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Publication Date

1991

Functions of the Verb in Tamil Narration

By

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C.Phil. (University of California) 1986

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LINGUISTICS

in the

GRADUATE DIVISION

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA at BERKELEY

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Functions of the Verb in Tamil Narration

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Abstract

Verbal categories such as tense and aspect have been observed to fulfill systematic narrative discourse functions in a number of languages, e.g. in distinguishing participants from events, plot-line from supporting material, and in organizing a text around an evaluative point. Some have proposed that these functions be included as part of the grammatical description of the verbal forms themselves, arguing that traditional sentence-level descriptions fail to account for the systematic nature of such usage. According to this view, discourse analysis is not a luxury, but rather a necessary tool in grammatical analysis.

In this study, evidence for the importance and systematic nature of discourse functions is adduced from Tamil, a Dravidian language spoken in South India. The verbal system of Tamil poses problems for sentence-level analysis, as attested by the fact that many productive devices in the language are misleadingly and/or incompletely represented in existing grammatical accounts. I develop an alternative account of the Tamil verbal system in terms of its functions in oral narrative discourse. Via a close descriptive analysis of a corpus representing four narrative genres (real-life accounts, folk tales, performed epics, and elicited epics), systematic functions are identified for each of the major members of the verbal categories tense, aspect, and predication type. These functions contribute not only to a coherent understanding of Tamil narrative discourse, but to an understanding of sentence-level properties of the forms as well.

I then consider the interactions of tense, aspect, and predication type within each narrative genre and within the Tamil verbal system as a whole. Three of the genres represent 'sub-systems' of verbal usage, which I account for in terms of the particular communicative requirements of the genres, and more generally, in terms of the historical evolution of the verbal system, older functions of which are preserved in traditional performance narratives. As a consequence of these factors, the synchronic picture which emerges is one of a rich and complex set of interrelationships between forms and functions, in which aspect competes with tense for the function of establishing primary 'grounding' relationships in text.

James A. Matisoff
April 25, 1991

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the many individuals and institutions who have contributed, either directly or indirectly, to the successful completion of this project. I especially wish to acknowledge the following:

The U.S. Dept. of Education, for Foreign Language and Area Studies funding for four years of Tamil study at UC Berkeley. The American Institute of Indian Studies, for a fellowship to study Tamil in Madurai, India in 1983-84. A Fulbright grant for Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad (Madurai, India) in 1986-87. Without these funds, the present study would not have been possible.

Dean Beverley Hendricks and Professor Peter Schroeder of California State University, San Bernardino, for arranging two courses of release time for me in the Fall of 1990 so that I might finish writing my dissertation.

My professors and committee members at the University of California, Berkeley, and especially my co-chairs Suzanne Fleischman and Jim Matisoff. I wish to thank Suzanne for introducing me to the field of narrative analysis, and for being an admirably efficient and responsible advisor throughout the years. To Jim I owe most of what I know of linguistic field methods, and many other useful things besides. My deepest appreciation for the advice and examples that both have provided. Thanks too to Karl Zimmer and George Hart, my other committee members.

In India, a special debt of gratitude to Dr. K. Paramasivam, head of the American Institute of Indian Studies Tamil language program. His seemingly limitless knowledge of the Tamil language was an invaluable resource to me during my visits in India.

Boundless thanks to my Tamil research assistants and to all of the narrators who participated in the data collection in India. V. Krishnasamy, J. Rajasekharan, and

V. Govindarajan were especially helpful to me in the data collection process, and I accord them my gratitude.

In Berkeley, heartfelt thanks to Kausalya Hart and Sampath Kannan for their willingness to serve as linguistic informants. They both bailed me out on more than one occasion.

Finally, the warmest thanks of all to my friends, for their support, both emotional and intellectual. Through his insightful comments and suggestions, Eric Pederson played a crucial role in shaping the early stages of my research; he also provided valuable technical assistance. Special thanks, too, to John Paolillo, for serving as a sounding board and helping me to sharpen my ideas during the writing process, and for helping out in a myriad of smaller ways as well. To Orin Gensler, thanks for tracking down references, and for commiserating during the difficult times. Finally, my love and immeasurable gratitude go out to Annie Jaisser for providing hospitality, use of her computer and printer, and her time in helping me to pull it all together at the end, when it really counts.

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Abbreviations Used in Glosses

1pl.	first person plural	INST	instrumental
1sg.	first person singular	LOC	locative
2sg.	second person singular	NEG	negative
3pl.	third person plural	NF	non-future
3pl.resp	third person respective plural	NP	non-past
3sg.f	third person singular feminine	P	past
3sg.masc	third person singular masculine	PERF	perfect
3sg.n	third person singular neuter	PFV	perfective
3sg.resp	third person singular respective	pl.	plural
ACC	accusative	PN	participial noun
Adv	adverbializer	POL	politeness marker
AjP	adjectival participle	PP	past participle
AvP	adverbial participle	Pr	present
COND	conditional	PROHIB	prohibitive
CONT	continuative	PURP	purposive
COP	copula	Q	question
DAT	dative	QUOT	quotative
DUB	dubitative	REFL	reflexive
EMPH	emphatic	resp	respective
EVID	evidential	SIM	simultaneous
F	future	TAG	tag question
GEN	genitive	TOP	topic
IMP	imperative	VN	verbal noun
IMPpl.	imperative plural	VOC	vocative
INF	infinitive		

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Narrative as a discourse genre.

Narrative discourse has long attracted the attention of scholars in a wide variety of fields. It is a genre of verbal communication known to and used by every human culture, and arguably, by every linguistically competent human being. Narratives -- also known as 'stories' -- are told to entertain, inform, illustrate, justify, warn, create solidarity, indeed, for as many different reasons as people use language. They reflect the cultures and the times in which they are produced, as well as the personal goals, skills, knowledge and experiences of the tellers. Many would argue that narrative does not merely reflect experience, but actively shapes it, by selectively creating organizational structures in the minds of narrator and audience via which they interpret past, present, and future reality. This characteristic of narrative arises from the fact that reality does not come pre-packaged in linguistic units, or, as Ong puts it:

Reality never occurs in narrative form. The totality of what has happened to and in and around me since I got up this morning is not organized as narrative and as a totality cannot be expressed as narrative. To make a narrative, I have to isolate certain elements out of the unbroken and seamless web of history with a view to fitting them into a particular construct which I have more or less consciously or unconsciously in mind (Ong 1982:12).

The act of narration necessarily involves selection and organization, leading to the creation of experiential schemata which may be applied in understanding other segments of reality. Thus narrative is also a cognitive construct; the study of the production and comprehension of narrative reveals aspects of the workings of the human mind.

As a discourse genre, narrative has a prototypical structure which distinguishes it from other frequently analyzed genres such as conversation and exposition. Unlike conversation or exposition, narrative is conventionally organized according to the principle of chronological sequence. A prototypical narrative can be expected to exhibit a sequence which imitates in significant measure the past progression of events in the world which it purports to relate; the omission of certain of these events could seriously threaten the coherence of the whole, and their rearrangement could result in the creation of a different story altogether.¹ Conversations, on the other hand, are not structured directly in relation to past experience, but rather reflect the immediate and shifting social and communicative goals of the participants; there are no conventions that require that particular topics be discussed in a particular order. Nor are the conventional structures of expository discourse determined by temporally-bound experience, but rather by the knowledge, beliefs, and intentions of speakers/writers and their audiences, however these internal states might have been acquired. If a supporting argument were left out of an expository text, or if the order of two such arguments were reversed, the resulting exposition might be less rhetorically effective, but it would not necessarily be perceived as incomplete, or as a different argument. Chronological sequence is thus an important consideration in narrative discourse analysis, a consideration which determines to a considerable extent the linguistic structures conventionally associated with the genre.

These observations notwithstanding, a narrative is not merely a sequence of events, that is to say, any random sequence of events. Rather it is a sequence unified

¹ To cite a simple example, a narrative composed of the two events 'Lucretia gave birth to a baby girl' and 'John and Lucretia got married' implies a rather different set of circumstances than a narrative in which the two events are related in the inverse order.

by a **point** (Polanyi 1989), or a reason for which it is told. Having decided that something is a potential 'story', a narrator structures its telling around the point. In Western culture, this structure typically involves some sort of orientation in which participants and setting are introduced, followed by a sequence of events which builds to a dramatic peak of conflict and/or tension, followed by a resolution of the tension. The resolution constitutes the minimal ending of the narrative; without the resolution the audience will feel that it has been "left hanging" (Pratt 1977). A minimum of orientation is also conventionally required at the beginning; a competent narrator will not plunge directly into the events of the story unless s/he is fairly sure that the audience already possesses (or can access) the relevant information about who and what is involved.² The point of the telling determines to a significant extent these two boundaries -- that is, a story's introduction, and its resolution. The choice of what constitutes the narrative 'peak' often corresponds roughly to the point itself. In a story told to entertain, it may be a hilarious moment; in a story of a life-threatening experience, it may be an especially terrifying or hopeless moment; typically, it is the portion of the narrative which receives the greatest amount of evaluation or 'rhetorical underlining' (Labov 1972; Longacre 1981).³

The structural properties of narrative are reflected at every level of its linguistic organization. This statement can be illustrated by a brief consideration of the 'evaluative' function mentioned above. As Labov (1972) notes, evaluation may be external or internal. A narrator can come right out and tell the audience the point of the story ("It was really weird/funny/scary", etc.) -- external evaluation -- or else

² An exception to this is written narrative fiction which begins *in medias res*; such usage however assumes the reader's familiarity with the convention of providing orientation, and deliberately violates it for stylistic effect.

³ Where the point is didactic in nature, as for example in parables and allegories, there may be a 'didactic' peak in addition to a dramatic or 'action' peak (Longacre 1981).

communicate it indirectly -- internal evaluation -- via a variety of linguistic and paralinguistic cues. These include gesture and gaze; expressive phonology (prosody, onomatopoeia, sound symbolism); morphological processes (reduplication, creation of non-standard forms); and the use of syntactic structures other than 'basic narrative syntax' with its reliance on indicative mood and affirmative, past tense verbal forms. Although considerably less research has been done on levels of linguistic analysis "beyond" the sentence, it is clear that evaluation frequently takes place there as well -- one has only to think of indirection (irony, understatement) and strategies that seek to involve the listener (tags, rhetorical questions, etc.) for examples of pragmatic evaluation, and there can be little doubt that evaluation is crucially involved in the local and global structuring of information in the organization of the discourse itself. The example of evaluation illustrates the complex and essential relationship which holds between language and narrative structure.

The present study is an attempt to explore this relationship in greater depth. I begin with a central premise: that the notion of *event* is basic to the act of narration. That is, a narrative is typically about something that happened, rather than an ongoing state of affairs or a static characterization of a person or scene. In support of this view, Labov's definition of a narrative as the matching of "a verbal sequence of clauses to [a] sequence of events" (1972:358-359) has oft been quoted in the literature. This is not to deny the possibility of varying the formula (as indeed is often done in modern experimental fiction writing) by constructing an "eventless" narrative, but then we are dealing with a marked strategy which seeks to draw attention to itself by virtue of its deviation from the expected norm; the norm is indirectly reinforced thereby. By convention, then, events are central to the organization of a narrative, whether there are many of them, as in an action-packed adventure thriller, or

relatively few, as in a moody character study. Narrative events must be supported, of course, by the characters who enact them and the contexts in which they are carried out; indeed, their interpretation may depend crucially on such supporting knowledge. We may state that the two major components of any (typical) narrative are **participants** (by which term I include objects and setting as well as animate protagonists) and **events**; however, given that events presuppose participants, but not vice versa (i.e. it is possible to describe participants without making reference to events), events are in a practical sense the most important single definitional component of narrative.

It stands to reason that the language used in narration must necessarily reflect the primacy of events and event structure. A narrator must have ways of distinguishing events from non-events, and of distinguishing between different kinds of events. Furthermore, since what constitutes an 'event' is no more fixed in the real world than what constitutes a 'story', but rather, is a matter of selection on the part of the narrator, s/he may employ linguistic devices which package experience as events, independent of its inherent and/or contextual semantics.⁴ The grammatical devices which may be employed in the description of events vary from language to language, but in most (if not all) languages, these involve verbs and their related categories, i.e. tense, aspect, voice, and modality. Any study of the linguistic structure of narrative, therefore, must pay special attention to verbs.

⁴ This raises the question of whether it is defensible to speak of 'events' and 'evaluation' as autonomous components of narrative structure, as Labov (1972) has done. If we expand our definition of 'evaluation' to include the organizational choices made by the narrator, i.e. in order to present the 'point' more effectively, then the linguistic structuring of narrative events is clearly an evaluative task. This issue is taken up again in the discussion of evaluation in 3.5.

The examination of verbal categories in narrative not only offers insights into the linguistic encoding of events (with all of its attendant cognitive implications); it has implications for grammatical theory as well. Traditionally, the domain of 'grammar' has been restricted to units no larger than the sentence. The following dictionary definition articulates a view held by grammarians for thousands of years:

grammar: The study of language as a body of words that exhibit regularity of structure and arrangement *into sentences* (The American Heritage Dictionary, 1983; emphasis mine).

This tradition -- along with the tendency to base grammatical descriptions of forms on their functions in restricted (and often, artificially constructed) contexts -- has been adopted and legitimized in the writings of generative linguists, and most notably, in the writings of Chomsky, e.g. through his assertion that the basic goal of grammatical theory is to account for "all and only" the grammatical sentences of a language (Chomsky 1957:13). I will argue, however, that the exclusion of the discourse properties of a linguistic form from its grammatical "definition" is an arbitrary and often damaging choice, damaging to the descriptive enterprise of modern linguistics in that systematic patterns may go undetected, even by otherwise thorough and responsible analysts. Indeed, many of the Tamil constructions examined here pattern *more* consistently on the discourse level than on the level of the sentence, and one or two can be coherently described only from a discourse perspective. If grammar is concerned with describing significant patterns in language structure, then the Tamil evidence argues strongly in favor of incorporating discourse into the definition of grammar.

A further argument for considering forms in the context of their usage is implicit in the claims of Hopper (1979a, 1979b, 1982), Givón (1979), Du Bois (1987), Herring (1988, to appear a.), and others, regarding the importance of discourse factors

in grammaticalization. The evidence presented by these researchers suggests that at least in some cases, discourse usage may determine the sentence-level properties of grammatical forms. This research, most of which is based on narrative discourse, suggests that grammar and narrative structure interact, and that the interaction may influence, in part or in whole, the characteristics of each component.

I raise these issues in order to underscore the importance of narrative analysis in linguistic research. Narrative is not the only -- nor indeed, the most frequent -- discourse activity in which speakers engage; it is, however, universal in its distribution and unique in its relationship to human cognition. As a genre, it has a particular set of structural properties -- participants, an event line, etc. -- which interact with the linguistic structure of the telling, and this interaction has consequences for both the narrated experience and the language used. It is not necessary, therefore, to give in to the temptation -- as some narrative analysts have done -- to overgeneralize the significance of one's exclusively narrative-based findings to the domain of 'discourse' as a whole;⁵ narrative properties are significant in and of themselves, and general properties of discourse can only ultimately be demonstrated by taking into account the differences in language use in different communicative genres. With this caveat in mind, references in this thesis to 'discourse grammar', 'discourse functions', 'discourse principles', etc. should be understood as referring primarily to narrative discourse, except where conversation or other genres are explicitly mentioned.

⁵ For example, Du Bois (1987) has claimed on the basis of (rather limited) narrative evidence that "discourse factors" are responsible for the grammaticalization of ergative morpho-syntax cross-linguistically.

1.2 Oral and written narrative.

While it is possible to speak in general terms of 'narrative' and 'narrative structure', oral and written narrative exhibit a number of different organizational and linguistic properties. In order to enter into a more detailed discussion, it will be necessary to distinguish further between the two.

A number of researchers have investigated the differences between spoken and written language (Chafe 1982; Ochs 1979; Tannen 1982), producing lists of features that characterize the two poles of this opposition. It has been noted, for example, that written language is more dense in information content, makes use of more complex, embedded grammar, and relies less on context for its interpretation than spoken language, which, in contrast, has a looser, paratactic structure and tends to be context-dependent. These properties of language organization presumably derive from the physical and cognitive differences associated with the written, as opposed to the spoken, modality. That is, while writing is a solitary activity which allows for planning and revision, speaking is interactive and "on-line". Both modalities are rich resources for investigation: the one more closely mirrors our idealized linguistic competence (Chomsky 1980), the other, the processing strategies and cognitive limitations which determine the nature of linguistic performance (Chafe 1980, 1987).

Oral and written narrative are more different, however, than a consideration of the differences between spoken and written language alone might indicate. This difference has primarily to do with the degree and nature of conventionalization in each. In our society, the writing and oral telling of stories are carried out by different individuals, for different cultural purposes. To begin with, the number of situations in which the average modern American is called upon to produce a written narrative is rather limited, outside of school composition courses and a small number of professions

which involve the writing of narrative reports.⁶ (The number of situations is even more limited in cultures with a lower rate of literacy, such as India). Written narrative is widely available, in the form of both 'high' and 'popular' literature, but its production is largely restricted to professional writers -- for whom we reserve a special term, 'author'.⁷ Within this professional community, a set of stylistic and aesthetic conventions has developed which is reflected -- either through observance or violation -- in the production of most published written narrative. Oral narration, on the other hand, is common property; indeed, what normal person has never related an interesting incident that s/he experienced, either directly or indirectly, to another person? There are professionals in the area of oral narration as well -- fewer, perhaps, in the United States than in areas of the world where television and cinema are less pervasive -- but one need not possess any special training or credentials to tell a successful story (cf. Labov 1972); rather, it is part of a more general set of communicative abilities that we acquire as children and develop through interactive practice. The universality of oral narration does not preclude the establishment of stylistic conventions -- particularly among different social groups -- but such

⁶ Suzanne Fleischman (personal communication) has suggested that diary writing and personal accounts embedded in letter writing might constitute exceptions to this generalization. I know of no research into either genre which would allow us to determine whether such writing is truly 'narrative', nor how common it might really be.

⁷ Indeed, to propose to average adults to write a narrative is to set them a rather artificial task, unless it is supported by a well-defined communicative context. This artificiality is evident for example in Tannen's (1982) study of spoken and written language, where oral and written versions of the same story were collected from the same speaker. For the writing portion of the study, some of the subjects wrote brief report-like summaries; others produced highly-evaluated texts which were more like short stories (thus evoking the dominant literary model for written narrative). In short, the subjects seemed to generate idiosyncratic hypotheses as to why and for whom they were writing; as a consequence, it is difficult to compare and generalize from the results.

conventions are relatively less numerous and less fixed than for literary narrative, and typically are of secondary importance to basic functional principles in determining the actual structures of oral narrative texts.

The research findings described in this study are based on a corpus of oral narratives. Given the on-line nature of speaking, it stands to reason that oral narration is more directly linked to the basic functional requirements of representing experience through language than is writing, which is a mediated activity. This direct link is of particular importance to the phenomenon of 'discourse-driven' grammar. In South Indian society, even more than in the United States, written narration is a specialized, restricted activity, in contrast with oral narration, which is practiced in some form by every individual. Thus the decision to focus on oral narrative in this study was motivated by a concern for naturalness on the one hand, and for what orality can reveal of basic -- and ultimately, perhaps, universal -- narrative strategies on the other.

1.3 Oral narrative in the Tamil context.

Tamil is a Dravidian language spoken by about 70 million speakers in the state of Tamil Nadu, South India, and in parts of Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Malaysia. Within India, it has an ancient and well-attested literary tradition, paralleling that of the Sanskritic culture of the North. Several oral folk traditions are still practiced as well, although their vigor appears to be diminishing in recent years as a consequence of the spread of popular cinema -- and, more recently, television -- to even the most remote of villages. Professional practitioners of the traditional oral arts can still be met with fairly easily in Tamil Nadu, although most nowadays hold down another, "real" job such as barber, lab technician or university professor. Many tell stories as an act of

devotion, since the major traditional genres deal almost exclusively with religious themes. Tamil oral narratives thus take place in a cultural context quite different from our own, and offer a variety of genres -- ranging from informal, to very structured -- through which to investigate the linguistic properties of narration.

The Tamil language also has special properties which make it of interest for the purposes of this study. The verbal system is richly provided with categories for describing properties of events: in addition to three simple tenses, Tamil possesses a system of aspectual auxiliaries expressing the notions of completion, continuation, current relevance, and a number of others which ascribe speaker affect to the completion or continuation of a situation. The Tamil auxiliary system has been the focus of numerous book-length descriptive studies (e.g. Schiffman 1969; Dale 1975; Annamalai 1985; Fedson 1981; Steever 1983), none of which, however, treats the functions of the forms in natural discourse. The fascination which this area of Tamil grammar holds for (especially) foreign linguists is due perhaps to the extreme difficulty that foreign speakers encounter in attempting to master the system. The problem is not simply that Tamil makes distinctions that English does not, or that the Tamil and English categories which overlap do so only partially, although both of these statements are true. Rather, much of the Tamil aspectual system functions predominantly on the discourse level, and as a consequence, the sentence-level accounts given in pedagogical grammars are insufficient to enable the language learner to grasp the true role played by such forms in the language.

Pedagogical considerations aside, the differences between the Tamil and the English verbal systems lend support to the present undertaking, since the potential is clearly present, through comparative study, for expanding our typological knowledge of how language structures narrative events. By undertaking a comprehensive study

of this area of Tamil usage, I intend first and foremost to provide a descriptive account of the interaction of narrative form and function in that language; at the same time, I proceed firm in the belief that insights gained from one language can be constructively applied in the analysis of another.

1.4 Goals of the present research.

The present research was initially motivated by a gap which had long been apparent to me in my investigations of the Tamil language, namely the inadequacy of sentence-level descriptions in accounting for the distribution of Tamil verbal categories. At first glance, many of these descriptions appear quite straightforward: Tamil, like English, has three basic tenses: past, present, and future, and the three Tamil aspects correspond at least in part to the English "compound tenses" (perfect and progressive). The aspectual auxiliary *viṭu*, or perfective aspect, is more problematic, but its problematic nature is glossed over in descriptions which ascribe to it a simple function such as 'completive' (Dale 1975; Hart and Hart 1979; Annamalai 1985) or 'definitive' (Shanmukam Pillai 1968; Paramasivam 1983a). Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes evident that these characterizations are less than adequate even at the sentence level. Consider, for example, the use of the auxiliary *viṭu* in sentence (1):

- (1) Rāman ella iṭli-aiy-um cāpiṭṭu-(vi)t-t- ān.
 R. all idli- ACC-inclusive eatAvP- *viṭu*- P- 3sg.masc
 'Raman ate up all the idli'.

We cannot attribute the sense of completion expressed in the English translation of this sentence to *viṭu*, since the same sentence in the simple past tense (i.e. with no *viṭu*) could also be translated 'Raman ate up all the idli'; that is, the '(ate) up' is an inference sanctioned by the use of the discontinuous nominal modifier (*ella + um* =) *ellām* 'all'.

Even in sentences without *eḷḷam*, the presence or absence of *viṭu* may make no apparent difference to the interpretation, e.g.:

- (2) *Āmā nṇu con-n-ān/ colli- (vi)ṭ-ṭ- ān.*
 yes QUOT say-P-3sg.masc/ sayAvP-*viṭu*- P- 3sg.masc
 "Yes", (he) said'.

In this example, the act of 'saying' expressed in the simple past tense version is no less complete, is associated with no less speaker certainty or "definiteness", than the version with *viṭu*. It is possible to provide pairs of sentences where the presence of *viṭu* does create a contrast, but as different kinds of contrast are possible depending on the Aktionsart (lexical aspect) of the main verb, this would lead us to posit more than one "meaning" for *viṭu*, though none applies systematically throughout the verbal system. To complicate matters further, the interpretation of *viṭu* varies according to the tense used; the completive sense is associated with past tense, and the definitive sense with present⁸ or future tenses.⁹

The inadequacies of sentence-level descriptions become even more apparent when one attempts to apply them to the understanding of actual texts, either spoken or written. The distribution of *viṭu* appears to be completely random, bearing no apparent relation to the semantic notions of either 'completion' or 'definiteness'. The Tamil 'perfect' and 'progressive' are not used like their English "equivalents", contra the indications of pedagogical grammarians. Tamil tenses pose problems as well: the function of the present tense in narrative has little relationship to its core "meaning", nor does its use correspond to our stylistic intuitions regarding the 'historical present tense' in English. Yet a grasp of tense and aspect forms is indispensable to a mastery of

⁸ Cf. n. 48.

⁹ A complete discussion of the problems associated with the sentence-level characterization of *viṭu* is found in 7.1.1.

the Tamil language, since all finite verbs (with the exception of a small subset of impersonal verbs) must be conjugated for tense, and aspect marking is clearly favored in a significant number of contexts as well. What, then, determines how these forms are used?

A second area of Tamil grammar which calls for discourse-based explanations is the description of sentence types which lack a finite verb. Tamil has nominal sentences in which two nominal elements are equated, and in which no overt copula verb appears, e.g. *Rāman oru māṇavan*, literally 'Raman a student'. Constructions of this type are observed by Longacre (1981) to play a role in the encoding of narrative situations low in dynamicity in Biblical Hebrew, and Tamil nominal constructions function similarly in this respect. At the same time, Tamil has another sentence type which lacks an overt predicate altogether, either nominal or verbal. An example taken from the oral narrative corpus is the following:

- (3) *Ankittē iruntu, oru kuṇa kilavi* Ø.
 there-emph from one hunchback old.lady Ø
 'From the other direction, a hunchbacked old lady'.

This sentence type is never mentioned as such in Tamil grammars, although examples of it involving locative adverbials are sometimes given as instances of 'copula deletion' in discussions of the Tamil copula.¹⁰ That is, sentences such as (4) and (5) below are considered to be stylistic variants:

- (4) *Kātt- ile oru periya ciṅkam* Ø.
 forest-LOC one big lion Ø
 'In the forest, a big lion'.

¹⁰ The assumption that such constructions necessarily involve a deleted copula is problematic. Native informants, when asked to supply the "missing" verb in verbless sentences, readily supply verbs other than the copula, and in certain contexts, reject the copula as ungrammatical (cf. example (3)). For further discussion of this point, see 5.2.2.

- (5) Kātt- ile oru periya ciṅkam iru-**kk-u**.
 forest-LOC one big lion be- Pr-3sg.neuter
 'In the forest, (there) is a big lion'.

Although less ubiquitous than aspectual auxiliaries, the 'zero predicate' type is used by all Tamil speakers, especially in narration. It is another device that foreign learners typically fail to master; many are no doubt unaware of its existence. What place does it occupy in the Tamil grammatical system?

While I cannot hope to account for all of the possible contextual uses of verbal (and verbiess) structures in Tamil, I will demonstrate that their distribution in narrative obeys systematic principles, and thus that it is possible to characterize their usage. Analysis of the aspectual auxiliary *viṭu*, for example, reveals that it regularly foregrounds what the narrator selects as the primary sequence of narrative events, similar to the perfective aspect forms of Russian, Literary Malay, and Indonesian. The 'zero predicate' construction, on the other hand, specializes in the presentation of new nominal referents; it is typically followed by another sentence commenting on the referent and making clear its relationship to the ongoing activities and events of the story.¹¹ These narrative-based characterizations are more generally useful than a description limited to a single discourse genre might at first appear, since the data on which they are based cover a diverse range of narrative practices, including personal narratives. On the basis of evidence of this sort, I present a case for the inclusion of systematic discourse patterns as part of the general grammatical description of Tamil.

My analysis extends the application of a discourse-based approach to an area of the world where it has hitherto been virtually unknown, i.e. South Asia. In addition to

¹¹ This is an 'event' marking strategy in a somewhat different sense, since nominal referents are the functional complement of events, in terms of the basic binary division noted in 1.1 between participants and events.

illuminating the workings of the Tamil verbal system, it is my hope that this study might pave the way for future narrative discourse studies of South Asian languages, since the potential usefulness of the resultant findings to areal comparison (cf. Moag and Poletto (to appear)), as well as to cross-linguistic typology in general, is considerable.

1.5 Organization of the thesis.

A few words regarding the organization of the thesis may be helpful here. **Chapter 1** has been concerned with introducing fundamental concepts associated with the linguistic analysis of narrative discourse, and with identifying features of the Tamil language which might be illuminated by adopting a narrative-based approach. These features involve the verbal system, specifically, the categories of tense, aspect, and predication type. **Chapter 2** reviews previous research on the linguistic structure of narrative, and the functions of verbal categories in encoding narrative structure. While most of the research considered in Chapter 2 was carried out on languages unrelated to Tamil, there are several studies which focus on narration in the South Asian context; these are discussed in the final section of the chapter. **Chapter 3** is devoted to methodological considerations in the design and execution of the research reported in this study. In this chapter the data-collection procedure is described, along with the criteria evoked in the selection of a 'judgement sample' of 19 texts for fine-grained analysis. The first three chapters thus present the background information necessary for the interpretation of the research findings.

Chapter 4 introduces the research findings by providing an overview of the Tamil verbal system, followed by a discussion of general patterns observed in the use and distribution of the three categories considered. Each category is then analyzed

separately in three subsequent chapters. **Chapter 5** presents the narrative functions of two verbless *predication types*: nominal, and zero. Since all sentences which contain tense and/or aspect are verbal, the third predication type, verbal predication, is not treated as a separate type in Chapter 5, but rather is treated implicitly in the chapters on tense and aspect. **Chapter 6** presents the research findings for the three Tamil *tenses*: past, present, and future. In **Chapter 7**, the three most frequent and productive of the Tamil *aspects* are analyzed: perfective, continuative, and perfect. Prior to presenting the results of the narrative analysis in each case, traditional sentence-level descriptions of each form are summarized. This allows for a comparison between existing grammatical accounts and the insights generated by the narrative analysis; as will be seen, the narrative analysis contributes crucially to an adequate characterization of most -- if not all -- of the verbal forms considered.

The final chapter, **Chapter 8**, summarizes the results of the analysis and considers the workings of the Tamil verbal system as a functional whole. In the process, competing sub-systems are identified, reflecting different stages in the historical development of the Tamil language. The concluding section makes use of the Tamil findings to argue more generally for the inclusion of discourse-based grammar in grammatical description.

Chapter 2: Previous Research

As the discussion in the previous chapter indicates, narrative language is a complex phenomenon which can be approached simultaneously from a number of angles: grammatical, functional, cultural, etc. This chapter reviews work which is concerned primarily with the relationship of grammatical form to narrative discourse function.

2.1 The structure of narrative: Labov's model.

Much of the research carried out on narrative structure to date is indebted, directly or indirectly, to two articles (Labov and Waletzky 1967 and Labov 1972) which describe the structure of oral narratives told by (primarily) inner city black adolescents in informal interview settings. Labov and Waletzky identify a common set of structural components which these narratives contain, components which, they maintain, characterize oral narrative in English more generally.¹² A fully-formed narrative will contain most if not all of the following:

1. Abstract
2. Orientation
3. Complicating action
4. Evaluation
5. Result or resolution
6. Coda

¹² Pratt (1977) argues that these same structural components are evident in written literary narrative as well.

These components typically occur in the order shown, although this is not a strict requirement, and it is not uncommon to find both orientation and evaluation interspersed throughout a story. Of the six components, the two which bound the narrative -- the abstract (concise summary of what the story is about) and coda (comment(s) which close off the story, often by relating the narrated events to the present situation) -- are at times omitted; in contrast, the complicating action is indispensable, at least if the text is to be considered a narrative, since this component contains the clauses -- appropriately labelled "narrative clauses" -- which relate the event sequence (a minimal narrative is defined by Labov as "a sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered" (1972:359)). We have here, then, a set of functions specific to narrative discourse, a structural formula narrators are more or less obliged to follow if they wish their narratives to be understood as such.

A further distinction introduced by Labov and Waletzky must be noted here as well, since it has implications for the study of verbal forms. In addition to narrative clauses, the complicating action may also contain "restricted clauses", so-called because they may be displaced over a restricted number of clauses without changing the interpretation of the temporal order in which the events occurred. Restricted clauses describe events that are simultaneous or otherwise overlap temporally with the events of the narrative clauses. This notion of displacement motivates a typology of clauses, whereby three types are distinguished: zero displacement (i.e. *narrative*) clauses, which must occur in a specific linear order in order to preserve the intended sequence of events; *restricted* clauses, which may be displaced only locally, and *free* clauses, which may be displaced anywhere in the narrative without altering the basic

interpretation of the event sequence.¹³ (Note that these distinctions crucially involve the temporal notions 'sequence' and 'simultaneity', which are associated with the categories of tense and aspect in numerous languages).

Labov and Waletzky's contributions are pioneering, and the authors can hardly be faulted for not providing much detail concerning the linguistic forms associated with the functions they identify in their corpus (with the notable exception of evaluation). The following observations can be extracted from the two articles:

1) Narrative clauses are finite, independent. "[O]nly independent clauses are relevant to temporal sequence. Subordinate clauses may be placed anywhere in the narrative sequence without disturbing the temporal order of the semantic interpretation" (1967:21).

2) The basic narrative tense is the simple past. The only exceptions to this are the use of the past progressive ("was ...ing") in orientation sections, and the "quasi-modals" *start*, *begin*, *keep (on)*, *used to*, and *want* (1972:376).

3) Deviations from the basic temporal sequence (i.e. events narrated "out of order") are associated with the use of the past perfect (e.g. "The teacher stopped the fight. She **had** just **come** in")(1972:361).

4) "In general, the present perfect does not occur in narrative" (1967:29).

¹³ While the authors do not explicitly correlate restricted clauses with any of the structural components of narrative, in the three sample narratives analyzed in Labov and Waletzky (1967), 47.4% of all restricted clauses are in the 'complicating action' section, 36.8% in the 'evaluation' section, and 15.8% in the 'resolution' section. Free clauses, in contrast, are found in 'orientation' sections (89.5%), and to a lesser extent, in evaluation sections (10.5%). Finally, narrative or 'zero displacement' clauses are most common in 'resolution' sections (52.2%) and 'complicating action' sections (43.5%); 'evaluation' comprises the remaining 4.3%. On the basis of this evidence, we may discern a statistical correlation between the three clause types and the components of narrative structure as follows: free clauses and orientation; restricted clauses and non-orientation; narrative clauses and complicating action/resolution.

5) Negatives, futures, modals and other auxiliaries are not part of basic narrative syntax; their function in narration is evaluative (1972:384). An example is the use of the past progressive in narrative clauses, e.g. to indicate duration, and/or to "suspend[...] the action in an evaluative section" (1972:387).¹⁴

These generalizations are provocative, and some of them can be challenged in the light of more recent research. They did, however, provide the impetus for a number of scholars to delve further into the relationship between language use and narrative functions.

2.2 Linguistic correlates of Labovian narrative structure.

Labov's analysis forms the basis for a number of more recent studies which have as their goal to explore the form-function relationship in narrative. Schifffrin (1981) investigates the use of the so-called 'historical present' tense -- present tense forms with past time reference in narrative -- , a phenomenon attested in Labov and Waletzky's data but not addressed in their articles. Schifffrin's quantitative analysis reveals a strong correlation between the historical present and clauses of the complicating action, with simple present tense and present progressive forms distinguishing between narrative and restricted clauses, respectively. Silva-Corvalán (1983), for Spanish, and Fleischman (1985, 1986, 1990), for French, undertake similar analyses, and show that in these languages as well, the historical present favors narrative clauses of the complicating action, where it replaces the (aspectually

¹⁴ An example of this latter type is the following: 'Calvin th'ew a rock. I *was lookin'* and-- uh-- And Calvin th'ew a rock' (1972:356). According to Labov's analysis, this use of the past progressive suspends the complicating action and has an evaluative function, in contrast with other uses of past progressive which are part of the complicating action proper, e.g. 'And [we] got back--it was a tent show--she *was lying* on a cot with an ice bag on her head' (n.14, p.387).

perfective) preterit. Present tense forms are not found in restricted clauses in Spanish and French, however; rather, imperfect (past imperfective) forms appear most frequently in this context.

2.3 Grounding.

Fleischman's analysis of the historical present tense integrates Labovian structural analysis with the insights of another influential approach to narrative analysis, the work of Hopper (1979a, 1979b, 1982) on **grounding**. In essence, the grounding approach claims that the aspectual categories perfective and imperfective in various languages have as their main grammatical function the expression of the binary distinction foreground/background in narrative structure. Fleischman (1985, 1990) argues that in spite of apparent differences between the grammatical properties of the 'historical present' in English, French, and Spanish, the forms can be seen to possess an underlying functional similarity: the historical present is a grounding device in all three languages, with the (simple) present tense acting as the perfective member of the pair, and the progressive (in English) and the imperfect (in French and Spanish) assuming the imperfective, backgrounding, function. Her analysis brings these languages in line with languages such as Russian (Hopper 1979a, 1979b, 1982; Chvany 1984), Literary Malay (Hopper 1979a, 1979b, 1982), Chinese (Andreasen 1981), and Indonesian (Rafferty 1982), all of which have been argued to employ perfective/imperfective marking to distinguish main event-line clauses from supporting background material.

The grounding approach to narrative analysis provides useful insights which are confirmed by a wide variety of languages of different structural and genetic types. The notions of 'foreground' and 'background' as discussed in Hopper's original work

are ambiguously defined, however. The ambiguity is a subtle one, and concerns the question of how 'foreground' and 'background' are determined. On the one hand, Hopper seems to assert that grounding is an evaluative strategy, determined by the narrator on the basis of his or her subjective assessment of what in the narration is most important to his or her evaluative point. Hopper writes:

[a] number of languages possess ... devices which indicate that the event or action signalled by a particular sentence is of especial relevance to the discourse of which the sentence is a part, as opposed to other sentences which, not being so marked, are signalled as being incidental, descriptive, or supportive of the main events of the narrative or discourse. (1979a:37)

He goes on to apply the label 'grounding' to this phenomenon. His use of the expressions 'especial relevance' and "incidental", along with the volitional verb "signal", suggests that the narrator's evaluative perspective plays the crucial role in determining grounding relationships.

Elsewhere, however, Hopper appears to suggest that grounding is a predictable consequence of the verbs used, which in turn reflect the inherent (e.g. temporal-aspectual) properties of the narrated events themselves. He states:

Because foregrounded clauses denote the discrete, measured events of the narrative, it is usually the case that the verbs are punctual rather than durative or iterative. This correlation can be stated as a correlation between the lexical, intrinsic AKTIONSART of the verb and the discourse-conditioned ASPECT. One finds, in other words, a tendency for punctual and conversely for verbs of the durative/stative/iterative types to occur in imperfective, i.e. backgrounded clauses ... Foregrounded clauses generally refer to events which are dynamic and active. (1979b:215)

According to the former interpretation, grounding is subjective and unpredictable; according to the latter, however, grounding follows as a largely automatic consequence of the events described. While it might be argued that the selection of verbs in the

description of narrative events is itself an evaluative task. we would nevertheless expect to find greater agreement among narrators reporting on the same "objective" experience in terms of what is or isn't a dynamic event, a durative state, and so forth, than what the relative *importance* of each of these situations is to the evaluative point of each individual telling. What is labelled as 'foreground' or 'background' thus has important consequences for narrative analysis, particularly where evaluation is concerned.

The ambiguity associated with the term grounding is evident throughout Hopper's work. The 'inherent' interpretation is discernible, for example, in his discussion of the grounding functions of the French *passé historique* (past perfective) and *imparfait* (past imperfective). He correlates the former with "the typical features of foregrounding", that is, "the new, dynamic events, the actions which carry the narrative forward" (1979a:38). Verbs in the *imparfait*, on the other hand, "tend to be durative or iterative rather than punctual" and "depict [background] events which are simultaneous with those of other sentences" (1979a:39).

The use of the definite article in the quote about the *passé historique* above suggests that all "new, dynamic events ... which carry the narrative forward" are foreground. That such is not necessarily the case, however, becomes apparent when the discussion turns to the Malay 'foregrounding' particle *lah*. Here Hopper notes that not all potentially foreground (i.e. new, punctual, dynamic) events are encoded as such adding however that it is not the case "that the sentences without *lah* contain no important detail at all, but simply that *they are not viewed as the crucial foci of the narrative*" (1979a:45, emphasis mine). This is perhaps the strongest statement in the three articles of what one might characterize as the 'evaluative' function of grounding

In comparing Malay with French, however, Hopper again confuses the issue by employing the term foreground twice in succession in different senses:

The particular difference between the French and the Malay constructions lies in the greater frugality of Malay narrative with its event-centered, *foregrounding* construction. In French, the use of the *passé historique* is categorical with all *foregrounded* sentences. (1979a:46; emphasis added)

'Foregrounding' in the first sentence refers to an evaluative strategy, i.e. the use of the aspectually perfective *lab* to signal the most crucial events, while in the second sentence, 'foregrounded' is a property of narrative events which can be correlated with -- but which exists essentially independent of -- its linguistic expression.

The situation is clarified somewhat in Polanyi and Hopper (1981). In this paper the authors characterize grounding as reflecting *two separate criteria*: psychological salience on the one hand, and narrator's evaluative choice on the other (discussed in Fleischman 1985).¹⁵ Unfortunately, however, this paper has not been published, and thus Polanyi and Hopper's explicit acknowledgment of the dual nature of the grounding concept has had far less impact than Hopper's earlier articles.¹⁶

The ambiguity generated by the earlier articles has resulted in two divergent approaches to grounding in subsequent research. A number of investigators have proceeded from the assumption that 'foreground' and 'background' are inherent properties of narrative events, identifiable independent of the linguistic forms used in

¹⁵ More recently, Fleischman (1990) has identified four distinct senses in which the term 'foreground' has been employed in the linguistics literature: 1) "the sequence of temporally ordered main events", 2) what is "humanly important", 3) those clauses which "advance the plot or move narrative time forward", and/or 4) what is "unpredictable or unexpected in a particular context" (1990:170-181)

¹⁶ Hopper (1982) was written in 1979.

their expression. This view is implicit, for example, in the following quote from Andreason (1981):

Based on [Hopper 1979b] ... we can make the following general assumptions about the function of various Chinese aspects in narrative discourse. First, that the majority of the foregrounded events will be marked (either grammatically or syntactically) for the Perfective aspect. And second, that the majority of the background information will be conveyed by the various lexicalized, grammaticalized, or syntactically expressed categories of Imperfective aspect. (Andreason 1981:57).

Andreason's interpretation has consequences for the methodology employed in his analysis of 'grounding' in Chinese literary narratives. He first assigns each clause to the 'foreground' or the 'background' category (or to a third, miscellaneous category, 'middleground') on the basis of their semantic content, and only then proceeds to relate grounding functions to the linguistic forms used in their expression. (Note that such an approach would be circular if foreground and background were construed as evaluative notions determined by the narrator in part by his or her choice of verbal form.) Grounding is also viewed as an inherent property of narrated situations in work by Longacre (1981), discussed in 2.4.1 below.

Other researchers have developed the interpretation that grounding is evaluative, or at least potentially so. Chvany's (1984) examination of Russian literary narrative reveals a statistical correlation between perfectivity and foreground, and imperfectivity and background, in support of the tendency noted by Hopper (1979a, 1979b, 1982). However, there are also exceptions to this trend, as indeed we would expect if grounding is determined by factors other than the inherent aspectual-temporal properties of events. Some of Chvany's "exceptions" can be explained away on morpho-semantic grounds; for example, the historical present, a *foregrounding*

device, is *imperfective* in Russian, rather than perfective (as it is in French and Spanish); however, this is due to the fact that the expected present perfective form has been co-opted in Russian to express only future (perfective) meaning.¹⁷ *Background perfectives*, also in violation of the predicted grounding-aspect correlation, occur when relating events off the main time line (e.g. flashbacks, flash-forwards), i.e. where English would use a past perfect; however this too is explainable, given that the Russian past perfective form can be translated either as a simple past or as a past perfect, with the choice of interpretation determined by context. In addition to such uses, however, an individual narrator may blatantly violate a narrative norm for personal or stylistic effect, e.g. by using the imperfective past for plot-line events (cf. the French *imparfait pittoresque*), or by relating an entire event sequence in the imperfective past. Chekhov is one author who makes use of such devices. On the one hand, these are clearly exceptional or 'marked' usages which "prove the rule", at the same time, they underscore the importance of treating grounding as a relative, context-dependent phenomenon, as Chvany recommends.

Fleischman (1985, 1990) also argues for this view. In discussing marked reversals of tense/aspect correlations for artistic effect, she notes that:

this interpretation of grounding, in which the saliency of foreground is contextually determined, dovetails well with the position ... that the configuration of material in a narrative reflects experience *as filtered through an individual consciousness*. This subjective viewpoint will be injected into the chronicle of events ... through reliance on -- or deliberate skewing of -- the linguistic strategies conventionalized in a given language for grounding and evaluation. (Fleischman 1985:860)

Fleischman emphasizes, however, that grounding and evaluation are not synonymous. While everything that is foregrounded is evaluated, not everything that is evaluated is

¹⁷ Comrie (1976:75).

foregrounded (1990:184). According to this view, 'grounding' is yet another means through which 'evaluation', in the general Labovian sense, is linguistically manifested in narrative

Although the two senses of 'grounding' identified here are distinct and make very different empirical predictions, there is nevertheless considerable overlap in the research findings of those who interpret the notion differently. That is, clauses evaluated by means of various linguistic devices as 'foreground' (i.e. important) do in fact typically turn out to be 'foreground' (i.e. dynamic, punctual, eventive, etc.) in the notional sense, although the reverse is not always true.¹⁸ Given the wide variety of motivations available to individual speakers in telling narratives, why should it be the case that speakers consistently choose to evaluate the same sorts of situations in the same ways?

Hopper and Thompson (1980) observe that features of grammar, narrator evaluation, and context tend to cluster together in predictable patterns. They note a correlation between foreground/background (in the sense of importance to plot development) and high vs. low 'transitivity', a complex notion not limited to grammatical transitivity alone, but which includes the animacy and degree of agentivity of participants, and the dynamicity and inherent aspectual properties of events. Wallace (1982) and Chvany (1984) propose similar cluster analyses in which perceptual 'salience', rather than 'transitivity', is the central organizing principle. Chvany argues that, in discourse which follows the "narrative norm",

we perceive a plot line or main thread because of the similarity of the plot-advancing segments, which tend to feature sequential, punctual,

¹⁸ Indeed, it is no doubt for this reason that the ambiguity associated with the term has troubled previous researchers so little, since their various analyses produced roughly comparable results.

perfective verbs and individuated subjects and objects, while the opposite grammatical categories cluster in the background (1984:5)

To the extent that this is true one could hypothesize that a narrator may not, even for evaluative purposes, completely disregard the conventional associations of perfectivity/foreground and imperfectivity/background, lest his plot line be lost to the audience. Cluster analyses thus provide useful insights into the relationships between the complex sets of behaviors associated with narration.

2.4 Spectrum and profile analysis.

Perfective and imperfective aspectual forms may signal a basic grounding distinction cross-linguistically, yet most languages employ a greater diversity of verbal forms in narration. What distinctions do these express? And how do they work together to achieve global coherence within a narrative text? A third approach which has been influential in narrative analysis -- the spectrum and profile model developed by Longacre (1981) -- is based on the assumption that "differing forms of tense/aspect/mood/ voice do not exist for nothing in a language"; rather, "such variety serves the needs of discourse" (1981:340)

2.4.1 Spectrum.

While the "needs" of narrative discourse are various and may differ from language to language,¹⁹ Longacre proposes that they can be grouped with respect to their relative dynamicity along a cline or **spectrum**, with crucial plot-line events

¹⁹ Longacre cites Jones and Jones' (1979) finding that some Mesoamerican languages morphosyntactically distinguish between pivotal vs. routine vs. downgraded events (vs. other supportive information types), in contrast with the binary division 'event-line' vs. 'supportive information' marked in the languages cited in support of Hopper's grounding hypothesis.

situated at the most dynamic end of the spectrum, and static depictions of characters and settings at the other extreme. Additional functions -- secondary events, flashbacks, background activities, identifications, and the like -- are situated at intermediate points along the spectrum. Implicit in Longacre's analysis is the view that the number and relative importance of narrative functions are not universally pre-determined; rather they emerge as a consequence of the morphosyntactic distinctions available within the language in question. There is, however, a tendency across languages (Longacre summarizes data from Biblical Hebrew, English, Halbi, and Northern Totonac) for past tense and perfective aspect forms to cluster at the 'dynamic' end of the scale, followed by imperfectives, then statives (including 'be' verbs), and finally non-past tenses/non-verbal constructions at the 'static' end. An interesting fact regarding Totonac is that even clauses whose verbs are low on the spectrum can be marked by a special suffix, *-tza*, to indicate that they are "especially crucial bits of background and supportive information" (346). That is, even notionally 'background' information can be evaluatively 'foregrounded', or accorded greater 'prominence', in Longacre's terminology.

The spectrum analysis is not, however, immune from the ambiguity associated with the notion of grounding. Although Longacre generally avoids the terms 'foreground' and 'background', evoking instead the notions of 'prominence', 'dynamicity', and narrative structural components such as 'primary event', 'secondary event', and the like, in his introduction he indicates that his spectrum is essentially a refinement of the binary grounding approach, one which involves intermediate degrees of 'groundedness'. In the spectrum analysis, 'foreground' corresponds to the dynamic end of the scale, while 'background' is static. Note that Longacre (like Andreason) has effectively construed grounding in the notional, rather than the

evaluative, sense. Evaluation in his system is a matter of relative 'prominence', a quality which can be signalled independently for situations at either end of the spectrum. One consequence of this is that there is no natural correlation in the spectrum model between 'dynamicity' and 'prominence' (salience), contra the observations of Hopper, Hopper and Thompson, Wallace, Chvany, and others that the two notions commonly cluster together.

The problem becomes even more apparent when the spectrum analysis is applied to an actual language. When structural components are correlated with relative degrees of dynamicity, along with the linguistic forms that encode them, it must be inferred that what causes main, secondary, and background events to be classified as 'main', 'secondary', 'background', etc. is their dynamicity (or lack thereof), rather than their perceived importance (prominence) to the narrator in the telling. This is illustrated for Halbi, an Indo-European language spoken in India, in figure 1 below (from Woods (1980)):

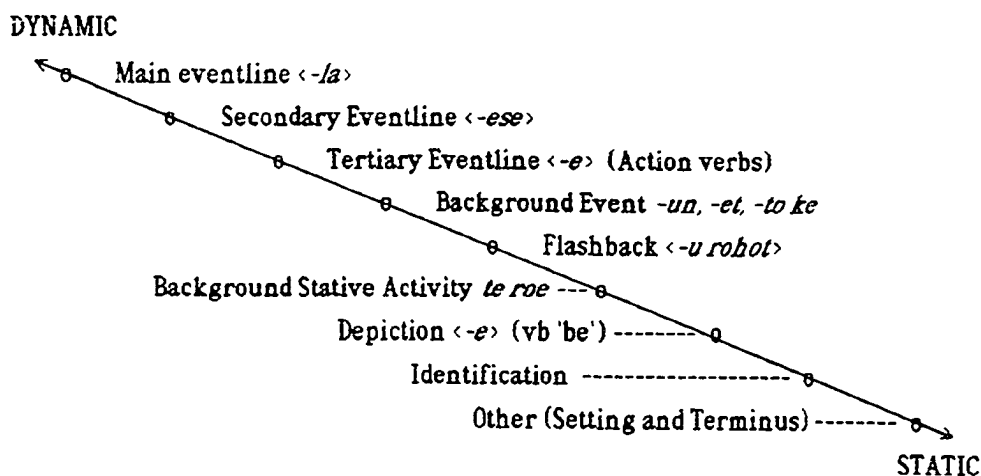


Figure 1: Spectral analysis of event marking in Halbi

By separating out the evaluative notion of 'prominence' from what constitutes the main and subsidiary information in narrative, we can only infer that it is the inherent semantic properties of narrative situations that determine their linguistic structure. In light of the observations made by other investigators regarding the expressive use of linguistic forms to encode the relative importance of situations to the narrative, such an inference is problematic, and in all likelihood does not accurately reflect Longacre's views ²⁰

2.4.2 Profile

Longacre (1981) develops a second perspective on narrative structure in terms of the **profile** created by mounting and declining tension within a story as it progresses through time. He proposes that a typical action narrative has an underlying structure composed of the following:

- 1) Exposition ('lay it out')
 - 2) Inciting Incident ('get something going')
 - 3) Mounting Tension ('keep heating it up')
 - 4) Climax ('knot it all up proper')
 - 5) Denouement ('loosen at some crucial point')
 - 6) Lessening tension ('keep on loosening it')
 - 7) Closure ('wrap it up')
- PEAK

The culmination of excitement, or **peak**, typically corresponds to the climax (point of maximum tension) or denouement (event crucial to resolution). It is marked

²⁰ Hatch (1983) cites an unpublished paper by Longacre ("The warp and woof of discourse" (1978)) in which he mentions verb tense/aspect as one of the devices used in the languages of the world "in order to give prominence to parts of narratives" (Hatch 1983:110). This statement is more in keeping with the view of grounding as evaluation.

linguistically by a variety of means, which Longacre subsumes under the term 'rhetorical underlining', the principal function of which is to "insure that the peak does not go by too fast" (349). Rhetorical underlining devices include repetition, paraphrase, the "packing of the event line" with minute detail, reporting non-events as if they were events, shifting of tense (e.g. past to historical present), change in sentence length, shift to dialogue if none appeared previously (or shifting to pure narration in contrast with previous dialogue), and the like. A particularly complex strategy from the point of view of the analyst is what Longacre terms the "shifting of spectral lines" at peak, whereby "verb forms that regularly mark differing sorts of information can occur in a distribution other than would be anticipated from previous parts of the narrative" (351). Thus the existence of a peak (or peaks) must crucially be taken into account in analyzing the patterning of verbal categories in narration, lest "turbulence" in those areas skew otherwise regular patterns of distribution.

If Longacre's spectrum evokes Hopper's grounding analysis, his seven-component analysis of narrative structure is similar in a number of respects to Labov's six-component model given in 2.1. Longacre's 'exposition' corresponds to Labov's 'orientation'; 'inciting incident', 'mounting tension', and 'climax' all make up Labov's 'complicating action'; and 'denouement', 'lessening tension', and 'closure' are all features of the 'resolution'.²¹ Moreover, Longacre's 'peak' is in many respects similar to Labov's explicit 'evaluation' section, which, according to Labov and Waletzky, often occurs between the complicating action and the resolution with the function of

²¹ It is not clear from Longacre's discussion whether he would consider Labov's 'coda' to be part of his 'closure' or not.

"suspending" the narrative action, and which is marked linguistically and prosodically by a great variety of means²²

Longacre's spectrum and profile analyses have generated a considerable body of descriptive research, most of it under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics.²³ While most remain well within the descriptive framework developed by Longacre, one study suggests an interesting alternative to both the grounding and the spectrum models. Sims (1986) analyzes tense-aspect forms in an Indonesian language, Ketengban, as combining in four functionally distinct ways with respect to two parameters: 'activity' ('dynamicity' in Longacre's term) and 'plot relevance' ('grounding' in the evaluative sense). Highly active situations which are also foreground, or vital to the development of the plot, are marked by the combination 'far past tense (FP)/perfective aspect (Pfv)', less active foreground situations by the 'far past (FP)/imperfective (Imp)' combination, active background situations by 'intermediate past (InP)/imperfective (Imp)', and finally, inactive background by 'intermediate past (InP)/perfective (Pfv)'. This is summarized in figure 2 (Sims 1986:20):

²² It should be noted that evaluation is also construed more broadly in Labov and Waletzky's work, i.e. as an expressive feature which may co-occur with any of the other components of narrative structure; this latter property of evaluation forms the basis for Fleischman's claim that foregrounding is a type of evaluation. However it seems likely that in including in both of their systems a rhetorically highlighted section between the narrative events and their resolution, Longacre and Labov and Waletzky were attempting to describe a similar phenomenon.

²³ See for example Woods 1980 for Halbi, Christian 1987 for Gujarati, and numerous articles in Longacre and Woods (eds.) (1976, 1977) for indigenous languages of Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador.

		Plot Relevance	
Activity	+	FP/Pfv	InP/Imp
	-	FP/Imp	InP/Pfv
		FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND

Figure 2: Aspect and grounding functions in Ketengban

It is noteworthy that *aspect* is not systematically associated with *grounding* in Ketengban; rather, tense is allocated this function (far past vs. intermediate past). Aspect, on the other hand, can be seen to correlate with the *predictability* of the association between the two parameters, such that the normal, *unmarked* associations of foreground with (dynamic) events on the one hand, and background with static situations on the other, are both signalled by the use of *perfective aspect*, while the more *marked* associations of foreground/stasis and background/dynamicity are signalled by *imperfective aspect*. Perfectivity is thus a characteristic in Ketengban of adherence to the narrative norm. This fact, which is of considerable typological interest, would not have emerged if a simple binary analysis of tense/aspect functions into the categories 'foreground' and 'background' had been imposed, nor would expanding the binary opposition into a spectrum have addressed the problem. The Ketengban language provides concrete evidence of the necessity of distinguishing unambiguously between the notions of relative importance and dynamicity (essentially, the two senses of 'grounding' in Hopper (1979a, 1979b, 1982)), and of analyzing the possibilities of interaction between the two.

2.5 "Mystery" particles.

In the discussion thus far we have been primarily concerned with the narrative discourse functions of verbal forms. The same (or similar) functions are encoded in many languages by means of other linguistic devices, however. Most relevant for the purposes of the present study are what Longacre (1976) terms "mystery" particles and affixes -- elements which defy analysis within the domain of a single sentence, but which carry out systematic functions within the larger discourse. His examples, drawn from American Indian languages of Colombia and Ecuador, illustrate the marking of such narrative discourse notions as 'main event-line', 'digressions from main event-line', 'thematic participants', and 'role reversal event' -- functions which could not be determined by simply examining the particles in sentences in isolation. In such languages, Longacre asserts, "discourse analysis is not a luxury but a necessity" (1976:475)

The notion of "mystery" particles is taken up by Rhodes (1976), and illustrated with examples from Ojibwa. Rhodes shows that on the one hand, the use of past tense (in contrast with zero tense) serves to set off the narrative events from supporting background material. Interestingly, past tense marking also occurs in backgrounded contexts, where it receives the interpretation of "past time relative to the time of the action of the text" (1976:104), or the translational equivalent of the English past perfect. (Recall a similar situation in the Russian data discussed by Chvany). At the same time, the "mystery" particle *dash* is used to set off the most prominent events and thematic participants, such that an extraction of only those clauses marked by *dash* produces an acceptable synopsis of the text as a whole. Past tense and *dash*-marking are only two of a number of what Rhodes terms 'structural phenomena' whose function is to indicate levels of prominence in Ojibwa texts. Other such phenomena include

direct quotes and the use of 'overlays', a discourse organizational device ascribed to several languages of Brazil and New Guinea by Grimes (1972). This latter device involves "the near repetition of substantial stretches of speech in such a way that the repeated elements are placed in prominence" (Grimes 1972:513). Thus if certain narrative discourse functions, such as the foregrounding of the primary event sequence, tend to be expressed via the verbal categories of tense and aspect in many languages, the facts of the above-mentioned languages make it clear that they have numerous other possible vehicles of expression as well.

Of course it is not necessary that a grammatical element be a "mystery" particle in order to carry out discourse work. The Literary Malay particle *-lah*, analyzed as a perfectivizer by Hopper (1979a, 1979b, 1982), functions on the sentence-level as a focus marker (i.e. when affixed to nominal elements) and as a perfect tense marker (when affixed to a verb); in narrative, it marks "kinetically new events which are highly relevant to the story line" (1979a:44). However, rather than characterizing the discourse function of *-lah* as an extension of its sentence-level properties, Hopper reverses the putative direction of evolution and claims that *the sentence-level meanings of the particle are in fact derived from its discourse-level meaning*, via the joint inferences of 'salience' (>focus) and 'temporal boundedness' (>completion) inherent in its function as a foregrounder of sequential events. The notion of perfectivity as arising out of discourse without the intermediary of sentence-level grammar receives support from the existence of true "mystery" particles which function systematically without having sentence-level correlates. The Tamil evidence is also suggestive on this point, as will be seen below

The cross-linguistic evidence summarized in this chapter thus argues for the necessity of acknowledging discourse grammar as part of general grammatical

description. Exotic phenomena such as "mystery" particles offer strong evidence for this position; however, as Longacre puts it, "discourse analysis can really be dispensed with nowhere. ... even for the understanding of a language such as English, text grammars give insights that are not possible with sentence grammars" (1976:475)

2.6 Narrative analysis in South Asian languages.

The relative absence in this survey of research devoted to the linguistic structure of narrative in South Asian languages is significant, and requires some comment. Its long and impressive grammatical tradition notwithstanding, India has no native tradition of discourse analysis; classical text analysis is practiced in the same academic settings as structural linguistics, yet to my knowledge there has yet to occur any spontaneous interweaving of the two approaches. Nor has discourse analysis gained a foothold from outside, as has generative grammar in recent decades. This lack is lamented by Moag (to appear), who finds it all the more regrettable in that "the South Asian languages are a particularly rich source of data on discourse conventions" (3) ²⁴

One exception to the lack of discourse-based studies for South Asian languages is Christian (1987), who applies Longacre's spectrum and profile approach to an analysis of levels of information and participant reference in three Gujarati folk tales. Christian observes that in Gujarati "verb morphology and sentence structure [finite vs. non-finite clauses] have a direct correlation with the various levels of information in narrative discourse. Without the discourse perspective, it becomes almost impossible to see how different features of the verb function in the language" (1987:88).

²⁴ After writing the above, I learned that a volume of textlinguistic studies of Indian languages, edited by Robert Longacre, was recently published. Due to time constraints, I have not been able to include discussion of that work here.

The Gujarati tense/aspect system is in some respects similar to that of Tamil: both languages have three tenses and compound verbs, and both make extensive use of medial (non-finite) verbs.²⁵ The latter two features play a role in Christian's findings for the correlation in Gujarati between verbal forms and narrative structure: primary information (the most 'unexpected', 'intense' information) correlates with the use of finite compound verbs, secondary information with simple finite verbs, and 'minor' information with medial verbs.

Upon closer inspection, however, the similarities between Tamil and Gujarati verbal categories turn out to be more apparent than real. Aspect in Gujarati is marked obligatorily as part of the morphology of simple finite verbs, whereas in Tamil the aspects are optional compound verb constructions: thus the term 'compound verb' does not refer to the same phenomenon in the two languages. Comparison between Gujarati and Tamil is rendered even more difficult in that Christian excludes tense from his analysis, treating present tense forms of all aspect types as functional equivalents of their past tense variants. Nor does the Gujarati analysis take into account stative predicates, or address the possibility of non-verbal predication types. The problems with the spectrum model in representing verbal choice as narrator evaluation has already been noted. Christian's interpretation of Longacre (1981) excludes the possibility of evaluation of this sort altogether; rather, "events presented by compound verbs are strikingly new and unexpected and thus have high information value and great importance in the narrative" (1987:82); in other words, an event's "importance" is determined by its information value, rather than ascribed evaluatively by the narrator. The three folk tales analyzed by Christian are written rather than oral.

²⁵ Languages which have a 'medial' verb construction (i.e. most SOV languages) offer clear counterevidence to the view that narrative clauses of the event-line are necessarily grammatically finite (cf. discussion of Labov and Waletzky in 2.1).

however, and appear to be normative in their structure. Thus it is possible that they contain no marked (i.e. non-normative) verb usage -- that is, no given or expected events evaluated by the narrator as "important" -- , and that the analysis is descriptively adequate for the texts considered.

Although outside the domain of linguistics proper, another body of research on Indian oral narrative is relevant to the present study, in that it analyzes traditional performance genres in their cultural contexts. Beck (1982), Blackburn (1986, 1988, 1989), Hart (1986) and Wadley (1986, 1989) discuss the use, in many Indian narrative genres, of more than one delivery style: speaking, as well as singing and/or chanting, with instrumental accompaniment a possibility in some genres as well. Switching among delivery styles can be a means of organizing and structuring the narrative, as Wadley (1989) observes for the Dhōla tradition of northern India:

throughout any particular performance, the lead singer must make choices from a variety of textual and musical options about structuring his epic, conveying moods, and meeting his audience's aesthetic expectations. (1989:101)

Such choices, she claims, reflect a narrator's basic 'performance strategies'

Blackburn (1986), whose research concerns the Tamil 'Bow Song' tradition, identifies five basic 'performance markers', or "a consistent set of devices" the main function of which is to "direct the audience's attention to select parts of the story" (1986:168). These are (in increasing order of selectivity): delivery style; use of the emphatic particle *-ē* *kuravai* (a cry or ululation); the music of the *mēlam* (instrumental ensemble); and a hastening rhythm known as *tuṭukku*. The first of these, delivery style, is responsible for the broad organization of the narrative performance into significant and less significant events, the former being signalled,

according to Blackburn, by the song style²⁶ The second feature, use of the emphatic particle, marks only the most crucial events of the story, typically at the close of a section. The third marker, use of the *kuravai* or ululation, signals only life-cycle events: birth, marriage, and death. The music of the *mēlam*, or instrumental ensemble, "joins with the song style, emphatic particle, and *kuravai* to produce a single, unified sound that levels semantic contrast in the verbal performance and intensifies its depth" (1986:183). The fifth and last marker, *tutukku*, is most specific of all, since it occurs only in association with the central event of death (an important theme in the Bow Song tradition). These observations are relevant to the present study in that they show how 'organization' and 'evaluation' in narrative performance can be carried out simultaneously by means of the same devices.

Wadley (1989) analyzes a written and a spoken version of the same myth in a Northern Indian genre known as *Kathā*, a non-song genre "performed annually by women for the sake of their families' welfare" (1989:214). Several of Wadley's observations suggest that these narratives are similar in their overall structure to American narratives, as described by Labov (1972). Specifically, she notes that both *Kathā* versions in her study "are bounded initially by their opening lines...; additional information about participants and setting is given, and then the action begins...[They] are also framed at the other end by a coda detailing the moral of the story" (1989:215).

The data base for the present study represents a diversity of Tamil narrative genres, from Bow Songs performed with full instrumental accompaniment, to myths

²⁶ 'Significant events' in Blackburn's analysis are those "which raise the dramatic tension of the story". Most "are common anxiety points -- pregnancy, birth, marriage, death -- while others are more peculiar to a narrative" (1986:179). At the same time, Herring (1990) notes that the song portions in Bow Song narratives are almost entirely redundant with the spoken portions; spoken portions alone, but not songs along, are capable of carrying the main narrative sequence.

narrated directly, to folk tales, to retellings of personal experience. Each genre occupies a different role in Tamil culture and has different performance requirements, which in turn influence the structure of the telling. Yet all are narrative, and as such exhibit common structural properties. While Blackburn and the other authors mentioned above are concerned to identify features of oral performance that give it structure with respect to its broader cultural context, my concern is to identify grammatical devices responsible for the internal structuring of the story itself. Performance markers such as *kuravai*, etc. are specific to a particular performance genre; the linguistic markers that I identify here are characteristic of oral narration in Tamil more generally.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodology of this study involves the identification of relevant grammatical devices and the analysis of their distribution in a corpus of oral narrative texts which I collected in Tamil Nadu, India, over a nine-month period in 1986-87. In this chapter, I discuss the data -- collection, selection, and analysis -- and provide definitions which function as theoretical preliminaries to the investigation as a whole

3.1 Defining 'narrative'.

As indicated in chapter 1, devices such as *vittu* and 'zero predication', although problematic on the sentence level, function systematically in narrative discourse. It is thus to narrative that we naturally turn in order to analyze the regular, patterned behavior of such forms. Narrative, however, may be defined in a variety of ways. What exactly do we intend by the term 'narrative discourse'?

The "working" definition given in the first chapter of narrative as a temporally-ordered sequence of events is useful in that it highlights what are presumably the two most crucial properties of the genre: the notion of event, and the notion of sequence.²⁷ It is, however, a minimalist definition which leaves unanswered the question of where to draw the boundaries separating narrative from other, related genres. Is *any* sequence of events a narrative or potential narrative? Clearly the events should be related to one another, e.g. by virtue of involving a consistent set of participants (persons, objects, and/or places), and/or by contributing to the communication of a more general evaluative point (e.g. "all the unsettling things that

²⁷ The term 'narrative' can also be used more broadly to refer to any piece of continuous prose; e.g. "a narrative statement of purpose", but I will not be concerned with such usage here.

happened in the world today") What, then, of historical chronicles and individual life stories, which are typically "about" some place or some person, but which are not necessarily organized around an evaluative point? In such cases, there is disagreement surrounding the question of whether linear temporal sequence alone constitutes a unifying theme: some are willing to classify such discourses as 'narrative', others view them as more in the nature of 'reports'. A conservative definition, then, is that a narrative relates a sequence of events which contribute to a common, underlying theme or point.²⁸

Also controversial is the question of where in time -- that is, past, present, or future -- the sequential events are supposed to occur. Labov (1972:359) writes that narrative is "one method of recapitulating past experience", and it is clear that there are strong conventional associations of narration with pastness: even events of futuristic science fiction novels are typically recounted in the past tense, as though they were based on some experienced reality. Present-time "narration", or what has been termed (Casparis 1976) the 'current report' genre, is considered by some to be exemplified in the "simultaneous" reporting mode of sportcasts, although most researchers treat this as a separate, non-narrative genre. As for reports of future sequences of events, these are more readily classified as predictions (Todorov 1969) or plans (Polanyi 1989)²⁹ than as narratives *sensu strictu*. Note that the question here is not one of *realis* vs. *irrealis*: sportscasting is a non-narrative *realis* genre, and narrative *irrealis* genres abound, e.g. myths, jokes, fiction. Nor is it, strictly speaking, the temporal location of the events that constrains the definition, since future

²⁸ Polanyi (1989:16) distinguishes between 'narrative' -- including 'report' genres -- and 'story', the latter of which is essentially a 'report' plus an evaluative point. In this study, I use the term 'narrative' in the more restricted sense of Polanyi's 'story'.

²⁹ For Polanyi, the contrast is between 'plans' and 'stories'; see fn 28.

projections can become more narrative-like if organized around an evaluative point.

There is something artificial (or possibly, mystical) about "future narratives", however, in that the entire sequence of events, including its outcome, is necessarily treated as though it were known in advance.³⁰ Indeed, this seems to constitute a precondition for the organization of experience as narrative in general: in addition to the requirement that individual events be bounded (complete) in order to form a linear sequence, the entire sequence must be bounded (complete) as well. This condition is not met in 'current report' genres such as sportscasting (since the sportscaster presumably does not know in advance how the game will end), and this may account for why they are not perceived as typical narratives, or indeed as narratives at all. Present experience is by definition ongoing and incomplete, and future experience unknowable (barring omniscience); only past experience is naturally bounded. Thus, taking the conservative view again, we may restrict our definition of narrative still further to the description of sequences of events which are temporally bounded.

The final definitional criterion to be considered involves the question of whether the sequence of events happened once or more than once, and this point is open to debate as well. Labov (1972:361-62) states that "clauses [which] refer to general events which have occurred an indefinite number of times ... are not narrative clauses

³⁰ Contrast the following two possible discourses of a clairvoyant looking into her crystal ball:

1) "I see you with a tall dark man. You are smiling at him. Now I see you in a white dress in front of a church. The man is standing next to you. People are throwing rice... a wedding. Now there are two small children, a boy and a girl".

2) "You will meet a tall dark man, marry him, and have two children".

The first "prediction" is not presented as a sequence but rather as a succession of visual impressions, while the latter is sequenced in a way that indicates that the speaker knew the last event before speaking of the first, and has organized her presentation accordingly. Perhaps because of the global perspective involved, the second prediction seems more narrative-like (and less spontaneous) than the first.

and cannot support a narrative". The reason given for this is that strict temporal sequence cannot be maintained in such clauses, since each event described occurred more than once on different occasions. For example, consider the following account:

We used to go visit my grandmother in Boston.

She'd take us to Cape Cod to the beach.

Even though on any one occasion, the first event -- going to visit my grandmother in Boston -- temporally precedes the second -- going with her to Cape Cod --, it is also logically the case that the second event on one occasion preceded the first event on another, later occasion. Since the narrative event sequence is by definition unreversible, such examples cannot be considered narratives, according to Labov. Although this line of reasoning seems somewhat unnatural to me (do listeners really reject sequences of repeated events as non-narrative on the basis of the hypothetical possibility of re-ordering the sequence?), the intuition that such sequences do not form part of the basic narrative prototype is a common one. The normal expectation seems to be that repeated events, whether sequenced or not, function in narration as part of the background against which the (unique, specific) primary event sequence is set. A discourse which contains only repeated events and no unique ones is perceived as a non-narrative, or a narrative that "never got off the ground". Including this final refinement, our definition of narrative now reads as follows:

Narrative is a verbal account of a singulative sequence of temporally bounded events, organized around an evaluative point.³¹

³¹ This definition corresponds in its essential features to what Polanyi terms 'story'. [Stories] are specific, affirmative, past time narratives which tell about a series of events which took place at specific unique moments in a unique past time world ... in order to make some sort of point about the world which teller and story recipients share. (Polanyi 1989:16-17)

I have elected to keep my data within the confines of this rather restrictive definition. That is, I exclude from the corpus reports of life histories, dream reports, predictions, and reports of non-unique occurrences, including plot summaries of films and books. My motive in so doing is to produce a corpus that is as representative of *prototypical* narration as possible. Of course, it may be the case that the verbal forms which concern us behave in even more interesting ways in less prototypical genres, but in order to understand the significance of the deviations, we would still need to know something of the more typical cases; thus the analysis of the latter is primary. At the same time, I include both *realis* and *irrealis* narrative genres, and in general, have restricted the selection of narratives for the corpus as little as possible, provided that they satisfy the criteria laid out above.

3.2 Identifying text types.

The corpus contains narratives from a diversity of Tamil narrative genres. These can be grouped under four general headings, as follows:

- 1) Real-life accounts
- 2) Informal tellings of folk tales
- 3) Professionally-performed epics
- 4) Elicited retellings of epics³²

³² In addition, there are several narratives which "fall between the cracks", but as the categories are intended only as a descriptive tool for talking about different kinds of narratives in terms of groups of features that they share, the fact that not every narrative fits neatly into one category or another is normal, and poses no particular difficulty for the analysis.

3.2.1 Real-life accounts.

The first category, real-life accounts, is in certain respects the most problematic. Tamil speakers tend not to view the relating of personal experiences as *katai* ('story', <Skt. *kathā*), i.e. something told for purposes of ritual or entertainment. Although it was difficult for me as an obvious outsider to observe directly the sorts of casual solidarity-affirming interactions among peers in which conversational storytelling is most likely to take place (cf. Wolfson 1982), I nevertheless retain the impression that the relating of personal incidents is less a mainstay of Tamil conversation than it is of conversation in Europe and America. I also observed a gender-related difference in the kinds of personal narratives told. When asked to relate a "memorable experience", the men represented in my sample seemed relatively more willing to talk about themselves and their experiences; women more often produced 3rd person accounts of events they had heard of or witnessed indirectly. Partially as a result of this tendency, three distinct types of real-life account can be identified in the data: 'first person direct' accounts of experience in which the narrator figures as a central participant; 'first person mediated' accounts, in which the narrator witnessed part or all of the events described, but played only a minor role in them; and 'public domain', or third person accounts of events which the narrator did not witness, and which typically involve participants with whom the narrator was not personally acquainted.

Despite the initial difficulty of convincing speakers that I was genuinely interested in recording real-life experiences, once they came to understand the nature of the request, a significant number did respond with highly evaluated accounts of "true" incidents. The events related are often somewhat morbid, at least from an

American cultural perspective; violent death figures as a recurrent theme. At times they are also truly incredible; more than once, I suspected 3rd person narrators of mythologizing, perhaps in an unconscious attempt to render their stories more "tellable" from the point of view of the cultural norm. All of the narratives included in this category purport to be true, however, and it is on this basis -- along with the contemporary, secular nature of the subject matter -- that they are grouped together. The real-life accounts were all related in informal settings. They are typically characterized by a language which is informal in style and lexicon; expressive phonology and sound symbolism are also most evident in this genre.

3.2.2 Folk tales.

The narratives in the second category, folk tales, were also elicited in informal settings, with speakers requested simply to "tell their favorite story". Virtually every speaker who was willing to be recorded knew at least one or two folk tales, and, consequently, the range of speaker backgrounds represented for this genre is very broad. The category can be divided into several sub-genres. Included in my corpus are short moralistic fables from the **Pancatantra** tradition; these involve animal participants and are frequently told to children. A popular folk genre for Tamilians of all ages is the **Tenālirāman** story, featuring the trickster hero Tenālirāman; these also have a moral, even if in some cases it is just that simple persons such as Tenālirāman may be more clever than kings and priests. Other folk tales have a long, episodic structure, and finish tragically; since I have only a few examples of these from different narrators with diverse backgrounds, I do not know that these can be attributed to any well-defined genre. The narratives in the folk tale category vary greatly with regard to overall length and structural complexity, with the Pancatantra

stories being the shortest and simplest, and the episodic tales often quite complex in their organization. In general, the language used in this genre is relatively informal, with few if any written pronunciations.³³

3.2.3 Performed epics.

The third category, professionally-performed epics, is represented by two traditional genres which are culturally quite distinct. The first of these, known as **Kathākālakshēpam** (from Sanskrit *kathā* 'story'), is performed primarily (although not exclusively) by members of the Brahmin caste,³⁴ and enjoys popularity with the educated elite as well as among the less-educated masses. In this tradition, the story proper -- usually an episode from the life of a god or saint -- is interspersed with morally instructive interpretation as to the relevance of the narrated events to the lives of modern listeners. Classical literary sources, both Sanskrit and Tamil, are evoked verbatim: in stories taken from the great Sanskrit epic, the Mahābhārata, the quotations are in Sanskrit, and in stories taken from the Rāmāyana -- an epic which has ancient literary versions in both Sanskrit and Tamil -- both the Sanskrit author, Valmiki, and the Tamil author, Kamban, are quoted. It matters little that the majority of the audience may not understand Sanskrit or Classical Tamil; the quoted verses, which are typically sung rather than recited, are paraphrased by the narrator immediately before or after in Modern Tamil; their inclusion serves primarily to reinforce the morally and intellectually edifying character of the performance. Kathākālakshēpam

³³ Tamil is a highly diglossic language, in which the major differences between the colloquial (spoken) and the literary (written) varieties are phonological and lexical. The appearance of written pronunciation and lexis in speech is not uncommon; however it tends to be restricted to more formal contexts of speaking.

³⁴ The Brahmins comprise a group of castes, most notably Aiyars and Iyengars, which traditionally enjoys a relatively high ritual and religious status.

performances are often put on in Hindu temples, and may be preceded and followed in performance by the singing of bhajans, or devotional songs, dedicated to the deity who figures in the story proper. The language of the genre as a whole is quite formal and elevated, and is characterized by the use of written or semi-written forms in speech and a higher than average usage of lexical items of Sanskrit origin.

The second traditional performance genre is **Villu Pāṭṭu**, which means 'Bow Song' in Tamil. This genre derives its name from the characteristic presence on the stage or performance area of a large inverted wooden bow, from which bells and cymbals have been hung, such that it produces a percussive sound when the "string" of the bow is struck. There are five to eight performers on stage, including a principal narrator, a secondary narrator, and accompanying musicians; in the performances that I witnessed, the bow was played by the secondary narrator.³⁵ The principal narrator leads the ensemble by alternately speaking and singing the story, which is typically on a religious or mythological theme, often drawn from a regional, rather than the pan-Indian, literary tradition. The secondary narrator (sometimes with the help of one or more of the musicians) responds to the primary narrator by repeating portions of his narrative, asking questions, and supplying a constant stream of backchannel responses ("ah!", "oh!", "really?", "huh!" and the like). With regard to the sung intervals, the narrator sings each line alone, and the lines are then echoed and elaborated upon by the ensemble. The sung portions may be quotes from well-known literary sources, as in *Kathākālakshebam*, or else simply more poetic variations of the spoken prose which makes up the narrative proper. Although the songs are an integral part of the ritual and entertainment value of a Villu Pāṭṭu performance

³⁵ This observation is at variance with Blackburn's (1986) claim that it is the primary narrator who plays the bow.

(Blackburn 1986, 1988, 1989), they are redundant from the point of view of advancing the narrative, since they could be dispensed with entirely without sacrificing any of the coherence of the plot. The Villu Pāṭṭu tradition is practiced by members of non-Brahmin castes; it is an indigenous Tamil tradition which has undergone relatively little Sanskritization, either in the choice of themes or the language used. The performances usually take place at temples, and may last for as long as several days in succession (Blackburn 1988). The language which characterizes the genre is overall less formal than that of Kathākālākshēpam, and it is typical to find a variety of spoken delivery styles, including informal vernacular, e.g. in humorous digressions and in representing conversation between characters in the story

3.2.4 Elicited epics.

The fourth and last category of narratives, elicited retellings of epics, does not form part of the native narrative tradition in any conventional sense, save possibly in educational settings. In essence, I created this category so as to be able to compare ordinary (i.e. non-professional) tellings with stories that figure prominently in both Kathākālākshēpam and Villu Pāṭṭu performances. These are prompted narratives; that is, I asked potential narrators, "Do you know the story of X?", and if they responded in the affirmative, I encouraged them to relate it. The content of these narratives focuses on two stories. The first, *Cilappatikāram*, or 'The Song of the Ankle Bracelet', is a local Madurai epic which dates back to the 4th or 5th century A.D. and has enjoyed continuous popularity in both written and oral forms ever since. The second is an episode from the ever-popular *Rāmāyaṇa* which relates the manner in which the hero Rama came to meet and marry his wife Sita, and which is often referred to by the title *Citā Kalyāṇam*, or 'Sita's Wedding'. Both stories are well-established in Tamil culture:

almost everyone has heard them in some form or another, although less well-educated speakers may not recognize them by name. The versions which I recorded were all related by relatively educated speakers who adhered closely to the content of the original texts. The style of this narration is relatively formal for a non-performance genre, with some written locutions and pronunciations making their way into speech, especially at the outset of narration.

3.3 Collecting and transcribing the data.

A total of 100 oral narratives was recorded for the purposes of this investigation, representing the four genres described above, and ranging from one and a half minutes to more than three hours in length. With the exception of three narratives, all were collected by me or my Tamil research assistants during the nine-month period from November 1986 to August 1987 in and around the Madurai area of Tamil Nadu, South India. The three exceptions were recorded prior to 1986: the first, a personal account ('The Auspicious Book'), was recorded for me by a native assistant in Madurai in 1984; the second, a Villu Pāṭṭu performance ('Kāttavarāya Swāmi Katai'), was commissioned by George Hart and recorded by K. Sundaram in Kanya Kumari district in 1979; and the third, a Kathākālakshēpam performance ('Cītā Kalyāṇam'), I transcribed from a recent professionally recorded audiocassette. All of the texts thus represent the contemporary spoken Tamil of modern-day Tamil Nadu.

The collection procedure varied according to whether the telling was a professional performance or not. Whenever possible, I attended public performances, securing permission to record the event in advance from the narrators and the organizers of the events. Two complete Villu Pāṭṭu performances were recorded in this fashion, each of them medium-sized affairs put on before an audience of seventy-five

to one hundred persons. On three other occasions, I organized Kathākālakshēpam performances in my home. These were attended by ten to twenty-five persons, most of them neighbors.

The non-professional narratives, on the other hand, were collected before smaller audiences, either in my home or the home of the informant. During the first eight months of the project, I collected narratives in the company of at least one native assistant, whose job it was to engage the narrators and put them at their ease by responding to their stories with culturally appropriate signs of interest. This procedure was adopted in order to reduce the possibility of narrators modifying their normal style as a result of the perceived limits of understanding of a foreign addressee. On other occasions, trusted assistants were given a tape recorder and dispatched to record stories on their own, in their home villages or among their peers; the disadvantage of this method was that I was not privy to the contextual cues surrounding and accompanying the act of narration, but on the other hand there could be no question as to the authenticity of the spoken data. Near the end of the research period, I felt confident enough to elicit narratives on my own, although I still preferred to supplement the audience with native speakers whenever possible. There do not appear to be any noticeable differences in basic narrative strategies employed by the narrators based on the composition of the audience.

All of the non-professional narratives were elicited. Typically, the procedure was as follows: I or one of my assistants would contact potential narrators, explain the nature of the project, and ask if they would be willing to be recorded telling a few stories. This initial contact typically involved suggesting some possible story-types and topics (people generally would not agree to narrate until they had at least one specific story in mind), and, once they had agreed, setting up a time and a place for the

recording. At the time of the actual recording, I, my assistant(s), the narrator, and anyone else present would converse casually for a while before turning on the tape recorder. The narrator would then relate, typically, two to four stories in succession, with audience comments and reactions after each. Although many narrators initially showed signs of self-consciousness in front of the tape recorder, this tended to dissipate as they became involved in their story, and most launched into their second story with considerably less reserve than the first, self-consciousness returning only at the very end, when they had concluded and were unsure of whether to retain the floor or turn it over to another speaker.

The narrators themselves, all adult native speakers of Tamil, span a range of ages, castes, educational and socio-economic levels. With the exception of the professional narrators, most were individuals with whom either I or one of my assistants was reasonably closely acquainted -- friends, neighbors, employees -- since I soon discovered that it was easier to get a natural sounding story from someone who knew and felt comfortable with at least one person in the room. As it turned out, slightly less than half the narrators were women.

Once a narrative had been recorded, it was transcribed. In the elicitation and recording of the data I was aided by two research assistants: one a college-educated Brahmin woman, urban background, English-Tamil bilingual, aged 23, and the other a 31 year old Tamil male monolingual office assistant with a village background. For the transcription of the recorded texts, these two assistants were joined by three others. Each narrative was first transcribed by one of the assistants, then checked and re-transcribed by another (and/or by me).

The system of transcription used is a standardized representation of Spoken Tamil, written in Tamil script. It preserves dialect and caste features of pronunciation

(e.g. Brahmin vs. non-Brahmin) but abstracts away from individual variation. In addition, following Chafe (1980, 1987), the transcriptions indicate primary and secondary clause stress, along with relative pause length (two dots for a short pause, three for a medium pause, four for a long pause), and disfluencies, including false starts and hesitation fillers. The two principal assistants were further trained to segment the stream of recorded speech into intonationally-defined clause units, a procedure that took place during the second transcription of each text. In total, two thousand pages of hand-written transcription were completed in this manner.

3.4 The judgment sample.

A two thousand page corpus is unwieldy for purposes of fine-grained analysis, however, and not all of the narratives contained therein are of equal quality. Therefore I selected a smaller 'judgment sample' on which to base my analysis. The criteria employed in the selection of the sample were as follows:

- 1) to include only texts that are unambiguously 'narrative' according to the definition given in 3.1 above;
- 2) to include texts that my assistants and I evaluated as successful in performance; i.e. that succeeded in entertaining and holding the attention of the audience;
- 3) to include representative texts from the four major genres; and
- 4) to include a variety of different narrators.

Texts in which the speaker misinterpreted the task in some important respect (e.g. gave a 'report' instead of an evaluated 'narrative'), or was noticeably self-conscious, were thus excluded, according to criteria (1) and (2) respectively. The resulting sample is made up of 19 narratives, listed by genre in table 1 below:

TITLE	GENRE	SOURCE	BY
1) "The Auspicious Book"	real-life account	1st person direct	RA
2) "Falling in the Well"	real-life account	1st person direct	RB
3) "The Japanese Girl"	real-life account	1st person mediated	RC
4) "American ... Swimming Pool"	real-life account	1st person mediated	RD
5) "Snakebite"	real-life account	public domain	RE
6) "Hm!"	real-life account	public domain	RF
7) "The Lion & the Rabbit"	folk tale	Pancatantra story	FA
8) "Tenaliraman's Cat"	folk tale	Tenāḷirāman story	FB
9) "T. & the Corrupt Palace Guards"	folk tale	Tenāḷirāman story	FC
10) "The Tale of the Unlucky Bride"	folk tale	regional	FD
11) "Krishna, Arjuna & the Prince"	folk tale	regional/religious	FE
12) "Two Pious Men"	performed folk tale	anecdote in Bow Song	PA
13) "The Dice Game" (excerpt)	performed epic	Bow Song (Mahābhā.)	PA
14) "The Seven Maidens"	performed epic	Bow Song (regional)	PB
15) "R. in the Forest of the Demons"	performed epic	Kathā. (Rāmāyana)	PC
16) "Bhima's Devotion"	performed epic	Kathā. (Mahābhārata)	FE
17) "The Marriage of Rama & Sita"	elicited epic	(Rāmānaya)	FB
18) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet1"	elicited epic	(Cilappatikāram)	FE
19) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet2"	elicited epic	(Cilappatikāram)	EA

Table 1. Composition of judgment sample by genre

In table 1, the six 'real-life account' narratives are grouped into the three categories identified in 3.2.1: '1st person direct', '1st person mediated', and 'public domain'. Both of the 1st person direct and one of the 1st person mediated narratives ("The American Students' Swimming Pool"³⁶) were related by men, while the other 1st person mediated and both public domain narratives were related by women (see table 2 below). The sample thus reflects the more general tendency observed for Tamil men to be more forthcoming in talking about their personal experiences than Tamil women.

In all, 15 narrators are represented in the judgment sample, of whom five are women. Three narrators are represented more than once: PA is the narrator of both text 12, "Two Pious Men", and text 13, a Bow Song epic performance entitled "The Dice Game"; the reason for this is that text 12 occurs as an anecdote within text 13. FE, a professional narrator with whom I became personally acquainted, has a story in each of three categories: "Krishna, Arjuna, & the Prince" (a folk tale related informally in his home), "Bhima's Devotion" (a Kathākālākshēpam performance), and "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet" (an elicited epic); I include all three because of the skill with which they were narrated. Last, the sample includes both a folk tale ("Tenaliraman's Cat") and an elicited epic ("The Marriage of Rama and Sita") told by FB, an especially competent non-professional. Data on the sociological background of each narrator is summarized in table 2 below (asterisk after name indicates that speaker is a member of a Brahmin caste):

³⁶ The English titles are mine: they are an attempt to provide a succinct summary of the content of each story, and are not necessarily the same as the Tamil titles given by the performers to their narratives or, later, by my Tamil research assistants to the transcribed texts.

NAME	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	EDUCATION	NATIVE PLACE
RA*	M	78	retired civil servant	M.A.	urban
RB	M	31	office assistant	high school	village
RC	F	20	student	B.A., M.A. in progress	rural
RD	M	38	small businessman	B.A.	urban
RE	F	38	cook	grammar school	urban (Burma)
RF*	F	32	Tamil teacher	M.A.	urban
FA*	M	30	engineer	M.S.(American univ.)	urban (Bombay)
FB*	F	27	civil servant	M.A.	urban
FC	M	18	student	high school	village
FD	M	40?	?	?	village
FE*	M	45	lab ass't./priest	B.S.	village
PA	M	42?	Tamil teacher	M.A.?	(Tirunelvely)
PB	M	?	?	?	(Kanya Kumari)
PC*	M	47?	Katha. performer	?	?
EA	F	52	housewife	B.A.?	urban

Table 2: Sociological background of narrators in judgment sample

In table 2, the specific place of origin of a narrator is indicated only when it is outside of Tamil Nadu. The exceptions to this are the two Bow Song narrators PA and PB, whose origins in the southernmost districts (Tirunelveli and Kanya Kumari) of Tamil Nadu support Blackburn's (1986, 1988) observations that performances in the Bow Song genre tend to be limited to these areas.³⁷ With respect to place of origin, it should also

³⁷ Narrator PA was on tour with his ensemble when I had the good fortune to hear him perform in Madurai.

be noted that RE, although a resident of Burma until the age of 13, was raised as a member of a Tamil-speaking community, and speaks Tamil as her native language

An examination of table 2 reveals that six out of 15 narrators (40%) are Brahmins, and that at least nine (60%) have a college degree.³⁸ In this respect, the sample is somewhat biased towards an educationally privileged sector of Tamil society; this is no doubt a reflection of the kinds of people who knew me and who felt most comfortable in relating stories to me.³⁹

The texts themselves vary considerably in length. The number of finite clauses, excluding quoted dialogue without an explicit verb of saying, is given for each in table 3 on the following page:

³⁸ In fact, the Brahmin subjects are among the most highly educated of the sample, with all but one possessing a master's degree.

³⁹ I was personally present at the collection of all but four of the narratives in the sample: text 3 (collected by my principal female research assistant in her college dorm), text 10 (collected by my principal male research assistant in his native village), text 14 (commissioned by George Hart and collected in Kanya Kumari district by a Tamilian unknown to me), and text 15 (a professionally recorded audiocassette, probably of a performance in Madras).

TEXT	GENRE	* FINITE CLAUSES
1) "The Auspicious Book"	RLA	19
2) "Falling in the Well"	RLA	103
3) "The Japanese Girl"	RLA	158
4) "The American ... Swimming Pool"	RLA	54
5) "Snakebite"	RLA	18
6) "Hm!"	RLA	36
7) "The Lion and the Rabbit"	FT	37
8) "Tenaliraman's Cat"	FT	35
9) "T. & the Corrupt Palace Guards"	FT	52
10) "The Tale of the Unlucky Bride"	FT	152
11) "Krishna, Arjuna & the Prince"	FT	169
12) "Two Pious Men"	PFT	72
13) "The Dice Game" (excerpt)	PE	139
14) "The Seven Maidens"	PE	65
15) "Rama in the Forest of the Demons"	PE	84
16) "Bhima's Devotion"	PE	124
17) "The Marriage of Rama & Sita"	EE	72
18) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet1"	EE	171
19) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet2"	EE	97

Table 3: Number of finite clauses in judgment sample texts

The number of finite clauses per genre, and the average number of clauses per text, is summarized in table 4:

GENRE	* FINITE CLAUSES	AVERAGE PER TEXT
real-life accounts	388	64.7
folk tales	445	89.0
performed epics	484	96.8
elicited epics	340	113.3
TOTAL	1657	87.2

Table 4. Number of finite clauses per genre and average per text

Table 4 indicates that the longest texts, on the average, are the elicited epics, but this is misleading, in that the elicited epics (as also the folk tales and the real-life accounts) are included in their entirety, while all but the 'performed folk tale' ("Two Pious Men") in the performed epic genre are excerpts from much longer narrative performances. Even with this provision, the texts -- with an average of 87.2 finite clauses each -- are not short; there is ample room for structural and organizational complexity.

The themes developed in these narratives are varied, as the titles indicate. Complete English summaries of the content of the judgment sample narratives are given in Appendix C. Also included in the appendices is a sample text -- "Falling in the Well" -- in romanized transcription. The Tamil text, along with interlinear English glosses, is given in Appendix D.1, and the translation is given in Appendix D.2.

Most of the analysis in this study is based on the judgment sample corpus described above. At times, however, the oral narrative data is supplemented with data

from informant elicitation and judgment of individual sentences. This method was utilized most often to supplement the analysis of verbal -- especially aspectual -- forms and was carried out with two native Tamil informants in Berkeley, California, after my return to the United States in 1987.

3.5 Analytic assumptions.

In chapter 2, it was pointed out that grounding, a central concept in narrative analysis, is susceptible to multiple interpretations, each of which makes different empirical predictions regarding the use of verbal forms in narration. It was further claimed that the interpretations adopted by individual researchers have consequences for their research methodology -- a researcher who believes, for example, that grounding is a property of narrated events, independent of their linguistic expression, may devise a study in which 'foreground' and 'background' are correlated with verbal (e.g. aspectual) forms, and in which the degree of correspondence between the forms and the functions is measured. Alternatively, a researcher who interprets grounding to be a relative, subjective strategy imposed by narrators via their choice of linguistic forms may seek *a posteriori* evidence that particular forms were used to encode grounding functions, but without attempting a separation of forms and functions. What counts as evidence for each of these approaches differs accordingly: statistically quantifiable correlations for the former, and the intuitions and interpretations of the analyst -- more difficult to quantify -- for the latter. Both approaches have been employed in recent research in narrative discourse analysis.

In the present study, I adopt the latter approach. That is, I base my research methodology on the assumption that grounding is a subjective function which cannot be analyzed independent of the linguistic forms used in its expression. This assumption

is one of a set of interrelated assumptions involving the notion of narrative *evaluation* which I will attempt to articulate in the remainder of this section.

Evaluation

Evaluation may be viewed narrowly, as a discrete unit of narrative structure which appears between the 'complicating action' and the 'resolution' sections in a typical narrative, or it may be viewed more broadly, as any device which functions to emphasize the point, or the reason for which a narrative is told. Both of these views are present in Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972). Even in its more general formulation, however, Labov distinguishes evaluation from narration proper: the 'point' is something contributed by the narrator to the basic event sequence, and is expressed by evaluative devices which deviate in some way from 'basic narrative syntax' (1972)

One may question this distinction, however, on the grounds that the selection of events to be included in a narrative also contributes to the point of the telling; that is, it is an evaluative process as well. As Ong states, "reality never occurs in narrative form" (1982:12); rather, narrators transform their non-linguistic experiences into narrative by selectively encoding features of that experience via language. If one accepts Ong's view, it follows that every linguistic choice that a narrator makes is by definition an evaluative choice (in the broadest sense of the term), including, at the most basic level, the choice of what situations to include in the narrative event sequence.

This view has consequences for the notion of 'event' itself. Rather than treating events "as if they were ontologically given and capable of being mapped onto grammar in a fairly straightforward way" (Fleischman 1990:99), narrative events must

be viewed as negotiated by -- and reflecting the evaluative subjectivity of -- the narrator. Events thus lack autonomous existence, or, as Fleischman asserts,

the event is but a hermeneutic construct for converting an undifferentiated continuum of the raw data of experience, or of the imagination, into the verbal structures we use when we talk about experience. (1990:99)

In light of these observations, the notion of evaluation can be expanded, such that it includes any selective organizational choice made by the narrator, including the choice of what features of experience to encode as narrative events in the first place. However such an expanded definition requires that we distinguish between levels of evaluation, based on the extent to which the narrator consciously controls and accesses his evaluative choice. The selection of features of experience to be encoded linguistically represents the first level of evaluation in narration, a level that is typically entirely subconscious.

Evaluation of this type contrasts with a second level of choice in which narrators determine how best to encode the events linguistically, using the tools available in the grammar of the language they are speaking. In this task, I assume that narrators generally have the sincere intention to find the best possible fit between their non-linguistic experience and language, i.e. to communicate their experience as informatively as possible; I term this the 'Best Fit Principle', analogous to Grice's (1975) 'Cooperative Principle' in conversation. The 'Best Fit Principle' determines that the ideal order in narration is that which is iconic with the order in which the events actually occurred. It further accounts for the tendency, noted by Hopper and others, for punctual, dynamic, sequential events to be encoded as 'perfective', and simultaneous and ongoing situations to be encoded as 'imperfective', when aspect marking is one of the linguistic tools available. The dictates of the 'Best Fit Principle'

thus give rise to conventional correlations between functions and forms in a number of languages. This process is largely unconscious as well, although inasmuch as it involves systematic grammatical alternations, sophisticated narrators may be able to access it upon introspection.⁴⁰

It is possible for a narrator to construct a story on the basis of a remembered experience making use of only a local, sequential strategy; that is, by starting at the beginning, and proceeding through to the end,⁴¹ marking the distinction between sequential events and non-sequential situations. There is evidence that young children narrate in this fashion, i.e. without imposing global strategies of organization (Bamberg 1986). In contrast, at a third -- and more consciously-accessible -- level of evaluation, linguistic choices serve to structure the narrative as a focused, cohesive whole; these include supplying orientation information, explicitly bounding the telling, e.g. by means of abstracts and codas, and using expressive devices to signal levels of relative prominence in the narrated information (cf. the evaluative 'foregrounding' devices discussed in chapter 2). Skilled narrators make use of these and other organizational features effortlessly; children must learn to do so as part of their acquisition of narrative competence. If the second level of evaluation gives rise to conventionalized form-function correspondences, evaluation on the third, organizational level frequently plays off of conventionalized correspondences by selecting forms that are unexpected in particular contexts. The three levels of evaluation in narrative are summarized in table 5 below:

⁴⁰ It is more likely, perhaps, that choices of this sort are accessible to conscious reflection when a narrative is composed in writing.

⁴¹ 'Beginning' and 'end' are of course evaluated notions, determined by the first level of choice as to *what* to encode.

Task	Type of evaluation involved
1) What is represented --	choice of features of non-linguistic experience to be encoded linguistically
2) How represented locally --	choice of linguistic forms that provide 'best fit' with non-linguistic experience
3) How organized globally --	choice of linguistic forms that give global coherence, and structure the telling around an evaluative point

Table 5: Levels of evaluation in the narration of past experience

Of these, only the third is commonly termed 'evaluation' in the literature on narrative analysis, and in order to avoid unnecessary confusion, I will continue to follow this practice in the remainder of the present study as well. However, it is important that the essentially subjective and evaluative nature of basic narrative structural units such as 'event', 'event sequence', 'foreground', etc.⁴² be recognized, since it has implications for the choice of analytic method employed in the present study.

In my analysis of the Tamil data, I do not attempt to identify a specific set of narrative functions with which I expect the verbal categories of tense, aspect, and predication type in Tamil to correlate, since to do so would be to assume -- without empirical basis -- that the functions and forms are in some sense independent and autonomous. Rather, I examine verbal forms in their larger narrative discourse contexts, identifying patterns that characterize their usage and allowing functional/structural distinctions to emerge from the data as they will. In the process, knowledge of the kinds of functions and structures that are encoded cross-

⁴² The same argument could conceivably be made in regard to Labov's six components of narrative structure as well.

linguistically serves to guide the analysis, but only as suggestions as to where and how to look, not as pre-determined end-points⁴³

Such an approach has the disadvantage of relying heavily on the judgments of the analyst. I would assert, however, that the methodological alternative of correlating forms with functions, while resulting in "hard" statistical results, is equally subjective (albeit covertly so) in that the analyst must ascribe functions to clauses in order to perform the necessary correlations. Since this cannot responsibly be accomplished without taking linguistic means of expression into account, the potential for biasing the analysis in favor of the expected outcome is enormous.

In contrast, an obvious advantage of the approach adopted in the present study is that it favors the possibility of discovering something new. Sims' (1986) analysis of Ketengban is a case in point; his discovery that choice of tense/aspect in Ketengban is determined by the intersection of two functional/semantic dimensions -- 'plot relevance' and degree of 'activity' -- would not have been possible had he limited his investigation to identifying the linguistic means of expressing 'foreground' and 'background' as a binary distinction, or even as a scalar one with intermediate degrees of grounding, as do the authors he cites. As a consequence of Sims' analysis, it is possible to identify a pattern that has important consequences for a typology of narrative functions: Ketengban formally marks, by means of aspectual choice, the distinction 'expected correlation between plot relevance and activity level' (i.e. foreground/dynamic and background/static) and 'violation of expected correlation between plot relevance and activity level' (foreground/static and background/dynamic). That such a function should be grammaticalized is remarkable.

⁴³ Indeed, the selection of the verbal categories tense and aspect as basic objects of investigation in this study was based, at least in part, on general cross-linguistic knowledge of this sort.

in that it crucially acknowledges a normative correlation between two more basic functions, thus involving the narrator on an abstract metacognitive level. Whether it will ultimately prove feasible to devise a model that accounts for the entire cross-linguistic range of narrative form-function relationships, or whether different models must be constructed for different languages, it is nonetheless important that findings such as this one be allowed to emerge, and their typological status taken into account.

With these considerations in mind, and equipped with the methodological definitions and procedures outlined above, we may now proceed to a functional analysis of the verbal system in Tamil narration.

Chapter 4: Overview of Verbal Categories in Narration

4.1 The Tamil verbal system.

In the discussion thus far, frequent mention has been made of the fact that the verbal system, and in particular the categories 'tense', 'aspect', and 'predication type', enjoy a privileged status in Tamil narration, and that they pose in addition an interesting challenge for grammatical description. It would be misleading, however, to imply that the entire Tamil verbal system is incoherent unless one takes the discourse functions of each form into account. True, certain elements are problematic; the 'historical present' tense, the aspectual auxiliary *viṭu*, and the zero predicate type are particularly striking examples of devices which are meaningless or virtually meaningless in sentences in isolation, but which occupy important roles in narrative discourse.

At the same time, these forms do not exist in a void, but rather derive their identity in relation -- and in contradistinction -- to other forms in the verbal system. The historical present is a tense form whose meaning is negotiated with reference to other tense forms (especially, past tense); *viṭu* as a marker of perfective aspect contrasts significantly with markers of imperfective (or non-completive) aspect, and 'verbless sentences' receive a special interpretation precisely because sentences with overt predicates are the norm. There is interdependence within each category; a speaker of a language does not "know", for example, an isolated tense form without "knowing" its relationship to the other tense forms of the language. Verbal categories also interact morpho-syntactically and semantically. In Tamil, as in English, tense and aspect forms often go together; each aspectual auxiliary can co-occur with any of the three tenses, and the meanings produced by the combinations may differ from the sum

of the meanings of the parts. All verbed sentences, moreover, take tense obligatorily and aspect optionally, such that it is impossible to talk about predication types without attending to the categories of tense and aspect (or their absence). In short, tense, aspect, and predication type are closely related, and must be considered as a system. The hierarchical relationship among the three categories is diagrammed in figure 3 below:

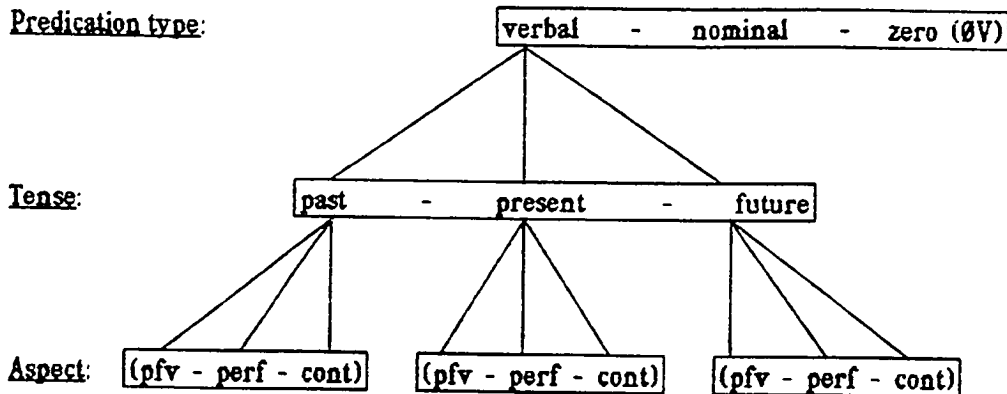


Figure 3: Hierarchical organization of Tamil verbal categories

As the diagram shows, there are three morphological choices available within each category, for a total of nine sub-categories. These are listed, along with an example sentence for each, on the following page.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ The transcription system used here represents a somewhat idealized version of standard spoken Madurai Tamil (non-Brahmin dialect), which is itself an idealization of the numerous dialects spoken in the region. For a description of spoken Tamil and transcription conventions, see appendix A. For further details of verbal morphology, see appendix B.

PREDICATION TYPE

verbal: Kāṭṭ-ile oru periya ciṅkam iru-kku. 'In the forest, (there) is a big
forest-LOC one big lion be-Pr3sg.n lion'.
(see also examples for tense and aspect below)

nominal: Rāman oru māṇavan θ. 'Raman (is/was) a student'.
(N-N) Raman one student θ

zero: Kāṭṭ-ile oru periya ciṅkam θ. 'In the forest, (there is/was)
(θV) forest-LOC one big lion θ a big lion'.

TENSE

past: Rāman viṭṭu-kku pō-n-ān. 'Raman went home'.
present: pō-r-ān. is going
future: pō-v-ān. will go/goes (hab.)
Raman house-DAT go-TNS-3sg.masc

ASPECT

perfective: Rāman viṭṭu-kku pōy- (v)it- t-ān. 'Raman went/has gone home
(v)itu-r-ān. will (definitely) go
(v)itu-v-ān. will/would
Raman house-DAT go-PP-PFV-TNS-3sg.masc (definitely) go

continuative: Rāman viṭṭu-kku pōy- kittiru-nt- ān. 'Raman was going home'.
kittiru-kkr-ān. is going
kittiru-pp- ān. will/would be going
Raman house-DAT go-PP-CONT-TNS-3sg.masc

perfect: Rāman viṭṭu-kku pōy- iru-nt- ān. 'Raman had gone home'.
iru-kkr-ān. has gone
iru-pp- ān. will/would have
Raman house-DAT go-PP-PERF-TNS-3sg.masc gone

Verbed **predications** in Tamil contain a finite verb (i.e. one inflected for tense and person-number-gender). Nominal predications (N-N) are those in which two nominals,⁴⁵ both in the nominative (or unmarked) case, are equated. Such sentences typically lack an overt copula in Tamil, although a copula verb may also be used, e.g. when tense specification is desired (see 5.2 for examples). Zero predication (ØV) has neither finite verb nor nominal predicate; the construction may consist of nothing more than a bare NP, although it is more common to find an NP accompanied by an adverbial (especially locative or temporal) element. The identification of ØV sentences involves intonational as well as morpho-syntactic criteria. A bare NP, for example, is sometimes structurally ambiguous between an interpretation of zero predication and a displaced constituent from a neighboring (verbed) sentence. Unlike most displaced constituents, however, ØV is associated with sentence-final intonation, and aural ambiguities are rare.

Tenses in Tamil are indicated by a suffix which follows the verb root and precedes the person-number-gender ending. The precise form of the suffix varies according to the morphological class of the verb (see appendix B): *-t*, (*-t̃*), *-tt*, *-nt*, (*-nt̃*, *-ñc*) or *-in* for past tense; *-r* or *-kkr* for present tense, and *-v*, *-p*, or *-pp* (or *-um* for 3sg.neuter) for future tense. Future tense is regularly used to express habitual or generic meaning in Tamil, and the Tamil simple present, unlike its English counterpart,⁴⁶ can be used to express a situation in progress at the moment of speaking.

⁴⁵ A nominal and an adjectival cannot be linked in this fashion in Tamil; the adjectival must first be transformed into a nominal, e.g. by means of an appropriate nominalizing suffix.

⁴⁶ With the exception of stative predicates such as 'see', 'know', 'like', etc.

The three **aspects** are formed by the addition of an aspectual auxiliary verb -- (*v*)*it̪u*⁴⁷ (perfective), *kiṭṭiru* (continuative), or *iru* (perfect) -- to the past participle stem of the main verb. Tense and person-number-gender indicators are then suffixed to the auxiliary. As in Russian (Comrie 1976), the present tense form of the perfective (*viṭu*) has future, rather than present, time reference.⁴⁸ A handful of other auxiliaries have also been classified as 'aspects' in Tamil grammars (cf. e.g. Schiffman 1969); these convey a variety of aspectual and non-aspectual notions ('completion', 'benefactive', 'future utility', etc.), often along with speaker's affective attitude towards the situation described. The most common of these in the narrative corpus are *koḷ* 'self-benefactive', *pō* 'undesirable outcome', and *ā* 'anticipated outcome'; none of these occur very frequently, however, and hence do not constitute a major focus of this study.

The overwhelming majority (91.3%) of finite constructions in the judgment sample fall into one of the three principal categories described above. A miscellaneous set of categories is represented as well, including, most notably, modals and negation. While both modal and negative verbs express tense distinctions, they do so according to an older, two-way system: past vs. non-past, or alternatively, non-future vs. future, with both non-past and non-future forms allowing for present time reference. This is illustrated in table 6 below for the modal verb *muti* 'to be able' and the non-modal verb *pō* 'to go':

⁴⁷ The initial -*v*- is often deleted in spoken Tamil, unlike the -*v*- of the homophonous auxiliary *viṭu* meaning 'to leave/let; to have (someone) V' (Schiffman 1990).

⁴⁸ This generalization holds for conversation. In narration, the present tense of the perfective aspect is a 'historical present' tense form which substitutes for the past perfective and has past time reference; see section 6.1 for examples.

	P affirm	NP affirm	NF neg	F (NP) neg
<u>Modal</u>	muti-ñc-atu 'was able'	muti-y-um 'is/will be able'	muti-y-a-lle 'wasn't/isn't able'	muti-y-ātu 'isn't/won't be able'
<u>Non-modal</u>	--	--	pō-k-a-lle 'didn't go/isn't going'	pō-k-ātu 'doesn't/won't go'
				pō-k-a-māttōn 'I don't/won't go'

Table 6. Tense distinctions in modal and negative verbs

Both modals and negatives are 'impersonal'; that is, they neutralize person-number-gender distinctions in an invariant ending. For modals, the ending is morphologically 3sg.neuter, and typically requires that the logical subject be placed in the dative or instrumental case (an exception is the future negative in *mātt-*, which takes the usual person-number-gender endings, and nominative subjects). As indicated above, NF and F (NP) negatives can both have present-time reference; however in such cases the meanings differ slightly: *mutiyalle* means '(I) can't do it right now (but possibly was or will be able to at some other time)', while *mutiyātu* means '(I) am generally unable to do it'. The former can of course also receive a strictly past-time interpretation, and the latter a future interpretation, depending on the context of their use. Both modal and negative verbs can co-occur with aspectual auxiliaries, although examples of this are infrequent in the narrative corpus.

In my analysis I also classify as modals a set of invariant forms which includes *vēnum/-num* 'obligative', *-sām* 'possibilitative', *-attum* 'permissive', *-kkūtātu* 'prohibitive', as well as the finite use of the infinitive as a request for permission, e.g.

- (6) Anta kateye colla? 'Shall I tell that story?'
that story-ACC say-INF

Also included in the category of negatives (in addition to tensed negatives) are N + neg constructions, which make use of the invariant negative morpheme *ille* (or *-lle*), e.g.

- (7) *Avaḷukku onnum ille.* 'She doesn't/didn't have anything'.
3sg.fem-DAT one.thing-and NEG

Such constructions can be used to negate sentences with a verb of existence (e.g. *iru* 'to be'), as well as non-verbal predication types. Compare (8) and (9) below with the first three sentences in the table on page 71:

- (8) *Rāmaṇ oru māṇavaṇ ille.* 'Raman is not a student'.
Rāmaṇ one student NEG
- (9) *Kāṭṭile oru periya ciṅkam ille.* 'There is not a big lion in the forest'.
forest-LOC one big lion NEG

Finally, a small number of finite clauses in the corpus (.8%) contain the invariant finite verb *uḷḷu* 'there is/are', which, although historically a 3sg.neuter non-future form, may now be used for any person, number, gender, or tense.

4.2 Distribution of verbal forms in narrative.

Having identified the forms to be analyzed, we turn now to their use in oral narrative. The following section presents a general overview of the distribution of the forms and constructions identified above.

The first general observation concerns the relative frequency of each **predication type**. Verbed predications are by far the most common, accounting for 84% of all finite clauses in the corpus as a whole. Of the 16% of clauses which are verbless, 6.2% are nominal predicates in equational constructions, and 10% are ØV constructions. The breakdown for distribution of predication types by individual

narrative and by genre is given in table 7. Percentages represent percent of total finite clauses in each case.

Title of Narrative:	total clauses	Predication Type		
		verbal	N-N	ØV
1) "The Auspicious Book"	19	78.9%	15.8%	5.3%
2) "Falling in the Well"	103	79.6%	4.8%	15.5%
3) "The Japanese Girl"	158	81.6%	7.0%	11.4%
4) "American ... Swimming Pool"	54	92.6%	5.5%	1.9%
5) "Snakebite"	18	83.3%	.0%	16.7%
6) "Hml"	36	75.0%	11.1%	13.9%
Genre #1: Real-life Accounts	-388	82.2%	6.7%	11.1%
7) "The Lion & the Rabbit"	37	67.6%	13.5%	18.9%
8) "Tenaliraman's Cat"	35	85.7%	.0%	14.3%
9) "T. & the Corrupt Palace Guards"	52	100.0%	.0%	.0%
10) "The Tale of the Unlucky Bride"	152	92.8%	1.3%	5.9%
11) "Krishna, Arjuna & the Prince"	169	84.0%	7.7%	8.3%
Genre #2: Folk Tales	-445	87.6%	4.5%	7.9%
12) "Two Pious Men"	72	90.3%	5.6%	4.2%
13) "The Dice Game" (excerpt)	139	66.2%	15.8%	18.0%
14) "The Seven Maidens"	65	96.9%	1.5%	1.5%
15) "R. in the Forest of the Demons"	84	83.3%	10.7%	6.0%
16) "Bhima's Devotion"	124	85.5%	4.8%	9.7%
Genre #3: Performed Epics	-484	81.8%	9.1%	9.1%
17) "The Marriage of Rama & Sita"	72	90.3%	2.8%	6.9%
18) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet1"	171	83.6%	4.1%	12.3%
19) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet2"	97	84.5%	4.1%	11.3%
Genre #4: Elicited Epics	-340	85.3%	3.8%	10.9%
Judgment Sample Total	1657	84.2%	6.2%	9.6%

Table 7: Relative frequency of predication types in judgment sample

While there is variation from narrative to narrative with respect to relative frequency of N-N and ØV predicates, the predominant pattern -- reflected in the averages for each genre as a whole -- is one in which ØV exceeds N-N slightly⁴⁹. On the other hand, the narratives are consistent in having a majority of verbal, rather than verbless, clauses. This may reflect the selection criteria for the texts of the judgment sample: they are all prototypical narratives (according to the definition given in 3.1) and therefore event-based, rather than description-based. Verbless predication, on the other hand, is associated predominantly with description, as we shall see in chapter 5. Note further that there are no significant genre effects for predication type; that is, the percentages of each type are roughly comparable for each genre.

The second observation concerns the distribution of *tenses*. For the purposes of summarizing patterns of tense usage, I counted all finite verbal forms which exhibit tense marking, including those which have aspect marking as well, and modals and negatives. There are four categories in all: past, present, future, and 'non-tensed', the last comprising non-past and non-future forms, as well as invariant modals, N+neg constructions, and *u/*. For the corpus as a whole, present tense forms predominate (45.8%) over past forms (37.0%), with future tense (10.4%) and non-tensed forms (6.8%) accounting for relatively few of the finite clauses. There is a significant genre effect with respect to tense usage: real-life accounts overwhelmingly favor past tense, elicited epics overwhelmingly favor present tense, and performed epics and folk tales favor past and present, respectively (although the preference of performed epics for past tense is slight). Real-life accounts also exhibit the greatest use of future tense, a

⁴⁹ The ØV category includes a variety of phenomena, however, including simple elipsis. Excluding elipsis, the overall frequency of ØV and N-N is roughly equivalent.

'non-prototypical' narrative tense by most accounts.⁵⁰ These facts are summarized, along with the percentages for each individual narrative, in table 8. Note both the differences among genres, and the variation among texts within each genre:

⁵⁰ Future tense forms are considered, along with modals and other auxiliaries, to signal narrator evaluation in American English narration (Labov 1972).

Title of Narrative:	total verbal clauses	Tense			
		P	Pr	F	non- tensed
1) "The Auspicious Book"	15	73.3%	13.3%	6.7%	6.7%
2) "Falling in the Well"	83	55.4%	21.7%	10.8%	12.0%
3) "The Japanese Girl"	129	44.2%	11.6%	31.8%	12.4%
4) "American ... Swimming Pool"	50	52.0%	2.0%	32.0%	14.0%
5) "Snakebite"	15	33.3%	60.0%	6.7%	.0%
6) "Hm!"	27	59.3%	14.8%	25.9%	.0%
Genre #1: Real-life Accounts	=319	50.5%	15.4%	23.5%	10.6%
7) "The Lion & the Rabbit"	25	100%	.0%	.0%	.0%
8) "Tenaliraman's Cat"	30	76.7%	20.0%	3.3%	.0%
9) "T. & the Corrupt Palace Guards"	52	17.3%	76.9%	5.8%	.0%
10) "The Tale of the Unlucky Bride"	141	26.9%	68.8%	.0%	4.3%
11) "Krishna, Arjuna & the Prince"	142	33.1%	62.0%	2.1%	2.8%
Genre #2: Folk Tales	=390	36.4%	59.2%	1.8%	2.6%
12) "Two Pious Men"	65	33.8%	32.3%	30.8%	3.1%
13) "The Dice Game" (excerpt)	92	38.0%	39.1%	6.5%	16.3%
14) "The Seven Maidens"	63	54.0%	34.9%	.0%	11.1%
15) "R. in the Forest of the Demons"	70	27.1%	61.4%	2.9%	8.6%
16) "Bhima's Devotion"	106	56.6%	23.6%	12.3%	7.5%
Genre #3: Performed Epics	=396	42.9%	37.1%	10.4%	9.6%
17) "The Marriage of Rama & Sita"	65	9.2%	86.2%	4.6%	.0%
18) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet1"	143	21.0%	69.2%	6.3%	3.5%
19) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet2"	82	8.5%	69.5%	12.2%	9.8%
Genre #4: Elicited Epics	=290	14.8%	73.1%	7.6%	4.5%
Judgment Sample Total	1395	37.0%	45.8%	10.4%	6.8%

Table 8: Relative frequency of tenses in judgment sample

The preferred tense for each genre is reflected in the tense preference of each individual narrative within that genre, with three exceptions. Narrative (5), "Snakebite", is predominantly in the present tense, whereas all of the other real-life accounts strongly favor the past. This apparent anomaly is explained, however, by the fact that 89% (all but one) of the present tense forms in narrative (5) are in the present perfect, a form which substitutes for the simple past in lower-class and rural dialects of Tamil. The two remaining exceptions, narratives (7) and (8), are more difficult to explain. Narrative (8) is predominantly, and narrative (7) exclusively, in the past tense, in contrast with the otherwise strong tendency for folk tales to favor present tense forms. Both of these tales -- "The Lion and the Rabbit" and "Tenaliraman's Cat" -- were told by well-educated Brahmin speakers around 30 years of age; they are short tales of a type commonly found in storybooks for children, and are normative in their structure. The normative connotations of these tales may have led the narrators to base their tellings in the past tense, the prescribed tense for narration (especially written narration). These two stories stand out, in any case, as the most formal and structured of the folk tales in the sample.

In contrast with the clear pattern of tense preference in the other three genres, the distribution of past and present tenses in the 'performed epic' genre favors present tense in one text (15), past in two others (14 and 16), and is roughly equivalent in texts (12) and (13), making it difficult to justify a tense preference for the genre as a whole. The use of future tenses varies within all four genres, as does the frequency of non-tensed forms. The narrative strategies which condition choice of tenses are complex, and are discussed at length in Chapter 6.

For the third category, **aspect**, I counted all of the finite, verbal forms which include (in addition to a tense marker) an aspectual auxiliary. The categories are

perfective, perfect, continuative, and a fourth category which includes a variety of miscellaneous 'aspect' auxiliaries, the most frequent of which are *ko!*, *pō*, and *ā*. The relative frequencies of aspect auxiliaries in the judgment sample are given in table 9:

Title of Narrative:	total verbal clauses	Aspect			
		Pfv	Perf	Cont	miscAux
1) "The Auspicious Book"	15	.0%	.0%	26.7%	.0%
2) "Falling in the Well"	83	32.5%	10.8%	6.0%	6.0%
3) "The Japanese Girl"	129	20.9%	25.6%	3.1%	3.1%
4) "American ... Swimming Pool"	50	14.0%	2.0%	12.6%	4.0%
5) "Snakebite"	15	13.3%	53.3%	.0%	6.7%
6) "Hm!"	27	18.5%	11.1%	18.5%	.0%
Genre #1: Real-life Accounts	=319	21.3%	16.9%	7.5%	3.8%
7) "The Lion & the Rabbit"	25	32.0%	4.0%	.0%	.0%
8) "Tenaliraman's Cat"	30	30.0%	3.3%	.0%	3.3%
9) "T. & the Corrupt Palace Guards"	52	19.2%	21.2%	5.8%	1.9%
10) "The Tale of the Unlucky Bride"	141	17.0%	8.5%	7.1%	2.8%
11) "Krishna, Arjuna & the Prince"	142	18.3%	5.6%	4.9%	4.2%
Genre #2: Folk Tales	=390	19.7%	8.5%	5.1%	3.1%
12) "Two Pious Men"	65	12.3%	1.5%	4.6%	1.5%
13) "The Dice Game" (excerpt)	92	8.7%	7.6%	3.3%	2.2%
14) "The Seven Maidens"	63	11.1%	.0%	4.8%	6.3%
15) "R. in the Forest of the Demons"	70	5.7%	4.3%	1.4%	5.7%
16) "Bhima's Devotion"	106	4.7%	3.8%	6.6%	5.7%
Genre #3: Performed Epics	=396	8.1%	3.8%	4.3%	4.3%
17) "The Marriage of Rama & Sita"	65	15.4%	.0%	7.9%	4.6%
18) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet1"	143	27.3%	7.7%	2.1%	2.8%
19) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet2"	82	26.8%	3.7%	6.1%	.0%
Genre #4: Elicited Epics	=290	21.4%	4.8%	4.5%	2.4%
Judgment Sample Total	1395	17.1%	8.3%	5.3%	3.4%

Table 9: Relative frequency of aspectual auxiliaries in judgment sample

As table 9 shows, the most common form of aspectual marking is the **perfective** (*viṭu*), accounting for 17.1% of all finite verbal clauses overall, as compared with the perfect (8.3%), the continuative (5.3%), and miscellaneous auxes (3.4%). Every narrative, with the exception of (1) "The Auspicious Book", employs the perfective at least twice: it is also the most popular aspectual form for each of the four genres. The others are more variable. The **perfect** is absent in three narratives (texts (1), (14), and (17)), and frequent in three others ((3), (5), and (9)), although this latter fact may be attributable to dialect differences.⁵¹ The frequency of the **continuative** also varies from text to text, although what is perhaps most striking is its overall scarcity, since as a prototypically 'imperfective' form we might expect its usage to correspond (or contrast) in some systematic way with that of the perfective. In fact, however, there appears to be no systematic correlation from narrative to narrative between the frequency of one aspectual auxiliary and the frequency of any other.

There is an interesting genre effect with respect to aspect: aspectual auxiliaries, both individually and as a category, are significantly less frequent in the performed epics than in the other three genres, and most frequent in the real-life accounts. This may be a reflection of the fact that the performed epics are the most linguistically conservative texts in the corpus.⁵² Diachronic evidence suggests that aspectual auxiliaries are a relatively recent development in Tamil, and that they fulfill narrative functions previously conveyed by simple tense forms alone. If this is so, it is likely that the lower frequency of compound aspectual forms in the performed epics is a reflection of an historically prior grammatical system, while the higher frequency of the forms in real-life accounts more accurately reflects the contemporary system.

⁵¹ See discussion in 7.3.2.

⁵² For evidence in support of this observation unrelated to tense/aspect, see Herring 1990.

Tables 8 and 9 treat tense and aspect in isolation from one another. In actuality, all aspectual forms are also tensed, and many tensed forms take aspect as well. What remains to be considered is the relative distribution of simple (tense only) and compound (tense + aspect) verbs, since this is a formal distinction which might conceivably be exploited for functional purposes. The figures for this distribution are given in table 10, along with an overall breakdown of verbal forms in the corpus.⁵³

⁵³ In the table, negatives and modals are counted as a single, separate category, independent of their tense (that is, the 'simple tense' total contains no negatives or modals). Where a negative or modal is marked for aspect, it is counted in both categories, and the redundancy is then subtracted to give a total equal to the total percentage of verbal clauses for the narrative or genre in question.

Title of Narrative:	total % verbal	tense only	tense + aspect	neg /Modal	ul	neg/M + asp.
1) "The Auspicious Book"	78.9%	47.4%	26.3%	5.3%	5.3%	-5.3%
2) "Falling in the Well"	79.6%	23.3%	44.7%	10.7%	.0%	-1.0%
3) "The Japanese Girl"	81.3%	23.2%	43.9%	16.1%	.0%	-.6%
4) "American ... Swimming Pool"	92.5%	49.1%	30.2%	15.1%	.0%	-1.9%
5) "Snakebite"	83.3%	11.1%	61.1%	16.7%	.0%	-5.6%
6) "Hm!"	74.3%	31.4%	37.1%	5.7%	.0%	.0%
Genre #1: Real-life Accounts	81.7%	28.2%	42.5%	13.0%	2.6%	-1.3%
7) "The Lion & the Rabbit"	67.6%	37.8%	27.0%	2.7%	.0%	.0%
8) "Tenaliraman's Cat"	88.2%	52.9%	35.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%
9) "T. & the Corrupt Palace Guards"	100.0%	51.9%	48.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%
10) "The Tale of the Unlucky Bride"	91.9%	53.2%	32.3%	7.3%	.0%	-.8%
11) "Krishna, Arjuna & the Prince"	82.6%	49.4%	28.5%	5.8%	.0%	-1.2%
Genre #2: Folk Tales	86.6%	50.1%	32.5%	4.8%	.0%	-.7%
12) "Two Pious Men"	90.3%	69.4%	18.1%	2.8%	.0%	.0%
13) "The Dice Game" (excerpt)	66.2%	41.0%	14.4%	3.6%	7.9%	.0%
14) "The Seven Maidens"	96.8%	58.7%	22.2%	15.9%	.0%	.0%
15) "R. in the Forest of the Demons"	83.3%	57.1%	14.3%	10.7%	1.2%	.0%
16) "Bhima's Devotion"	85.5%	51.6%	16.1%	16.9%	.0%	.0%
Genre #3: Performed Epics	81.7%	53.1%	16.4%	9.7%	2.5%	.0%
17) "The Marriage of Rama & Sita"	90.1%	60.6%	25.3%	4.2%	.0%	.0%
18) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet1"	84.6%	52.1%	27.2%	5.3%	.0%	.0%
19) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet2"	84.8%	44.4%	30.3%	12.1%	.0%	-2.0%
Genre #4: Elicited Epics	85.8%	51.6%	27.7%	7.1%	.0%	-.6%
Judgment Sample Total	83.9%	46.2%	28.8%	8.7%	.8%	-.6%

Table 10: Overall breakdown of verbal categories in judgment sample

Table 10 shows that simple forms are preferred over compound forms overall, with the exception of four narratives in the real-life account genre (texts (2), (3), (5), and (6)). Simple tenses are most frequent in the performed epics, an observation which supports the hypothesis that tense/aspect usage in that genre follows the dictates of the older system. The use of another archaic feature -- the invariant verb of existence, *u!* -- is also exclusive to this genre, with the exception of a single token in text (1).⁵⁴

A point can be made regarding the distribution of negatives and modals as well, although this is outside the scope of the present investigation strictly speaking. Negatives and modals, as clear departures from 'basic narrative syntax', are considered evaluative devices by Labov (1972). The highest frequency of negatives and modals is in the real-life accounts (13% of all verbal clauses), where the narrators in my corpus do in fact make greater use of explicit evaluation than in any other genre. This may reflect a concern on the part of the Tamil speakers to elevate the telling of contemporary, factual experiences to 'story' status, i.e. by rhetorically underscoring their evaluative significance. Correspondingly, negatives and modals are least frequent in the telling of folk tales (4.8%), which are the most prototypical and accessible kinds of 'story' in the culture. I do not break the category of negatives and modals down any further here, although it can be noted in passing that the relative frequency of the two sub-categories -- negatives, and modals -- is approximately equal for all genres.

To summarize, certain basic patterns emerge from this overview, both with respect to individual genres and the corpus as a whole. The genre effects can be summarized as follows:

⁵⁴ It is interesting that text (1), which was related by an elderly gentleman, is the most formal narrative in the real-life account genre; this observation is consistent with the interpretation that *u!* is a feature of a more formal, archaic style.

Genre	Predication	Tense	Aspect	Other
Real-life Accounts	no genre effect	past; future	all aspects frequent	compound V's; neg/Modals
Folk Tales	no genre effect	present	pfv frequent	simple V's
Performed Epics	no genre effect	(past)	no aspects frequent	simple V's; u/
Elicited Epics	no genre effect	present	pfv frequent; others infrequent	simple V's

Table 11: Summary of genre effects

With respect to the corpus as a whole, the general patterns that emerge, therefore, are as follows. The overwhelmingly preferred predication type is verbal; of the two non-verbal types, $\emptyset V$ and N-N are used with roughly equal frequency. Present tense marking is most common, followed by past, while future and 'non-tensed' forms (miscellaneous negatives and modals, as well as *u/*) are relatively infrequent. The aspect marker most in evidence is the perfective, followed by the perfect, and then the continuative (although the somewhat higher incidence of perfect marking is probably a dialect effect). Despite the evolutionary tendency in Tamil towards compound, aspectually-marked verbs (see 8.2), simple tensed verbs still predominate overall.

What this survey does not show is how each of these categories is distributed within the texts. That is, although we know, for example, that narrator (1) uses the continuative auxiliary approximately 27% of the time, we as yet know nothing about where or why he does so, nor whether his use of the form corresponds in any essential way to its use by other narrators. The following chapters consider these and related questions in detail.

Chapter 5: Predication Type

Perhaps the most basic event-encoding decision that a Tamil narrator must make is whether or not to include a verb. The majority of Tamil sentences do in fact contain a finite verb; I refer to this phenomenon as 'verbal predication'. In such sentences, as Lehmann (1989:172) observes, the verb is of central importance; virtually any other element may be deleted when contextually recoverable, but the finite verb must remain (e.g. **Koṭuttān** '(He) gave (something) (to someone)'). Yet at the same time, the language makes use of non-verbal predication types, where what is lacking is, precisely, a finite verb. What functional-semantic distinctions does the presence or absence of a finite verb express?

Rather than attempt to summarize here all of the possible functions of **verbal predicates** -- many of which involve the categories of tense and aspect, and will be discussed in later chapters -- I focus in this chapter on the non-verbal types. There are two structurally and functionally distinct non-verbal types in Tamil: **nominal predication**, and **zero predication**. Neither is a predominant sentence type in narration; the former accounts for only 6.2%, and the latter 9.6%, of finite clauses in the narrative sample, and there is no instance of a narrative related entirely or even mostly in verbless utterances. Both constructions are found in the majority of individual narratives, however, and their functional values are roughly consistent across narratives and across genres.

In the remainder of this chapter I analyze the two verbless predication types in terms of their structure, their meaning, and their functions in narrative discourse. For each, I begin with a consideration of its sentence-level properties as described in traditional grammars, and then turn to the patterns of usage which characterize it in

the oral narrative data. Wherever possible, I contrast the use of verbless sentence types with their verbal 'equivalents'.

5.1 Nominal predication.

5.1.1 Traditional accounts.

Most traditional and pedagogical grammars recognize the existence of the 'noun-noun' or 'equational' sentence type, in which one nominal element is equated with another (i.e. 'X is a Y'). The Tamil construction differs from its English equivalent in two essential respects: in Tamil an overt copula verb (e.g. 'be') is typically lacking (see 5.1.3 below), and an adjectival complement cannot function as an equated component unless it is first morphologically converted into a nominal (thus 'Raman is intelligent' becomes literally 'Raman is an intelligent masculine-person/one'). Nominals may also be derived from verbs (e.g. 'Raman is the masculine-one-who-went' or 'The masculine-one-who-went is Raman'), with person-number-gender, tense, and (optionally) aspect specification preserved. The second, or 'focused' nominal in constructions of this type I refer to as the **nominal predicate**. The three morphological types of nominal predicate are illustrated with examples from the narrative corpus in (10) - (12) below:

simple nominal predicate:

- (10) Mayūra tōjan rājā. [11:17]⁵⁵ 'Mayura Tojan (is) a/the king'.
 M. T. king

de-adjectival (participial) nominal predicate:

- (11) Vikarnan nall-avan. [13:72] 'Vikarnan (is) a good person'.
 V. good- PN3sg.masc

⁵⁵ In these and in subsequent examples, numbers in square brackets indicate text and line number.

de-verbal (tense + participial) nominal predicate:

- (12) *Kaṇṇakiyūṃ kōvalaṇuṃ cōla nāṭṭai cēr-nt-avaṇka.* [18:174]
 Kannaki and Kovalan and Chola country-ACC join-P- PN3pl.
 'Kannaki and Kovalan (are) from Chola country (lit. ones who joined C. country)'

Example (12) may be contrasted with its verbal 'equivalent' in (13):

- (13) *Kaṇṇakiyūṃ kōvalaṇuṃ cōla nāṭṭai cēr-nt-āṇka.*
 Kannaki and Kovalan and Chola country-ACC join-P-3pl.
 'Kannaki and Kovalan joined (i.e. moved to) Chola country'.)

Relatively little is found in traditional descriptions regarding the semantic function of the nominal predicate. Arden (1942:279) states that it "denote[s] the innate quality and condition of the subject". Lehmann (1989:173) goes somewhat further in his observation that it occurs with "general or temporally unmarked attributive or ascriptive propositions", the atemporal value being a consequence of the fact that the copula verb, which would otherwise bear tense marking, is lacking. The association of nominal predication with the attribution of qualities is clearly supported by the examples in (10) - (12) above, and indeed in the narrative corpus as a whole. A more in-depth consideration of the behavior of this construction in the corpus, however, allows us to characterize its functions with greater precision.

5.1.2 Nominal predication in narration.

Structural properties

There are 103 tokens of nominal predication (6.2%) in finite, non-dialogic clauses of the narrative sample. Their distribution among the three morphological types is uneven: 70.8% are simple nouns, 22.9% are de-verbal nouns, while only 6.3% are de-adjectival. The low incidence of de-adjectival nouns is partially compensated

for, however, by the use of Adj + N predicates in which the N is an exact repetition or paraphrase of the subject N. An example is given in (14):

- (14) Pōkum pōtu makan periya makan tān. [11:21]
 go-FAJP time son big son EMPH
 'When (the king) left, (his) son (was) already grown (lit. the son (was) a big son)'.

All of the de-adjectival nouns in the sample function as the focus (that is to say, predicate) of the sentence. De-verbal nouns, on the other hand, are used as both subjects/topics and predicates/foci, although the predicate/focus function is more common (72.7%, as opposed to 27.3% topics).

Information-structural considerations affect the N-N construction in a variety of other ways as well. When the topic is recoverable from context, that is to say 'old' information, it may be omitted. 22.3% of the all instances of nominal predication have a zero topic, as in (15):

- (15) Ayiram- ām yānai balam koṇ-ṭ- avan. [13:41]
 thousand-EVID elephant strength take-P-PN3sg.masc
 '(He) (was) one-who-had the strength of a thousand elephants, it seems'.

This feature is not unique to nominal predication; Tamil is a language which freely allows nominal arguments to be zeroed when they are contextually retrievable.

In 13.6% of the tokens, the normal topic-focus order of the two nominals is reversed. This is illustrated in (16):

- (16) Rompa murattu kutirai atu. [3:112]
 very wild horse it
 'It (was) a very wild horse'.

Despite their appearance in what would normally be focus position, postposed topics of this type are accorded low saliency, as though they were afterthoughts. Intonationally

they receive decreased stress and volume; they are also 'old' or 'given' information in every instance, and in fact are personal pronouns in all but a single use.

Alternatively, topics are sometimes emphasized (e.g. when they are contrastive or otherwise unpredictable) by the use of the colloquial topicalizer *vantu*:

- (17) Anta poṇṇu pēr vantu cikova-vō ennam- ō. [3:49]
 that girl name TOP Chicova-DUB something-DUB
 'The name of the girl (was) **Chicova or something like that**'.

Vantu-marked topics are never postposed in the data analyzed here.

Focus may be indicated by WH- words, which in Tamil function both nominally and adjectivally. 11.6% of the total nominal predicates are WH- words; all but one occur in the performed epics.⁵⁶ Of these, slightly more than half have a de-verbal noun as their topic -- a strategy also characteristic of performed epics⁵⁷ -- as in (18):

- (18) Mutalil pēcu-kir-avan yāru? [13:110]
 at.first speak-Pr-PN3sg.masc who
 'Who spoke first? (lit. the one-who-spoke first (was) **who?**)'

Questions of this sort are invariably rhetorical; the narrator answers them -- if they are answered at all -- himself. The most frequent WH- questions in equational sentences -- *yār* 'who' and *eppaṭi paṭṭa* 'what kind of' -- function to solicit identification and description of participants.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Text (13) -- 'The Dice Game' -- alone accounts for 8 out of the 12 uses of WH- words.

⁵⁷ The use of participial nouns in performed epics is another feature that can be considered archaic. Zvelebil (1962) hypothesizes that finite verbs in Tamil developed out of participial forms; the latter are common and the former rare in Old Tamil texts.

⁵⁸ For a discussion of the organizational functions of rhetorical questions in Tamil narrative, see Herring (1991).

Functional properties

The majority of uses of the nominal predicate construction in the narrative sample exhibit a set of common semantic and functional properties. To begin, they typically identify, describe, or otherwise characterize a narrative **participant**, rather than an event or other situation type. As a consequence, the attributed characterization is temporally unspecified, making it especially well-suited to the expression of omnitemporal, **unbounded states**. This is the notion expressed in all of the examples given above, with the exception of (13), which is bounded by the temporal adverbial modifier 'when the king left'. In the context of narrative discourse, the construction functions to provide **orientation** (in the sense of Labov 1972), particularly with respect to animate narrative participants. As such, it supplies **background** information which (generally) holds true throughout the time period in which the narrative events take place, and which aids the audience in understanding and appreciating the point of the story as a whole. The age of the son in (14), the strength of the king in (15), the wildness of the horse in (16), are all qualities of participants which bear directly on the stories' respective interpretations, by allowing the audience to measure their subsequent actions in a particular light. 85.7% of nominal predications in the sample conform to this functional description in every respect.

The other 14.3% deviate from it in one or more respects, while preserving, however, at least one feature of the functional prototype. Semantically, the deviations are of two types: those which express temporary (rather than unbounded) states and processes (6.6%), and those which express a change-of-state (7.7%).

By employing a nominal predicate where it is not strictly-speaking semantically appropriate, narrators evoke the functional values with which the form

is associated.⁵⁹ Thus temporary and/or time-bounded situations encoded by means of nominal predication are effectively treated as orientation for the portion of text they precede, as is the case for example (14) above. Nominal predications expressing change-of-state are of two structural types: those in which the change-of-state is the event expressed in a de-verbal noun, and those in which it must be inferred from the content and context of the utterance. In the first case, the event expressed by the nominalized verb, regardless of whether it functions as predicate or topic, is presupposed, and thus functionally backgrounded. This can be seen in (18) above, as well as in the following example:

(19) *Reṇṭu pēr-um cama kālatt-ile vāl- nt-avaṇka.* [6:4]

two people-and same time- LOC grow-P- PN3pl.

'The two of them grew up together (lit. (were) ones-who-grew-up together)'.

Rather than employing the Tamil equivalent of the (more idiomatic) English translation, which would have treated the event of 'growing up' on a structural par with other events in the narrative, the narrator here chooses to background the event of growing up in favor of a (static) characterization of the two main participants. The result is consistent with both the backgrounding and the orientation functions of the nominal predicate construction.

In cases where no event verb of any form is present, the interpretation of change-of-state derives largely from the role played by the utterance in the larger narrative context. The examples of this sort in the sample are doubly deviant, in that they are not only semantically eventive, but they function as events -- often crucial ones -- as well. An example is given in (20) below:

⁵⁹ Normally, a verbal predicate of some sort is preferred in the expression of temporary states and processes; see sections on the simple tenses and continuative aspect.

- (20) *Inta aruccunan vantu avarutaiya pēran.* [11:87]
 this Arjuna TOP his grandson
 'Arjuna (changed into) his [Krishna's] grandson'.

Here the context of the story makes it clear that Arjuna is not Krishna's actual grandson; rather a magical transformation has taken place. The nominal construction employed by the narrator effectively focuses on the 'grandson' as a new participant, leaving the event of change to be inferred in a way that emphasizes the sudden, magical nature of the transformation. Far from being backgrounded, this utterance is evaluatively foregrounded, far more so than if the expected finite verb had been used. The foregrounding effect is here achieved, not through any inherent property of the construction itself, but rather by the violation of the unmarked correlation between nominal predication and background state.

The account developed here thus views the function of nominal predication in Tamil oral narrative as a cluster of semantic and discourse-organizational features. In prototypical cases, these features are in agreement; however, the Tamil narrator may also exploit the functional value(s) of the construction, by employing it even when the features of the situation do not all fit the prototype. In cases where the situation is in near-complete functional contrast with the prototype (as with salient change-of-state events), use of the nominal predicate construction takes on a marked, evaluative role which instructs the audience to look to the context in order to determine its precise interpretation.

5.1.3 The copula in equational sentences.

The examples discussed thus far are all verbless; what of sentences in which a copular verb appears? Conflicting claims have been made in the literature regarding the function of the copula, which has the form *-ā iru*, in the Tamil equational sentence

type. According to one view, all equational sentences, whether or not they have an overt copula, are underlyingly copular. Kothandaraman (1972:16) gives a number of arguments for this view, stating further that "we are not able to find any meaning difference" between sentences with and without an overt copula verb. He alludes however to the possibility that one might "feel" that meaning differences exist on the basis of "lack of familiarity and intonation difference", but does not elaborate on either of these points. The view that nominal predication is underlyingly copular is also implicit in the descriptions of Asher (1985).

Alternatively, it has been claimed that the addition of *-ā iru* alters the meaning of the otherwise verbless nominal predicate construction. Arden (1942:279) observes that "[the *-ā iru*] form of expression is generally used when denoting the particular state of the subject at a particular time". Similarly, Schiffman (1979:60) claims that pairs of sentences such as (21) and (22) below differ systematically, in that the first member of the pair refers to a situation that is generally or habitually true, while the second views it as temporary.⁶⁰

- | | |
|--|---|
| (21) <i>Itu cari.</i>
this okay | 'This is alright (generally)'. |
| (22) <i>Itu cari-y-ā irukku.</i>
this okay COP-Pr-3sg.n | 'This is alright (now, at the moment)'. |

Lehmann (1989:174-5) also supports this view, although in his analysis, *iru* is stative, while the adverbializing suffix *-ā* is responsible for expressing the concept of temporariness.

What sort of evidence do the oral narrative data bring to bear on this controversy? Although explicit use of the copula is rare in the sample (8% of finite

⁶⁰ The distinction here is similar to that between Spanish *ser* and *estar*.

clauses overall), the instances which are found generally support the view that the copula encodes an added component of temporariness. Excluding three instances of Adj + *-ā iru* (which could not have occurred without the copula without sounding strange or stilted), all of the remaining occurrences (N=10) with the exception of one (see below) describe situations which are temporary and/or temporally bounded. Of these, one is a tenseless participle, three are in the past tense, and six are in the present tense. Of the three past tense copulas, two encode situations which have not only ended but which can be viewed as temporary aberrations -- one, a husband's straying from his wife to live with another woman [19:84], and the other, the god Krishna working as a chariot driver for a mortal [15:103]. The third past tense copula functions to bound the narrative at its conclusion ('And they **were** good friends until they died' [6:36]).

The present tense copulas also describe a range of situation types. Three are in intensive constructions which present a scene as it appears to a narrative participant. The confusion of a prince who is asked to distinguish between the seven saris of seven identical sisters is reflected in the narrative statement:

- (23) Orē cēlai-y-ā irukku. [10:74]
 one-EMPH sari- COP-Pr-3sg.n
 '(It)'s all the same sari'.

The prince eventually realizes however that one of the saris is in fact different; the present tense copula thus encodes the prince's temporary perception. Other examples deal with transformation and assumed identities. When Krishna is playing the role of an old man, he is described as follows:

- (24) Kirusṇaṇ tānē kilavar- ā iru-kk-āru. [11:183]
 Krishna himself-EMPH old.man-COP- Pr-3sg.resp
 'Krishna himself **is** (being) an old man'.

Similarly, when a murdered princess' dismembered body grows up as a flower garden, the narrator relates:

- (25) *Nallā pūñcōlai-y- ā irukku.* [10:152]
 good flower.garden-COP-Pr-3sg.n
 '(It)'s all a nice flower garden'.

In each of these examples, there is an implicit 'now' being contrasted with a previous and/or normal state of affairs. In this sense, the construction contrasts with the zero copula construction described in the previous sections, which is temporally unspecified.

Only one example (10%) seems unmotivated by this analysis. In introducing two main participants, the narrator first uses a zero copula (nominal predicate) construction, followed by a copular one:

- (26) *Mayūra tōjan rājā. Tamarai tōjan vantu ilavaracan-ā irukkān.* [11:19]
 Mayura Tojan king. Tamarai Tojan TOP prince- COP-Pr-3sg.masc
 'Mayura Tojan (is) the king. Tamarai Tojan is the prince'.

The identity of Tamarai Tojan does not change in any way in the course of this narrative -- he remains a prince throughout. Unless the narrator knows that this character appears in later stories in some other role (e.g. as a king), I can find no justification for the use of the copula here.

In general, then, the *-ā iru* copula appears to function as a device for encoding transformed and/or temporary states, where the focus is on their temporal boundedness. In this respect it contrasts semantically with the nominal predicate construction. The narrative findings thus support the view of Schiffman (1979) and contradict the claims of Kothandaraman (1972) regarding the semantic relationship between the two. Unlike nominal predication, however, copular constructions appear to lack a systematic narrative discourse function.

5.2 Zero Predication.

5.2.1 Traditional accounts.

No real account exists in the literature on Tamil grammar of the phenomenon that I refer to here as zero predication, or ØV. Of the different structural and functional sub-types that ØV subsumes, the one most frequently mentioned is the locative adverbial construction. Asher (1985:51) notes, for example, that a 'copular sentence with [locative] adverbial complement' can be verbless, i.e. when it has the order 'noun phrase - adverbial - *iru* ('to be')', as in (27):

- (27) Rāman tōṭṭatt- ile (iru-kkir-ān).
 Raman garden-LOC be- Pr- 3sg.masc
 'Raman (is) in the garden'.

In contrast, Lehmann (1989:173) states that *iru* can be deleted when it occurs in either of two structural patterns:

- i) NP dative + NP nominative + *iru*
- ii) NP locative + NP nominative + *iru*

In illustration of these patterns, Lehmann gives two sentences which I reproduce here as (28) and (29):

- (28) Kumār-ukku tākam (iru-kkir-atu).
 Kumar-DAT thirst be- Pr- 3sg.n
 'Kumar is thirsty (lit. to Kumar (is) thirst)'.
- (29) Inta kirāmatt-il mūṇṇu kōvil (iru-kkir-atu).
 this village-LOC three temple be- Pr- 3sg.n
 'In this village, (there) (are) three temples'.

Although Asher and Lehmann both mention locative adverbial constructions, the word order differs; for Asher the verb may only be deleted when the order is subject-LOC, while for Lehmann it is LOC-subject. A further difference between the two accounts is that Asher groups sentences such as (27) together with equational constructions

(regardless of whether or not they have a surface copula) as 'copular', while Lehmann distinguishes between zero copula and copular equational sentences on semantic grounds, taking sentences (28) and (29) above as instances of yet a third phenomenon in which *iru* is optionally deletable. The one point on which these two descriptions agree is that the deleted verb is always a verb of being. In constructions where it can be deleted, neither author attributes any special semantic or functional significance to the presence or absence of the finite verb.

5.2.2 Zero predication in narration.

A total of 159 instances (9.8% of finite clauses) of zero predication occur in the narrative sample. I define **zero predicates** as those finite clauses in whose surface form neither verbal nor nominal predicate appears. In so doing, I reject the possibility that there is a functional predicate in such sentences in the form of a dative or locative complement, for reasons which will become apparent below.

The $\emptyset V$ tokens in the data are of two distinct and functionally unrelated types: elipsis, and $\emptyset V$ proper. Examples of elipsis include fragments (e.g. elaborations, partial repetitions, responses to audience questions) where the omitted portion of the sentence is retrievable from the immediate discourse context (N=34), and directly quoted dialogue in which the "he said/she said" is left off (N=21). These phenomena are not unique to Tamil narration, and I exclude them from analysis here. Also excluded from the sample are formulaic expressions which happen to be verbless (e.g. *Avva/aru iān* 'that's all') (N=5), the 'definitional' formula *Ennā Y* 'X means Y (lit. if one says X, Y)' (N=3), and nominalized finite predicates (e.g. *Ennā ceyratu?* 'What to do (lit. what the doing)?') (N=3). Excluding these cases, we are left with an adjusted total of 93 $\emptyset V$ tokens.

Structural properties

ØV sentences in the sample vary according to whether or not they contain an initial non-subject complement. The most frequent structural type is a bare NP (31.2%), followed by LOCative adverbial + NP (26.9%), DATive NP + NP (24.7%), and TEMPoral adverbial + NP (16.1%)⁶¹. Examples are given in (30) - (33), respectively:

bare NP:

- (30) (Namma āḷ irukkān pārūṅka, turiyōṭaṇaṇ.) Avan-uṭaiya koṭi. [13:45]
 (our man be-Pr-3sg.masc TAG Duryodhana) 3sg.masc-GEN flag
 'There's our man Duryodhana, right?) His flag'.

LOC + NP:

- (31) Anta nakaratt-ile ēḷu penṇu. [10:56]
 that town- LOC seven girl
 'In that town, seven girls'.

DAT + NP:

- (32) Anta mirukaṇ-kaḷ ellātt-ukkum rompa cantōsam. [7:38]
 that animal- pl. all- DAT much happiness
 'The animals (were) all very happy (lit. to all the animals, much happiness)'.

TEMP + NP:

- (33) Appuram mūṇāvatu nāḷ vantu oru muyaḷ. [7:13]
 then third day TOP one rabbit
 'Then on the third day, a rabbit'.

An additional 3.2%⁶² of ØV sentences comprises three tokens, two with initial indirect object NP's and one with an initial manner adverb.

The identification of these four basic structural types points immediately to the inadequacies of the descriptions of verbless predication in Tamil grammars. First,

⁶¹ Unless otherwise modified, the symbol 'NP' in the discussion of structural ØV types refers to an NP in the nominative, or morphologically unmarked, case.

⁶² Two of the tokens are counted in both the DAT and the TEMP category; the total thus equals 102.1%.

there is no recognition of the bare NP type, which in my data is statistically most frequent. The existence of this type argues against the hypothesis that ØV sentences have a surface predicate in the form of a non-subject complement. Second, while Lehmann's dative and locative types are attested in examples (31) and (32), neither Lehmann nor Asher has an account for the temporal type in (33). No instances whatsoever of Asher's NP + LOC construction are found in the corpus.

A further problem arises when we attempt to reconstruct a verb of being for these sentences. For (31) and (32) this is not a problem, but it is difficult to imagine an interpretation of either (30) or (33) where 'be' would be appropriate. Indeed, it is difficult to ascribe an interpretation to these utterances at all when they are presented out of context, as they are here. In order to characterize these constructions semantically, it is necessary to expand the scope of our description to include their functions in connected discourse.

Functional properties

Unlike nominal predications, which are functionally unified around the notion of participant attribution, ØV sentences comprise a variety of functional types. The most distinct is the DAT + NP construction illustrated above. This construction differs structurally from the others in that it contains a preposed nominal argument, as opposed to an adverbial (or nothing). Further, the dative argument is in some sense the semantic subject, and thus is a central component of the sentence, in contrast with the locative and temporal adverbials, which never encode subjects (or even animate participants) and which function as adjuncts to the sentence core.

Semantically, DAT NP verbless constructions are associated with a consistent meaning which none of the other ØV types share: that of **possession**, either of a

concrete entity or, metaphorically, of a physical or mental state. In either function, they can be rephrased with a finite form of *iru* 'to be' or with a verb expressing change-of-state, e.g. *kītai* 'to get' (with physical entities) or *vā* 'to come' (with physical and mental states). Thus (32) above could be rephrased as either (34) or (35), depending on whether a static or a dynamic interpretation is intended:

- (34) *Anta mirukaṇ-kaḷ ellātt-ukkum rompa cantōṣam iru-kku-tu.*
 that animal- pl. all- DAT much happiness be- Pr- 3sg.n
 'The animals are all very happy (lit. to all the animals, there is much happiness)'.
- (35) *Anta mirukaṇ-kaḷ ellātt-ukkum rompa cantōṣam vā- nt-atu.*
 that animal- pl. all- DAT much happiness come-P- 3sg.n
 'The animals became/were all very happy (lit. to all the animals, much happiness came)'.⁶³

In isolation, a verbless DAT + NP sentence is potentially ambiguous in this respect.

There is, however, a pattern to the distribution of lexical NP's in the narrative sample which allows us to interpret the meaning of the construction largely independent of its discourse context. Of the 23 tokens of DAT + NP, one-third express a durative state; one-third a temporary state; and another one-third a dynamic change-of-state (i.e. the inception of the 'possessed' quality). The durative state NP's describe concrete objects and personal attributes, such as age. The temporary state NP's describe physical sensations such as pain and hunger, as well as thoughts. Finally, the change-of-state NP's describe emotions -- surprise, shock, happiness, anger, and grief. Thus the dynamic interpretation of $\emptyset$ V sentences with DAT NP is largely predicatable on the basis of the lexical choice of nominative NP.

⁶³ The tense difference here is not crucial to the distinction I am attempting to illustrate; there is however a more natural correlation between present tense and ongoing states and past tense and change-of-state than the inverse correlations. For further discussion of tense forms, see chapter 6.

The choice of $\emptyset V$ in such constructions has in addition a general evaluative function. That is, verbless statements of possession describe situations which are important to the understanding of the evaluative point. For example, in text #2 the point of the telling is the physical pain experienced by the narrator when he fell down a well and had to be treated by a local 'medicine man' without the benefit of modern pain killers. Clauses describing his pain are consistently verbless, in contrast with statements of possession of other objects/qualities, all of which contain a finite verb.

The second important functional type is **presentation**. Of the 63 remaining tokens, 47 (74.6%) serve to present or introduce a new nominal referent into the narrative. In defining this functional type, the presence or absence of a preceding adverbial complement is largely irrelevant.⁶⁴ A structural correlate of $\emptyset V$ presentation exists on the discourse level, however: in 91.5% of the uses, the presented NP is resumed in the immediately following discourse. (In contrast, only 17.4% of the subject NP's in the DAT/possessive verbless construction are taken up in the following utterance, and of these, half are presentational in function.) While the presented NP is always a full NP in the nominative case, the resumed NP may take the form of a full NP, a pronoun, or a null argument;⁶⁵ it may also be marked for a case other than the nominative. This can be seen in examples (36) - (38) below (examples (30), (31), and (33) plus the immediately following utterances):

⁶⁴ 34.8% are bare NP's, 39.1% are preceded by a locative, 23.9% by a temporal adverbial, and 2.2% by both a temporal and a locative adverbial. While there is an overall preference for beginning a $\emptyset V$ utterance with an adverbial, this probably has more to do with the clause-connecting functions that such elements serve; most repeat information from the previous clause, rather than directly modifying the presented NP.

⁶⁵ In the case of resumed NP's which have a null realization, the claim that two distinct sentences are involved, rather than a single sentence interrupted by a pause, is based entirely on intonational evidence. Example (38) illustrates a situation of this type.

- (36) Namma āl irukkān pārunka, turiyōtanaṇ. Avan- utaiya koṭi
 our man be-Pr-3sg.masc TAG Duryodhana. 3sg.masc-GEN flag.
 Koṭi-y-ilē uḷḷa cinnam enna? Ø arava koṭi. Ø pāmpu koṭi.
 flag-LOC exist insignia what? Ø serpent flag. Ø snake flag.
 'There's our man Duryodhana, right? **His flag**. What's the insignia **on his flag**? (It's) a serpent flag. A snake flag'.
- (37) Anta nakaratt-ile ēlu penṇu. Eḷu penṇ-um onṇu pōla iru-kk-āṇka.
 that town- LOC 7 girl 7 girl-and one like be-Pr-3pl.
 Eva camuttira valliṇṇu teri-y-āṭu.
 which Samudra Valli QUOT be.known-NPneg
 'In that town, **seven girls**. And the **seven girls** are all identical. (He) doesn't know which one (of them) is Samudra Valli'.
- (38) Appuram mūṇāvatu nāl vantu oru muṇai. Ø cens va- nt-āṭu.
 then third day TOP one rabbit. Ø chance come-P-3sg.n.
 Appa anta muṇai vantu, rompa cāmārttiyam.
 then that rabbit TOP very clever(ness).
 'Then on the third day, **a rabbit**. (It's) turn came. Now **that rabbit** (was) very clever'.

In each of these examples, a new referent ('his flag', 'seven girls', 'a rabbit') is first presented in an intonationally-finite $\emptyset V$ clause. In subsequent clauses, the referent is resumed as given information, and a new assertion or assertions are predicated of it.

This strategy is functionally motivated in two distinct ways, both of them, however, related to issues of information structure in discourse. Chafe (1980, 1987) and Pawley and Syder (1979, 1983) hypothesize that as a result of cognitive constraints on on-line speech production, it is easier to process utterance units containing only one piece of new information each. The presentational strategy described here lends tangible support to this hypothesis, in that narrative information which would otherwise be encoded in a single utterance -- the introduction of a new referent, and the asserting of something new about that referent (e.g. 'On the third day, a rabbit's turn came') -- is presented in two separate utterances. While this strategy has become

largely conventionalized in Tamil, its cognitive basis is evident in several examples in the corpus, where the narrator begins an informationally-complex sentence, becomes overloaded, and "bails out" in mid-stream by converting it to a verbless presentational sentence, as in (39):

- (39) Uṭaṇē, appa tāṇ oru poṇṇu vantu, a- anta japanese girl,
 immediately then EMPH one girl TOP that Japanese girl
 oru girl-ai pāttu, **anta poṇṇu vantu...** [3:22]
 one girl-ACC see-AvPn that girl TOP
 'Just then, a girl, the Japanese girl, having seen a girl, **the girl...**'

In this example, all mentions of 'girl' refer to the same referent, one of the two main characters in the story. The narrator appears to begin with the intention of treating 'a girl' as the subject of a finite predicate, then switches to a construction in which 'the girl' is the direct object of the adverbial participle 'having seen'. However, since this is the first mention of the girl in the story, the narrator evidently decides that the information load of both introducing and asserting something new of her is too heavy, and at the end she switches back to simply presenting 'the girl' in the nominative case. At that point, the listener helps out by asking a question: 'Did the Japanese girl come for (the agricultural meeting) too?', to which the narrator responds with a nominal predication in which the referent is now clearly treated as given information:

- (40) Illai. Illai. Anta poṇṇu vantu, tourist.
 No no that girl TOP tourist
 'No. No. The girl (was) a tourist'.

Switching to verbless presentation in mid-sentence is also found where the referent is particularly complex or potentially difficult to access, regardless of whether or not it plays an important thematic role in the narrative. In (41) below, the narrator begins ambitiously, but finishes by breaking her informational content down into two sentences:

- (41) Kuñcaṇ nampiyār tāṇ 'ottantullal' appatiṇṇu.. aṇke natakkiṇa..
 Kunjan Nambiyar EMPH 'Ottantullal' thus QUOT there happen-PrAjP
 oru tēns- ai, .. kēraḷā nāṭṭ- ilō.. rompa mukkiyamāna oru.. natanam.
 one dance-ACC Kerala country-LOC very important one dance
 At- ai kaṇṭupiti-cc-avar- ē, avar tāṇ. [6:11]
 that-ACC discover- P-PN3sg.resp-EMPH he EMPH
 '(It was) Kunjan Nambiyar who (Ø) a dance(ACC) that happens there called
 'Ottantullal'. In Kerala country, a very important dance(NOM). He (was)
 the one who discovered it(ACC)'.

Here the narrator's original intention appears to have been to state that 'Kunjan Nambiyar was the one who discovered an important dance that happens in Kerala country called 'Ottantullal''. The dance itself plays no role in the story other than assisting in the identification of one of the characters, Kunjan Nambiyar. As such, it is appropriate that it be backgrounded by being mentioned in the accusative case. At the same time, it is a complex, culturally-specific referent with which the narrator cannot reasonably expect her audience -- an American -- to be familiar. By first presenting the dance form as the subject of its own verbless utterance, she is able to then background it to the new information in the subsequent utterance. As a consequence of introducing one new piece of information per utterance, a processible flow of information is maintained.

The second functional motivation concerns the relative saliency of information within a single utterance. In Tamil, as in other languages with SV word order, normal focus position occurs later, rather than earlier, in the sentence. As a strict verb-final SOV language, however, Tamil prohibits non-verbal elements from appearing after the finite verb, except as afterthoughts. In the case of transitive sentences with two or more surface NP's, the position of greatest focus is immediately preceding the finite verb, or normal 'object' position. With intransitive verbs with a single subject NP,

however, the saliency of pre-verbal position is neutralized, and there is a tendency for focus to be accorded to the verb. This poses a functional problem for referent presentation in narrative, since newly introduced should ideally be in focus, even when they are subjects of intransitive verbs, as is often the case.⁶⁶ The Tamil presentational construction solves this problem by omitting the verb. This works in two ways: first, it leaves the subject nominal in sentence-final position; an effect which is especially noticeable when it is preceded by one or more adverbial complements; second, it removes the principal competitor for focus interpretation -- the finite verb -- from the sentence altogether.⁶⁷

The use of $\emptyset V$ in referent presentation is therefore well-motivated. However, $\emptyset V$ presentation accounts for less than a quarter of new nominal referents introduced in the sample overall. The remaining three-quarters are introduced as subjects of intransitives, objects of transitives, and to a lesser extent, in oblique case roles and equational constructions. These case roles do not specialize in the presentational function as does the $\emptyset V$ construction, however; they refer to given and/or accessible referents more often than to new ones, in contrast with the $\emptyset V$ construction which refers almost exclusively to brand new or re-introduced referents.⁶⁸ Thus $\emptyset V$ is the only construction in Tamil specialized in the presentational function; the problem remains, however, to account for why it is or isn't used.

Any $\emptyset V$ presentational sentence can be effectively paraphrased using a sentence containing a finite verb; that is, there is no semantic difference between the two constructions. What, then, is the functional value of $\emptyset V$ presentation? Part of the

⁶⁶ The most common presentational verbs -- 'be', 'live', 'sit', 'lie', 'stand', 'come', and 'go' -- are all intransitive.

⁶⁷ Herring and Paolillo (1991).

⁶⁸ See Herring (1989).

answer, as in the case of the dative/possessive type, is that verblessness itself is marked, and hence contextually salient, in narrative. Moreover, $\emptyset V$ constructions are characterized by nominal focus, and thus are typically associated with participant identification and description in background contexts. Within these contexts, $\emptyset V$ highlights selected referents or situations, the highlighting function deriving in an iconic fashion from the marked structural value of zero predication in Tamil grammar. Individual narrators employ this strategy in a variety of ways: to introduce major participants (52.9% of narratives (N=17) with $\emptyset V$); to underscore the evaluative point (23.5%); or to set the scene at new episode boundaries (23.5%). All of these uses involve the presentational function; that is, they present nominal elements so as to be able to talk about them later.

A third set of uses (N=13) follows the general pattern outlined in the previous paragraph, with the exception that they are not presentational. Referents that appear in such uses are not necessarily new in the discourse, nor are they taken up again in what follows. Rather, their **existence** is asserted, but in a way that accords greater focus to the referent itself than to the fact of its existence. The particular evaluative function of this type of focus must be inferred in each case by the listener on the basis of the content and context of the utterance; that is, there is no single function -- at least in narrative -- that focused existential assertion fulfills. In some cases it simply intensifies the asserted situation:

- (42) Appuram mēl oru mācam vāḷkkaiy-ile.. taṅka muṭi-y-āta kaṣṭam.
 after above one month life- LOC bear-INF be.able-NPneg-AjP difficulty
 'Even for a month afterwards, in (my) life, unbearable difficulty'. [2:96]

In other cases, it encodes a referent as perceived by a participant in the narrative. Such usage may lead to an inference that the perceived referent is surprising or intensified from the point of view of the participant:

(43) "Enna" nnu pār-ttatum, pāmpu katacca viṣam. [5:16]

what QUOT see-as.soon.as snake bite-PAjP poison

'When (they) looked to see what (had caused her death), snake bite poison'.

(The 'they' in this example are doctors, and the discovery of snake venom is especially surprising in that the location is a hospital and the patient, a woman who has just given birth. It is not new information to the narrative audience, but it is new to the characters in the story.)

Finally, when the existence of different referents is encoded verblessly in successive clauses, the effect may be one of a series of descriptive vignettes which, taken together, characterize the scene:

(44) Paṇi malai pōl perum māḷikai-y-ām.

snow mountain like great jasmine-EVID

Muttu oḷi viṭ- um mantapam-ām.

pearl shine give.off-FAjP mandapam-EVID

Moy-kkum vaṇṭu-kaḷ pōl cōlai- kaḷ-ām. [13:15-17]

swarm-FAjP bee- pl. like flower.garden-pl.-EVID

'(There are) great jasmine flowers like snowy mountains, it seems.

(There is) a mandapam [pillared hall] which gives off a pearly luster, it seems.

(There are) flower gardens like swarming bees, it seems'.

This last example is from a Bow Song narrative; it is sung in response to a question about the city of Aṭṣanāpuram, the locale in which the narrative action takes place. None of the referents described -- jasmine, mandapam, flower gardens -- is mentioned again in the story. The effect of stating them verblessly here is akin to a succession of cinematic close-ups, in which one image after the other fills the screen. The fact that they are in series de-emphasizes the importance of any single image, resulting in a collective descriptive effect.

Despite the fact that the 'presentational' function is far more common than the 'existential' function in narrative, I believe that the meaning of ØV in general must be

derived from the notion of existence, at least in its prototypical uses. Existence gives rise to the notion of 'possession' with dative experiencers, e.g. 'to X there exists a Y'; it also gives rise to presentation via the notion of metaphorical existence in a narrative discourse context (cf. the English presentational 'there is/was a X' construction). Both of these derived uses have grammaticalized such that the notion expressed by the deleted verb need no longer be that of static existence. The dative/possessive construction can encode either a state or the inception of a state, and the presentative construction presupposes a variety of semantically-recoverable predicates, including 'be', 'come', 'go', 'lie', 'live', etc. The relationship between the three basic $\emptyset V$ types is diagrammed in figure 4 below:

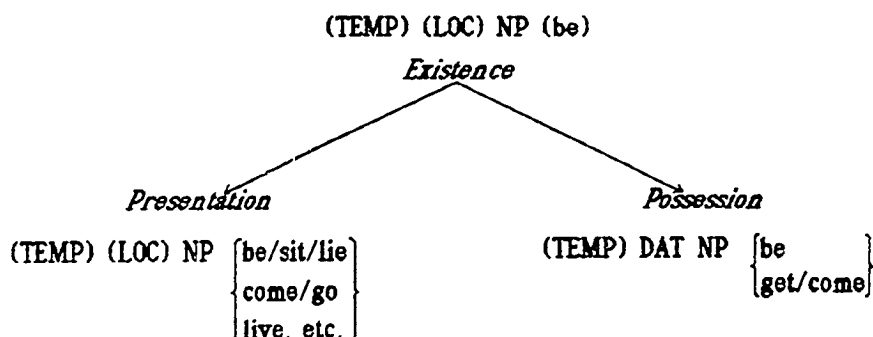


Fig. 4: Grammaticalization of $\emptyset V$ types from 'existential' function

These three functions account for 89.2% of $\emptyset V$ usage in the data; there remain only two small categories to account for. The first of these (5.4%) involves the idiom *oru itu* 'a thing'. According to this strategy, an eventive situation is viewed globally as a static referent, as in (45):

- (45) Oru malaiy-ile pōy appatīyē.. aikkiyam āyi- r- r-ā nnu oru itu.
 one mt.- LOC go-AvP thus-EMPH oneness become-PFV-Pr-3sg.f QUOT one thing
 '(There's) a thing where she goes to a mountain and becomes one (with God)' [19:92]

This strategy is perhaps best viewed as a metaphorical extension of the 'existence' function proper.

The second strategy (4.3%) also involves treating events as states; in this usage, however, rather than according a single, global focus to a situation as a whole, the result or end-state of a dynamic event receives the focus. This is illustrated in (46):

- (46) "Ayyō pāmpu" nnu coll-i tatt-i vitav-um, paḷiccu nnu orē kottu.
 oh.no snake QUOT say-AvP hit-AvP let-as.soon.as flash: QUOT one-EMPH bite
 'As soon as she realized "oh no, a snake!" and struck out at it, in a flash, a terrible bite'. [5:7]

Here the emphasis is on the bite; the fact that it is encoded verblessly gives rise to an inference of suddenness.⁶⁹ A similar inference is also available in the following:

- (47) Pār-tta-v- uṭanē avan manac-ilē oru tittam. [18:76]
 see-PAjP- as.soon.as he mind- LOC one plan
 'As soon as he saw (the anklet), in his mind, a plan'.

The effect of this last example can be compared with an image of a cartoon character with a lightbulb going on over his head. Despite the fact that it achieves its effect via nominal (i.e. participant) focus, this strategy represents one of the most emphatic means available for encoding narrative events. As in the case of nominal predication, the emphatic or highlighting effect arises from the marked juxtaposition of a static, participant-oriented strategy with a dynamic plot-line event.

The breakdown of θ V tokens in the sample by functional type is summarized in table 12 below:

⁶⁹ While this interpretation is bolstered by the presence of temporal adverbials such as *uṭanē* and the 'past participle + -um' construction, both of which mean 'as soon as', the contributions of these to the suddenness effect of examples (46) and (47) is relatively minor, since both can occur equally well in sentences where no suddenness is implied.

Functional type	Number of tokens	% of total ØV
possessive	23	24.7%
presentational	47	50.5%
existential	13	14.0%
<i>oru itu</i> 'a thing'	5	5.4%
sudden event	4	4.3%
misc. other	1	1.1%
Total:	93	100%

Table 12: ØV functional types

The overall function of the ØV construction can be summarized as follows. As a device associated primarily with participant focus and orientation information in background contexts, it provides a means whereby narrators can selectively highlight features of the background for evaluative effect. Specifically, the construction specializes in participant identification and introduction. Semantically, ØV is based on the notion of existence, both literal and metaphorical. Although prototypically this implies durative states, in fact many of the uses in the Tamil data involve events or changes-of-state; this is due to the predominance in narrative of the presentational and possessive functions -- which have extended the notion of existence into dynamic contexts -- over the purely existential one. Thus the functional characterization of ØV as a whole involves two features: nominal focus, and existence.

In contrast, the nominal predicate construction discussed in 5.1 is characterized by the features of nominal focus and attribution. The two constructions often co-occur in orientation sections of a narrative text; a common pattern is for a referent to be introduced in a $\emptyset V$ sentence, and then characterized in a nominal predicate one (an example of this can be seen in (37) above). Both function similarly in their capacity to emphasize the sudden, dynamic nature of narrative events by focusing on their result (compare example (19) with (45) and (46)); however, such usage is highly marked, and relatively infrequent for both constructions.

With respect to their relationship to verbal predication, the two non-verbal types differ: nominal predicates are not the semantic equivalents of equational sentences + copula, while $\emptyset V$ sentences can always be replaced with verbal ones without changing their meaning, although their evaluative significance will differ. Both non-verbal types occur with roughly equal frequency in the narrative sample; neither occurs in all of the contexts in which it could possibly occur.

In this chapter I have focused on the two non-verbal predication types, describing the behavior of verbal predication only in those contexts where either a verbal or a verbless predication could be used. In the following two chapters, the problem of verbal predication is considered in greater detail.

Chapter 6: Tense

Tense, as a grammatical category, is associated with location in time. It is also a deictic notion: that is, its referential value is determined relative to the 'now' of the speaker or reporting ego. Tenses which take as their deictic center the present moment are known as 'absolute' tenses, while those which take as their point of orientation a situation in either past or future time are 'relative' tenses. The three basic absolute tenses are past (situation prior to speaker now), present (situation co-temporaneous with speaker now), and future (situation subsequent to speaker now). In addition, some languages have forms which express degrees of distance from speaker now in past or (less commonly) future time; Tamil, however, is not such a language. Relative tense is encoded grammatically in numerous languages by means of 'perfect' forms. Perfects generally have an aspectual value (completion) as well as a tensed one (current relevance), and thus are sometimes classified as aspects rather than as tenses in grammatical treatments. In Tamil, the perfect is an auxiliary form which bears a close morphological resemblance to other aspectual auxiliary forms. In contrast, the three absolute tenses are all formed by the addition of simple suffixes.⁷⁰ On these grounds, I categorize the Tamil perfect as an aspect for the purposes of this analysis, restricting the category of tense in Tamil to the simple, absolute tenses.

Although important research is now being conducted on the meanings and functions of tense forms in discourse (see especially Fleischman 1990), the more traditional view -- that contextual functions are secondary to the basic "meanings" of

⁷⁰ This is true of Modern Tamil. Historically, the present tense marker is believed to have derived from a verbal auxiliary (Rajam 1985; Steever 1989).

tense forms -- still holds sway in many quarters. In a section entitled "Tense, grammar, and discourse", Comrie (1985) explicitly states that

[T]enses have meanings definable indepently of particular contexts; it is possible for a given tense to have more than one meaning, in which case some of the meanings may be more basic than others; it is also possible that a tense will receive particular interpretations in particular contexts, but these are always explainable in terms of the interaction of context-independent meaning and context, and do not therefore form part of the meaning of the tense category in question.
(26)

For Comrie, the basic meaning is "grammaticalised location in time" (9). We will see, however, that the Tamil narrative data pose a problem for Comrie's claim that the contextualized meanings of tense are "always explainable" on the basis of the primary meaning and the context: at the very least, they require us to articulate far more precisely than has been done thus far the nature of the contextual given.

Discussions of tense in Tamil grammars adhere closely to the traditional view. Occasionally, 'exceptional uses' are listed: these are invariably conventionalized and/or idiomatic, such as the use of future tense for habitual actions, and do not involve discourse functions per se. In the following sections, I consider the behavior of Tamil tense forms in the narrative discourse context.

6.1 Past.

6.1.1 Traditional accounts.

Few Tamil grammarians explicitly state the meaning of past tense, perhaps because they take it to be self-evident. The most comprehensive statement is that of Lehmann (1989), who writes of the 'interpretation' of past tense that it "refers generally to the past time of an action, event, or state. It is the only tense which is

marked for definite time reference" (1989:65). Of note in this statement is the fact that the Tamil past can refer to a state; that is, it is not restricted to an interpretation of aspectual perfectivity, as are simple past forms in some languages.⁷¹ It is unclear what Lehmann intends by the expression "marked for definite time reference", however. On the basis of his example ('Last month I saw Kumar') we may infer that the simple past tense in Tamil carries with it an implication of a single, unique occurrence.

Both Lehmann and Lazarus (1878) note the existence of two exceptional uses, whereby past tense forms have future time reference. In the first of these, a past perfective form (i.e. with aspectual *viṭu*) is used to refer to a situation that the speaker wishes to reassure the hearer will take place immediately -- if not sooner. Thus a Tamil speaker may respond to an exhortation to "hurry up" with the following:

- (48) Nān va- ntū-(vi)ṭ-ṭ-ēṇ.
 I come-AvP-PFV-P-1sg.
 'I'm coming! (lit. I've (already) come)'

The second exceptional use involves a simple past tense verb; it expresses "certainty", according to Lazarus; Lehmann states that it is used for purposes of warning or threatening:

- (49) Nī it- ai toṭ- ṭāl cet-t-āy
 you this-ACC touch-COND die-P-2sg.
 'Touch this and you're dead (lit. If you touch this, you died)'.

Note that in both cases, colloquial English makes use of the present tense to express the same future-time notions.

⁷¹ The French *passé simple*, for example.

6.1.2 Past tense in narration.

Despite the fact that the meaning of the past tense receives little attention from traditional grammarians, it plays a central semantic and functional role in Tamil narrative. The narrative prototype with which we are operating crucially involves events that took place (or are treated linguistically as though they took place) in past time. Applying the dictates of the 'best fit' principle evoked in 3.5, it follows that the basic, expected, or otherwise unmarked tense in narration is the past. In Tamil, the simple past tense occupies this unmarked status. Although the statistical incidence of simple present tense forms is higher in the corpus overall (for reasons given in 6.2 below), the simple past is broader in its distribution: nearly one-third of the texts in the sample have zero or only a single token of the simple present,⁷² but none of them lack simple past forms. It is also the case, as noted by Lehmann, that situations of all semantic types -- states, as well as processes and dynamic changes-of-state -- can be expressed using the simple past.

Use of the simple past is also the unmarked functional norm from which the other tense/aspect/predication forms derive their value in narration. With the exception of comments -- interruptions, digressions, etc. -- taking as their point of orientation the time of the telling,⁷³ most verbal forms in narrative refer to past time, i.e. by virtue of their occurrence in the narrative context. Primary tense distinctions (in Comrie's sense) are thus neutralized in narrative. At the same time, non-past (non-simple, non-verbal) forms contrast functionally with the simple past in systematic ways, suggesting a relationship between the two involving something

⁷² All but one of these are in the real-life account genre, where there is a strong preference for past tense forms. However, the inverse situation does not exclude the use of past tense forms: in the elicited epics genre, where the preference for present tense is even more categorical, simple past forms still occur.

⁷³ As opposed to the time of the narrated events.

other than temporal location. In order to understand the contrastive significance of usage of this sort, we clearly require a functional/semantic characterization of past tense which goes beyond the notion of past time reference.

The characterization that I feel best accounts for the data -- not only the distribution of simple past tense forms but the distribution of other verbal forms as well -- involves the analysis of past tense as a cluster of semantic and functional features which, taken together, define the narrative prototype or norm. I start with the assumption that the simple past, as the morphologically least marked exponent of the past tense system, is the most prototypical form (in Tamil, and probably in other languages as well); thus the general statements which follow should be understood to apply primarily to simple past usage. Past time reference in narrative gives rise to the joint inferences of **completion** (boundedness) and **distance**. Completion, a feature of meaning also associated with aspectual perfectivity, leads to the notion of **sequence** (in that one situation must be completed before the onset of the next) and plot line **events**. Distance, on the other hand, gives rise to the interpretation, in normative usage, of objectivity and **factuality**, making the past the preferred tense of reports as well. Because narration is typically structured around a particular sequence of events that happened only once, the simple past also implies **semelfactivity**, or single occurrence. Finally, the use of simple past in the context of sequential, plot-line events is expected and hence evaluatively **non-salient**.⁷⁴

This norm is rarely observed in all of its particulars, however. On the basis of the discussions in previous chapters, it is clear that a well-developed narrative is likely to contain non-eventive and temporally overlapping situations, i.e. as

⁷⁴ The one exception to this statement occurs when the base tense of the narrative as a whole shifts to the historical present. Under such circumstances, past tense forms in eventive contexts are evaluatively **marked**.

supporting ground on which to orient the basic event structure. Further, narrative is often highly expressively evaluated; in fact, evaluation is an integral component of narration, in keeping with the definition put forth in chapter 3. Evaluation can take various forms, both overt and covert; Labov (1972) notes, however, the existence of a general, overarching strategy which involves any deviation from "basic narrative syntax", a construct defined in part by the use of simple past tense forms. In the Tamil corpus, evaluative violations of this sort may involve employing forms other than the simple past in eventive plot line contexts (as described for verbless predication in the previous chapter), and of employing the simple past in contexts other than those in which it normally appears. Each of these violations can be accounted for in terms of the neutralization of one or more of the features of 'pastness' (excluding the 'past time reference' feature, which is already neutralized by the overall context) mentioned above.

In order to demonstrate this point, we must first consider the predominant patterns in the distribution of past tense forms in the narrative corpus. Past tense is used in the sample 516 times, comprising 31.8% of the total finite clauses. Within this category, morphologically simple pasts account for the majority of uses, followed by past perfectives, past progressives, past perfects, past forms of other compound auxiliaries,⁷⁵ and 'past' (i.e. non-future) tense negatives and modals. The exact distribution is given in table 13 below:

⁷⁵ These are *kol* (N=11), *pō* (N=6), *ā* (N=3), *pōtu* (N=1), *patu* (N=1), and *vā* (N=1).

Grammatical form	Tokens of use	Percent of total past
simple past	257	49.8%
past perfective	167	32.5%
past progressive	14	2.7%
past perfect	12	2.3%
past misc. aux	23	4.5%
neg/modal	43	8.4%
Total	516	100%

Table 13: Breakdown of past tense forms in narrative sample

In addition to the fact that simple pasts predominate over compound forms, the correlation between past tense and perfective aspect is especially noteworthy: past perfectives are on the average 13 times more frequent than either past progressives or past perfects.⁷⁶ This finding is compatible with the characterization of past tense as involving completed, sequential, plot line events, in that these features are also encoded by perfective aspect. Finally, it is also relevant that the miscellaneous aux category is well-attested here,⁷⁷ since the majority of these have a perfectivizing function as well.

In the discussion that follows, I focus primarily on the use of the simple past tense, leaving the analysis of tense-aspect combinations for Chapters 7 and 8. I also

⁷⁶ In fact, the clear majority (69.9%) of perfective forms in the sample as a whole are in the past tense; cf. 7.1.2.

⁷⁷ 53.3% of all misc. auxes are in past tense, as compared with 37.8% in present and 8.9% in future.

exclude here the use of negative and modal forms, which are ambiguous in their temporal reference between a past and a present interpretation (see 4.1).

The majority (84.8%) of simple past forms occur in the relating of sequential events of the narrative plot line, where the events described are active and/or involve a change of state, and are of relatively brief duration. Consider example (50) below, from a *Pancatantra* folk tale:

- (50) a. 'Nān pōy pāttu-kki- rēn.. oru kai' appaṭi ntu, pō-cc-u.
 I go-AvP see- REFL-Pr1sg one hand thus QUOT go- P- 3sg.n
 b. Appō.. inta muyal-kitta coll-i-ttu.
 then this rabbit-LOC say- P-3sg.n
 c. 'Enakku pōy kāṇpi. Inta inṇoru ciṅkam eṅke iru-kk-u?' nttu.
 1sg.-DAT go-AvP show-IMP this another lion where be- Pr-3sg.n QUOT
 d. Appa.. inta muyal munnāṭi pōy oru kiṇaru-kitta pō-ccu.
 then this rabbit in front go-AvP one well- LOC go-P3sg.n
 e. Kiṇaru-le pōy 'aṅke ulle irukku pārūṅka' appaṭi n- atu.
 well-LOC go-AvP there inside be-Pr3sg.n look-IMPpl. thus sayP-3sg.n
 f. Appō, anta ciṅkam mēlē ēri pār-tt-atu. [7:29-34]
 then that rabbit top climb-AvP look-P- 3sg.n
- a. "I'll go have myself a look", (the lion) said, and **started up** (lit. 'went').
 b. Then (it) **said** to the rabbit,
 c. "Show me where this other lion is".
 d. Then the rabbit **led** the way to a well.
 e. It went to the well and **said**, "It's inside there. Look!"
 f. Then the lion climbed up and **looked** (in).

This example is representative of simple past usage in that the events related are sequential and part of the linear plot. It is also typical in that the simple past events are not the "core" events of the story; that is, they are not evaluated by the narrator as being especially salient or crucial. (The encoding of core plot-line events is a function of perfective aspect; see 7.1.) At the same time, it is also somewhat atypical, in that simple past forms are used in six successive event clauses, rather than

in a pattern in which other clause-types intervene. Sequences of simple pasts other than this example do occur, but they typically involve directly quoted material embedded by verbs of saying such as *en* 'say', *col* 'say', or *kēl* 'ask'. Verbs of saying may also be marked with perfective aspect, i.e. when the saying or the thing said is especially central to the narrator's intended point,⁷⁸ but such usage is relatively less frequent, a fact which suggests that direct quotes are not as likely to constitute primary events as are clauses of pure narration.

Other examples (N=12; 4.7%) illustrate what I term the 'reportative' function of simple past tense usage. In these examples, the narrator asserts the occurrence of a past event not with respect to its role in the narrative sequence but rather as an informative statement of fact. As a consequence, reportative simple pasts do not always encode events in linear order; some are off the time line (previous or later occurrences), and others are 'meta'-comments on the narrated situation (or the act of narration itself) in which the narrator momentarily steps back and evokes a real-time perspective. Examples of these two types are given in (51) and (52):

(52)a. Tuition ve- ccu paṭi-ccittīru-nt-atu, anta piḷḷai iṅkiliṣ.

tuition place-AvP study-PROG- P-3sg.n that girl English

b. Appuram tān teri- āc-atu⁷⁹ itellām. [3:65-6]

afterwards EMPH be.known-P- 3sg.n this.all

(after relating how a Japanese girl had written a letter in English:)

a. 'She was paying to study English, the girl.

b. (We) learned all this afterwards'.

⁷⁸ An example of this occurs in the real-life account 'Hm!', the point of which is that the uttering of the interjection 'hm!' has semantic and pragmatic significance. Accordingly, the clause in which the main character utters the interjection in order to test the hypothesis is marked for past perfective.

⁷⁹ The past tense modal *teriñcatu* 'became known' has exclusively past time reference.

- (53)a. *Avan pēru tamarai tōjan nu pēru.*
 3sg.masc name Tamarai Dojan QUOT name
 b. *Pēru-kal ellām rompa col- r- atu-kku kastam-ā iru-kkum nu*
 name-pl.all very say-Pr-VN-DAT difficult-COP-F3sg.n QUOT
nīnka itu panni-kka vēntām.
 you this take- REFL-INF not.necessary
 c. *Pēr-ai mattum con-n-ēn avvalavu tān.* [11:15-7]
 name-ACC only say- P-1sg.that.much EMPH

(after presenting the names of the two main characters, which are very similar:)

- a. 'His name is Tamarai Dojan.
 b. You shouldn't go imagining that the names are all going to be really hard to say.
 c. I just **said** the name(s), that's all'.

The (a) sentence in each of the examples above is an orientation clause of the narrative world. In sentences (52b) and (53b-c), however, the narrator interrupts the thread of the narration to address the audience in real time, making use of the simple past tense to assert the occurrence of an event at a time prior to the moment of speaking (i.e. past tense refers to location in time). Such usage in narrative is the exception, rather than the norm. It does however provide an illustration of the 'objective/factual' feature of past tense meaning in narration.

As stated above, 84.8% of simple past tense forms can be analyzed as containing the ensemble of prototypical pastness features discussed above. Excluding the purely 'reportative' uses, the remaining 10.5% violate one or more features, and thus constitute apparent exceptions to the functional meaning of past tense that I have proposed. The exceptions, all of which occur in background contexts as 'orientation' or 'restricted clauses' (in Labov's terminology) can be grouped into five categories: durative state, temporary state, activity/process, habitual action, and background event. Since these instances encode background notions, they all violate the plot-line ('foregrounding' in the notional sense) feature of the pastness prototype. In addition,

state and ongoing activity simple pasts violate the joint notions of punctuality and perfectivity, while habitual actions violate semelfactivity. Each category is considered separately below.

Durative state simple pasts

In the sample as a whole, there are six examples of the stative verb *iru* 'to be' in simple past tense, each of which has a static, existential function. Recall that although Lehmann states that any verb can appear in the simple past, in narrative this form is normally associated with actions rather than with states or processes. On the one hand, the existence of only six exceptions (2.3% of simple pasts) could be seen as lending support to this association; in fact, however, it is possible to make an even stronger case by explaining away the apparent exceptions altogether.

An examination of the texts in which the past tense forms of *iru* occur reveals that the six instances occur in three texts: *4 - 'The American Students' Swimming Pool', *7 - 'The Lion and the Rabbit', and *12 - 'Two Pious Men'. These texts are unusual with regard to their use of tense and aspect. Texts *4 and *7 are the only two texts in the sample in which no simple present tense forms are used, and text *12 makes virtually no use of perfective aspect (one instance each in past and present tense). The lack of simple present forms in the first two texts is directly relevant, in that the normal expected tense for existential *iru* is the simple present (see 6.2 below). The two narrators in question do not contrast past and present in order to distinguish between activities and states, or between sequential events and background, as do the others in the sample. As a consequence, the simple past in their narratives must serve as an all-purpose form to encode situations of both types.

In text *12, on the other hand, the narrator does make use of present tense forms, such that the above analysis does not apply. He does not, however, use present tense to signal background states; rather, the historical present is used to 'set the scene' for the most highly evaluated portions of the text, in which contexts it is used with both states and preparatory events. At the same time, the absence of perfective aspect in the narration of this text means that the simple past must carry additional functions. The result appears to be a neutralization of narrative pastness features in favor of a more generalized conception of the simple past tense's function.

This accounts nicely for the use of past tense with *iru* if we assume that the narrators' sole alternative is the simple present. In fact, all but one of the examples functions to present a new referent, and thus might conceivably have been expressed by means of a zero predicate as well (see 5.2). It is not as easy to justify the non-occurrence of zero predication in these sentences, since each of the three narrators makes use of $\emptyset V$ presentation at least once in other contexts. Recall, however, that $\emptyset V$ presentation is never used systematically in all of the contexts in which it is sanctioned to occur, but is rather an optional, evaluative strategy. A second consideration is that two of the examples are absolute discourse-initial, and another is scene-initial, these being contexts in which past tense forms are more likely to be used, i.e. in order to establish the temporal frame of reference for the narrative (or scene) as a whole. That is, Tamil narrators are more likely to begin a story with the Tamil equivalent of 'Once upon a time there was a king', than with the verbless 'Once upon a time, a king'. When we exclude discourse-initial uses, we find that the three remaining cases all occur in narrative *4. This narrative has only 1 instance of $\emptyset V$ presentation; thus it is probably safe to conclude that zero predication did not constitute a significant alternative for this narrator, while simple past, as a general

tense of narration, did. Thus we may refine our characterization of the relationship of past tense to static, non-eventive situations to state that the simple past tense *never* refers to durative states in Tamil narration, except in cases where the narrator's grammatical system assigns to the simple past a more general narrative function.

Temporary state simple pasts

A total of eight instances of temporary states are encoded by means of the simple past tense: four involve the verb *iru*, three the copula *-ā iru*, and one, the verb *iṭṭuku* 'to sleep'. There appear to be two functional motivations for the use of the simple past in these examples: the encoding of states as temporally bounded (i.e. complete) in past time, and the viewing of states as 'events' in a narrative sequence. The first usage has already been discussed for the *-ā iru* copula in 5.1.3, and a similar analysis can be applied to two of the non-copular *iru*'s as well. In text #15, 'Rama in the Forest of the Demons', the narrator relates a sequence of narrative clauses in the present tense (the dominant tense of narration in this text) describing the reception of Rama and his brother by the sages in the forest. Then he says the following:

- (54)a. Anta camayatt-ile rām-ā nī eppaṭi iru-nt-e!
 that time- LOC Rama-VOC you how be- P- 2sg.
 b. Unn-utaiya mukam eppaṭi iru-nt-atu! [15:37-8]
 you- GEN face how be- P- 3sg.n
 a. 'At that time, O Rama, you **were** (so happy)! (lit. you were how!)
 b. Your face **was** (wondrous to behold)! (lit. your face was how!)

The use of the vocative here functions as a signal that the narrator has moved from straight narration to an expressive style (one might almost say 'devotional', given the genre and the fact that Rama is worshipped in India as a god). The past tense in these sentences bounds the states referred to as 1) of temporary duration, and 2) no longer

in effect, as does also the explicit temporal adverbial *anta camayattile* 'at that time'. The use of present tense, on the other hand, could have been misconstrued as expressing a general devotional statement; e.g. 'O Rama, your face is wondrous to behold!', an ambiguity which the narrator takes pains to avoid. This use of the simple past exploits the 'completion' feature of narrative pastness by using past tense with a non-prototypical (non-completive) verb.

The second function involves the viewing of temporary states as events in the narrative sequence. There are three examples of this, each occurring in a different narrative. Consider (55) below:

- (55)a. Pāl koṭutt-uttu, kulantaṭṭ-ai tūṅka vaccu, tōṭṭi-y-ile pōṭṭ-ut-t-āṅka.
milk give-PFV-AvP child-ACC sleep-INF place-AvP cradle-LOC put-PFV-P-3pl.
b. Pōṭṭ-uttu ivāṅka tūṅk-in-āṅka.
put-PFV-AvP she sleep-P-3pl.
c. Tūṅki, oru arai maṇi nēram kūṭa iru-kkāṭu. [5:2-4]
sleep-AvP one half hour time even be-NEG-NP
- (The mother) gave milk to her child, put it to sleep, and placed it in a cradle.
 - Having placed (it) (there), she slept.
 - Having slept, it wouldn't even have been half an hour.

Although the simple past form of *tūṅku* does not normally refer to the inception of the sleep state, it may do so, and several factors invite us to interpret the past form in this sense here. First, the internal structure of the sleeping is not critical to the advancement of the plot; nothing happens until the character is awakened by a snake at her breast. Nevertheless, one might have expected the narrator to present the sleeping as the background against which this surprising event takes place, e.g. by using a present tense or progressive aspect form. Instead, she treats it linguistically in parallel with the events of giving the child milk and putting it down to sleep, both of which are similarly related via past tense, finite verbs, and then resumed

adverbially at the beginning of the following clause.⁸⁰ The statement in (55c) that she slept for less than half an hour further bounds the situation temporally, thus making it appear more event-like.

When the temporary state is 'being' rather than 'sleeping', the eventive use of past tense is even more marked with respect to the norm. In (56) below, the narrator effectively encodes his temporary state of obsessing about a book as an event in the narrative sequence:

- (56)a. *Enna ā- ccu, oru nālu āncu nāl iṭṭaṭi iru-nt-ēn.*
 what happen-P3sg.n one four five day like.this be- P- 1sg.
 b. *Iru-nta pōtu (...) oru paiyaṇ enna paṇ-n-ān.* [1:9-12]
 be- PP time one boy what do- P-3sg.masc
 a. 'What happened (was), I **was** like this for about four or five days.
 b. When (I) **was** (like this), what a boy did (was) ...'

As in example (55) above, nothing transpires during the period of time in which the narrator is in this state until the arrival of the event that terminates it, thus the narrator does not choose to view it in terms of its internal constituency. In recognition of the fact that 'being' is a situation involving duration, the chaining repetition of *iru* at the beginning of clause (b) makes use of the simultaneous temporal adverbial *pōtu* 'time' (as opposed to the adverbial participle form, which implies sequence); however, 'being' is still effectively treated as an event in the chain thereby. Also as in (55), the state of being is specifically temporally bounded by the expression 'four or five days'. The same style of explanation accounts for the remaining example as well. Although rare, these examples illustrate the possibility of exploiting the 'sequential event' features of the pastness prototype by using simple

⁸⁰ This 'chaining' strategy is typical of event sequences in Tamil; for further examples of this strategy, see lines 8-17 of the sample text in appendix D.

past tense with what would otherwise, according to the dictates of the 'best fit' principle, be encoded as ongoing and/or durative background.

Activity/process simple pasts

Typically, activities and processes are expressed with progressive aspect in Tamil, and half of the situations of this semantic type in the past tense data do in fact make use of the progressive auxiliary *kittiru*. The majority of the remaining examples (N=4) can be accounted for by means of the same functional principle evoked for temporary states: that is, ongoing activities are treated as 'events' in sequence when encoded by the simple past. An example of this is given in (57):

- (57)a. Tiraupati evvalavō nēram varpurutti, appaṭi-y-ē tiyānam ellām cey-t-āḷ.
 Draupadi how.much time insist-AvP thus-EMPH meditation all do-P-3sg.f
 b. Pāṭellām pāt-in-āḷ.
 song.all sing-P-3sg.f
 c. Āṇā kannan vara-le. [16:118-120]
 but Krishna come-NFneg
- (Draupadi is going through various spiritual gymnastics in order to summon the god Krishna through the power of her meditation:)
- 'Draupadi **performed** meditation and the like in this manner, insisting for a long time.
 - She **sang** songs.
 - But Krishna didn't come'.

Despite the fact that the performing of meditation and the singing of songs are activities with a clear internal structure, and which most probably overlap with one another, they are presented here -- along with the negative outcome -- as completed wholes in a linear sequence. This choice appears to be motivated by the overall structure of the telling of this narrative: in the story, each of five characters attempts, one after the other, to summon Krishna, and fails. The use of the simple past

in the above sequence marks it as structurally parallel with the other (more active) attempts and failures.

One example cannot be accounted for in this manner. It occurs in text *12, and would appear to require the past progressive, since the context makes it clear that the situation described (standing with the eyes closed) is ongoing and unbounded. As noted above, text *12 makes virtually no use of perfective aspect. It is also the case that it makes very limited use of the progressive; in fact, there are no instances of the past progressive in the text. Again, therefore, the apparently exceptional behavior of the simple past tense reflects the more general function accorded that form in this narrator's system, in which a limited set of tense/aspect distinctions are available.⁸¹

Habitual action simple pasts

Excluding an example in which the simple past serves a 'reportative' function ('He would come (lit. came) to our house, and eat (ate) at our house' [3:93]), there is only one clear instance in the sample of a simple past tense verb being used to encode a habitual action. This is given in (58):

- (58)a. *Atu ciṅkatt-ai kaṇ-ṭā ellā- ellā.. animals-ukkum.. payam.*
 it lion- ACC see-COND all all animals-DAT fear
 b. *Appō.. inta ciṅkam vantū rompa cōmpēri.*
 then this lion TOP very lazy.one
 c. *Appō.. atu vēṭṭaiyāṭa pōratukku.. rompa cōmpal.*
 then it hunting go-Pr-VN-DAT very laziness
 d. *Appō enṇaṇṇākka... vēra mirukatt-ai ellām paya muṇutti cēṇ-c-atu.*
 then what.if.say other animal-ACC all frighten-AvP go- P-3sg.n
 e. *"āi- iṅke vantū.. tiṇam oru oru mirukam eṅkiṭṭa vara- ṇum.*
 all- here come-AvP daily one one animal 1sg.-LOC come-be.necessary

⁸¹ In chapter 7, I argue that this is a reflection of a genre-specific convention, rather than the grammar of an individual narrator.

Nān cāp̄ṭar̄atukku" appaṭi n̄nu collittatu. [7:3-7]

I eat-Pr-VN-DAT thus QUOT say-PFV-P-3sg.n

- a. 'It- all the- all the animals (are) afraid of the lion.
- b. A--nd.. this lion (is) really lazy.
- c. A--nd.. it('s) too lazy to go hunting.
- d. And then what (happens) is, it **frightened** all the other animals.
- e. "All- every day a different animal must come here to me. So I can eat it," it said.

Given that the narrator has already stated in (a) that the other animals are afraid of the lion, the most natural interpretation of 'frightened' in (d) is that the frightening took place on more than one occasion. The verbal form which would be most appropriate here is the simple future tense, which has habitual meaning. However, the fact that the narrator introduces the clause with *ennānnākkā* 'what (happens) is', and follows it with a specific instance of frightening, allows for the interpretation, at least in the local context, that what is being referred to in the simple past tense is a single act of frightening.

The ambiguity appears to be the result of poor planning. The narrator -- who grew up speaking Tamil as a child, but makes little use of the language in his adult life -- clearly has a model of basic narrative organization: general background information ((a) - (c)) is followed by event description ((d) - (e)). By setting up the fear of the animals as an orienting feature of the narrative as a whole, however, he is left in the awkward position of having to encode its cause as a subsequent event. There is thus no evidence that habitual, repeated actions can be described in Tamil narrative by means of the simple past, at least not as a mature, functionally motivated strategy.

Background event simple pasts

There are five examples in the narrative sample in which the simple past is used with events which are not part of the plot line, but rather serve a background, supportive function. 'Background events' are neither oxymoronic nor uncommon in narration; it is sometimes necessary to summarize prior events in order to illustrate a character's personal qualities, or to set the scene for the foregrounded events. Such usage may appear as part of the initial orientation, or as a flashback or explanatory digression at a later point in the narrative. In the former usage, no reordering of the event sequence is necessarily involved, while in the latter usage, the background events must logically be understood to have taken place prior to the foreground events, even though they follow them in linear sequence. This deviation is signalled in many languages by a special tense form, e.g. the past perfect in English, or the past perfective in Russian. In Tamil as well, the majority of previous event clauses (53.3%) are encoded by the past perfective, one (6.7%) by the past perfect, and one (6.7%) by the past form of the perfectivizing auxiliary *po*. The remaining five cases (33.3%) make use of the simple past alone.

In accounting for these cases, two points must be noted. First, all but one occur narrative-initially. Thus the events are not strictly-speaking out of order, an observation which may account for the absence of perfective marking. Second, they present background information which could equally well have been presented non-eventively. For example, the story in *16 begins with the statement 'The month of March arrived', rather than with 'It was the month of March' (or simply 'The month of March'). The use of past tense is not unusual here as a device for establishing past time reference for the story as a whole; what is less obvious, however, is why opening

situations should be presented as events. A particularly odd (to me) example is the following discourse-initial sequence.

- (59)a. Kāvīrippū paṭṭinatt-ilē... kannaki pira- nt-ā.
 Kāvīrippu town- LOC Kannaki be.born-P- 3sg.f
 b. Appo aṅke tān kōvalan-um pira- nt-āṇ.
 then there EMPH Kovalan-and be.born-P-3sg.masc
 a. 'In the town of Kāvīrippu, Kannaki **was born**.
 b. And it was there that Kovalan **was born**, too'.

Of the dozen or so versions of this story (the epic *Cilappatikāram*) that I collected, this is the only one in which the birth of the main characters is mentioned.⁸² In all other versions, the events of the story begin when they are married to one another as teenagers. The narrator of this example skips to the marriage in the utterance which follows, saying nothing further about their births or their childhood. The function served by the sentences in (a) and (b) above is therefore presentational, rather than eventive, yet they are encoded linguistically as sequential events.⁸³ Past-tense events being the basic structural units of narration, it follows that speakers might begin their narrations with a past-tense event as a means of signalling, unambiguously and at the outset, the discourse type in which they are engaged. I can think of no other functional motivation for this usage.

There remains one example which is not narrative-initial, and which is clearly eventive, but which is expressed by means of the simple past rather than the expected past perfective. In this instance, which occurs in text *4, the narrator gets ahead of himself in the event sequence and is then obliged to back up in order to relate an event which was logically prior. As in example (58) above, the usage appears to

⁸² Nor is their birth mentioned in the original 5th century written epic.

⁸³ In fact, the sequential interpretation is infelicitous, since Kovalan is older than Kannaki. This only increases the oddness of the usage.

reflects a production error rather than a functionally motivated strategy. Thus there are no cases in which a narrator strategically employs a simple past form for an event which is out of sequence; rather, the perfective aspect is reserved for this function.

This examination of the 'exceptions' to the pastness prototype has shown that they do not weaken the descriptive accuracy of the prototype, but rather indirectly reinforce it in many cases. This is because narrators are free -- within the confines of communicative effectiveness -- to violate existing norms in order to meet their particular expressive needs. The violations, in each case, point to a feature or features of narrative pastness which taken together, form the pastness prototype, but which can be manipulated separately by playing off of conventionalized correlations between grammatical forms and narrative functions.

Other functions of the past tense

In addition to its conventionalized associations with sequential, dynamic events of the narrative plot line, the past tense takes on additional functions in several of the texts in the sample. The most striking of these is its occurrence at or near the conclusion of a story to mark the narrative peak, the resolution, and to a lesser extent, the coda. In 84.2% of the texts in the sample, the peak and/or the resolution are expressed in past tense clauses, while codas -- in stories which have them (73.7%) -- are in the past tense 50% of the time.⁸⁴ For peaks and resolutions, past perfective is more common than simple past, while the reverse is true in codas. In the first case, this may be because peaks and resolutions are typically among the most salient events in narration, and hence tend to be evaluatively highlighted. Codas, on the other hand,

⁸⁴ Another 21.4% of codas are encoded by temporally ambiguous non-future negative modals, e.g. *teriville* 'didn't/doesn't know'.

have a summing up function, similar in certain respects to the 'reportative' use of the simple past, as in:

- (60) Anta mātiri nata- nt-uccu. [4:62]
 that manner happen-P- 3sg.n
 'It happened like that'.

What is interesting is that the affinity of past tense for these functions is evident even in narratives where the base tense of narration is the present, provided that past tense forms occur at least 15% of the time in the text overall.⁸⁵ There are only two narratives where this condition is not met: texts *17 and *19, which have 9.5% and 8.3% past tense forms respectively. In text *17, the peak and coda are in the simple present, and the resolution is in the present perfective. In text *19, the peak is in the present perfective, and the coda is a non-past negative modal, although the past perfective is used in two clauses at the resolution, in conformity with the dominant pattern.

In each of these narratives, what past forms are used take on a particular function which is different from that of sequential event encoding, and also different for each narrative. In text *17, past tense forms are used only at the beginning of the two major episodes which make up the plot, thus helping to structure the text globally and also to provide past time orientation for each episodes as a whole. In text *19, with the exception of the resolution events mentioned in the previous paragraph, past tense forms are used to refer to prior events: the birth of Kannaki and Kovalan in example (59) is prior (by a number of years) to the first real event of the story, and

⁸⁵ This figure is approximate. Two texts have less than 9.5% past tense; with the exception of the resolution in one, the three functions under discussion here all occur in non-past tenses. Another text which has 17.3% past tense, however, uses past tense for all three functions, as indeed do texts with greater than 17.3% past tense. Thus I infer that the critical point is located somewhere between 9.5% and 17.3%.

when the narrator later describes Kannaki's frustration after her husband has been killed, she refers back (in two past tense clauses) to the long period of time that she had had to live without him when he was carrying on an affair with a dancing girl. Thus each narrator is consistent in employing past tense for some systematic purpose; however the purpose in each case differs.

In contrast, the third text in the same genre (elicited epics), text #18, makes use of past tense 21% of the time, and this usage follows the normative pattern of past tense usage outlined above. The only difference is that the choice of past tense is more selective, and hence functions more evaluatively, than if all of the events of the story were in past tense. The narrator of #18 uses this to good effect: in relating the Cilappatikāram story, which contains numerous episodes, he employs past tense only in reference to those events which relate directly to the unjust murder of Kovalan, thereby evaluating it as the central focus of the event sequence.⁸⁶ It appears, then, that there is a certain 'critical mass' of past tense forms which must occur before past tense can be used in its prototypical functions; text #18 has achieved this critical mass and thus the use of past tense resembles that of other texts in which past tense is dominant.

Genre effects and past tense

As mentioned in 4.2, there are noticeable genre effects in the sample with respect to tense usage. Texts #17, #18, and #19, the elicited epics, make the least use of past tense overall. The motivations for this reside in the functional values of present tense usage, and are considered in 6.2 below. Both folk tales and performed epics make

⁸⁶ The point of the story can be (and has been) interpreted in a number of other ways, but the selection of this event as central seems to me a logical choice.

use of both past and present, although the folk tales prefer present tense overall, despite the fact that two texts in the category (*7 and *8) are related entirely or almost entirely in the past. In contrast, real-life accounts show a consistent preference for past tense usage. There are a number of possible explanations for this fact, the most plausible being that the stories are factual (or at least, are presented as though they are) and hence select for past as the dominant tense as a means of establishing a creditable, factual tone. The existence of genre effects must be taken into consideration, as the functional values of other forms can be seen to shift in relation to both the base tense of a narrative and the range of formal categories it employs.

6.2 Present.

6.2.1 Traditional accounts.

There is widespread agreement in grammars of the Tamil language that the present tense refers to situations in present time. Lazarus (1875:115) goes further to include, in addition to present time reference, the use of present tense to refer to habits (e.g. 'Sāttan drinks'), employment or occupation ('Ponnan is a laborer'), and universal truths ('Human beings die'); this latter sense he calls the 'Indefinite Present'. Lehmann (1989) subsumes these various senses under two categories of reference: 'present state of affairs' (including occupations, universal statements, and, presumably, habits, although he does not explicitly mention these), and the 'temporary present', which refers to "an action or event occurring at the moment of speaking" (67). The former corresponds to the simple present tense in English, while the latter is usually best translated by the present progressive (e.g. 'Kumār is sleeping now'). The Tamil simple present thus has a broader range of usage than the simple present tense in English.

Most grammarians also note that the present may be used conventionally to refer to non-present situations. The use of simple present to refer to events in the **immediate future** is illustrated in (61):

- (61) Nālai- kku matrāsu-kku pō-kir-ēn. (Lehmann 1989:67)
 tomorrow-DAT Madras- DAT go-Pr-1sg.
 'Tomorrow I'm going to Madras'.

As in English, present tense in Tamil may also be used to convey a sense of future immediacy, similar to the past tense (see example (48)), as in (62) below:

- (62) Nān var- r- ēn!
 I come-Pr-1sg.
 'I'm coming!' (said by someone who might in fact still be washing dishes)

This latter use is usually restricted to the 1st person.

Finally, Lazarus observes that the present is used in place of the **past** "when speaking of authors whose works are extant" (1875:115), and for "vividness", i.e. the 'Historic Present'. As an example of this latter usage, he gives the following example:

- (63) Irāmar itō varu-kir-ār.
 Rama here come-Pr-3sg.resp.
 'Along comes Rama'.

Although Lazarus does not elaborate further on this usage, it is of interest to the present study in that the 'historic(al) present' is a tense form which occurs exclusively in narrative, from which context it derives its past time reference. The identification of a narrative use of present tense -- the 'historical present' -- does little, however, to help us to make sense of the bewildering distribution of present tense forms in Tamil narrative. For this, a discourse-based analysis is required.

6.2.2 Present tense in narration

While past tense is the basic, unmarked tense of narration, present tense clearly plays an important narrative role as well. Present tense is the preferred tense in the corpus overall, accounting for 45.8% of all finite verbal clauses, as opposed to 37% for past tense, and 10.4% for future. The use of the present is subject to few, if any, structural constraints. Like the past, the present may combine with any of the aspectual auxiliaries; however simple present forms are most frequent overall,⁸⁷ followed by present perfects, present perfectives, and present continuatives, as shown in the table below:

Grammatical form	Tokens of use	Percent of total present
simple present	424	66.4%
present perfective	60	9.4%
present progressive	45	7.0%
present perfect	84	13.1%
present misc. aux	19	3.0%
neg/modal	7	1.1%
Total:	639	100%

Table 14: Breakdown of present tense forms in narrative sample

What these figures do not show is that perfect and continuative aspects exhibit a statistical affinity with present tense: 75% of all perfects, and 64.9% of all

⁸⁷ In fact, the simple present tense is the single most frequent verbal form in the entire corpus.

continuatives in the corpus are in present tense (as compared with only 24.7% of perfectives). For perfects, this is partially attributable to the fact that the present perfect has a particular grammatical value -- inferential past -- in the speech of some informants, who employ it frequently in narration. The continuative aspect, on the other hand, shares many of the functional values of the simple present: both are imperfective forms associated with background activities. Continuative aspect is discussed in greater detail in 7.2. In this section, I restrict my discussion to the use of the statistically predominant simple present.

A second point to be made with regard to overall distribution concerns genre. The preference for present over past is not uniform; rather, it is restricted to the elicited epic and the folk tale genres. This can be seen by comparing the 'genre' rows in table 8 in 4.1. We therefore cannot hope to make meaningful generalizations regarding the functions of present tense in Tamil narration as a whole without first considering its functional values within the various genres.

Further, there is considerable variation within each genre as well. As table 8 shows, it is not uncommon for individual texts in the same genre to differ in their frequency of present tense usage by as much as 30%; as an extreme example, among the folk tales, text *7 employs no present forms at all, while in text *9 they make up 77% of all finite utterances.⁸⁸ This suggests that a good deal of individual narrator choice is involved in the deployment of the present tense as a narrative strategy. In what follows, therefore, I attempt to generalize regarding patterns of usage in each genre, while taking into consideration differences in strategy from text to text.

⁸⁸ This disparity is partially offset, however, by the fact that narrator *9 makes frequent use of the present perfect (officially a present tense, and included in the above percentage) as a substitute for past tense.

Present tense in real-life accounts

The use of the simple present -- and the present tense in general -- is most limited in real-life accounts, which strongly favor past tense for reasons suggested in 6.1 above. What simple present forms do appear (N=12) are distributed over four texts,⁸⁹ three of which contain only a single instance, while the remaining text -- "Falling in the Well" -- contains nine. Of these nine instances, two refer to habitual situations ('In a hospital, you take pills; you take stuff'), a non-historical use of present tense, as described in traditional grammars. An additional two tokens occur in clauses directly representing the narrator's thoughts at the time of the narrated events (e.g. 'Where's the money for this treatment coming from?'), but which appear without any overt verb of thinking or saying. Functionally these are equivalent to directly quoted thoughts, in which present tense refers to the 'now' of the speaker (in this case, the narrator as a character in his story). Excluding these four tokens with habitual and real-time reference, we are left with eight instances of the 'historical present', that is, simple present tense with past time reference, in the real-life account genre.

The remaining uses can be ascribed a common functional motivation. All but one (87.5%) encode **background states** or **activities** which function as **orientation** for the story as a whole, or, alternatively, as **restricted clauses** (in the Labovian sense) describing activities or states obtaining concurrently with narrative events. Examples of an orientation and a restricted present tense clause are given in (64) - (65) below:

⁸⁹ Texts #4 and #6 have no simple present tense forms.

Orientation (free)

- (64)a. Neraya rūpāy-ellām celavaliccu varu-v-āṅka illaiyā?
 alot rupee-all spend-AvP come-F-3pl. TAG
- b. Anta māṭiri vant- iru- kkira poṇṇu, anta poṇṇu.
 that manner come-PERF-PrAjP girl that girl
- c. Anta poṇṇu vantu āṅke eṅkayō vēla- tūccar vēla pā-kku-tu pōl irukku.
 that girl TOP there smwhere work-teacher work do-Pr- 3sg.n it.seems
- a. 'They [Japanese tourists] come and spend a lot of money, right?
- b. She('s) that sort of girl (lit. a girl who has come like that), the girl.
- c. The girl work- **works** over there somewhere as a teacher, it seems'. [3:26-8]

Restricted:

- (65) Taktar ammā ellātt-aīyum kūṭṭi vantu pā- ttā
 doctor lady all- ACC gather-AvP come-AvP look-COND
cettu kīta-kkur-āṅka. [5:15]
 die-AvP lie- Pr- 3pl.(=3sg.f.resp.)
- 'When the lady doctor gathered everything together and came over and looked,
 she's **lying there dead**'.

In (64), the sentence in the present tense 'the girl works over there as a teacher' describes the character and functions as part of the orientation for the narrative as a whole; that is, the girl in question is understood to have worked as a teacher throughout the time period in which the main events of the story take place.⁹⁰ In (65), on the other hand, the patient is alive at the beginning of the narrative; the state of her 'lying there dead' is understood to be restricted to (co-temporaneous with) the events in the latter part of the story (here, the arrival of the doctor).

⁹⁰ It is also theoretically possible that general present-time reference is intended here, i.e. 'I still know this girl and she still works as a teacher in Japan', but given that the narrator explicitly states at the close of the narrative that her family lost all contact with the girl a number of years ago, such an interpretation seems unlikely.

In this usage, the simple present contrasts functionally with the simple past along a number of dimensions. While the latter is eventive, the former is associated with states and activities; the latter implies sequence (perfectivity), the former simultaneity (imperfectivity); past advances the plot line, while present provides supporting background. In other respects, the potential functional contrasts are neutralized: both appear to connote relative objectivity,⁹¹ neither is evaluative or salient when used in its prototypical context, and both refer to situations in past time.

The only exception to this characterization is found in text *2, "Falling in the Well". The story concerns an injury that happened to the narrator when he was a child. After relating (in past tense) how he was brought to see a village doctor, and, since he was feeling faint, lain down to rest, the narrator continues:

- (66)a. Appō anta.. anta.. vaṭṭiyaru col-r-āru.
 then that that doctor say-Pr-3resp.
 b. En-kūta va- nt-avanka kiṭṭa, "paiyaṇ ippa nallā tūṅku-r- ān.
 I- with come-P-PN3pl. LOC boy now well sleep- Pr-3sg.masc.
 Atanāle oru ūciy-um oru nūl-um kaṭaiy-ile pōy vāṅki-ṭṭ-u vāṅka.
 thus 1 needle-& 1 thread-& store-LOC go-AvP buy-PFV-AvP come-IMPpl.
 Mūṭṭ- iṭu- v-ōm, tūṅk- um pōt- ē" appaṭi nṛā- pla.
 close-PFV-F-1pl. sleep-FAjP time-EMPH thus say-P-like
 c. Nāṇ tapāl nu entirucc-iṭ- t- ēṇ. [259-61]
 I "boing" QUOT get.up- PFV-P-1sg.
 a. Then the.. the.. doctor says,
 b. to the people who came with me, "The boy is sleeping soundly now.
 So go to the store and buy a needle and some thread.
 We'll stitch (him up) while (he)'s sleeping" he said.
 c. I sat up with a jolt.'

In this example, the verb of saying *col/* appears in the present tense in the clause preceding the doctor's quote. Normally, however, quoted material *precedes* the verb

⁹¹ At least, the simple present does not carry any discernable connotations of subjectivity, involvement, proximity, or the like in the examples analyzed here.

of saying which embeds it, and in accordance with this usage, the quote is followed by a past tense form of the verb *ea* 'to say'; the result is that the quote is redundantly embedded. This bracketing on both sides of quoted material is not uncommon in oral narration in Tamil, nor is the use of present tense with the first verb of saying, and past tense for the second.

The example poses a challenge, however, to the characterization of simple present as a device for encoding non-eventive background material, since the doctor's speaking is clearly a sequential event. It is also an important event for the speaker's evaluative point, which centers around the fear and pain that he experienced as a result of his accident. The present tense verb in (66a) introduces a conversational exchange between doctor and patient that highlights this point in a humorous way, and is without a doubt the liveliest and most entertaining portion of the narrative, as attested to by several outbursts of laughter from the listening audience. Thus the present tense here appears to have an evaluative function, i.e. to signal that the actions which follow have a special significance for the telling. This use of the simple present is discussed further in the section on performed epics.

Present tense in folk tales

Although the simple present tense is far more frequent in this genre (N=160), the five folk tales included in the sample do not form a consistent type with respect to tense usage. In these texts, three different strategies can be noted. In text #7, "The Lion and the Rabbit", no present tense forms are used. This narrator appears to have generalized the normative prescription for past tense narration to the exclusion of the other tenses. In text #8, "Tenāḷirāman's Cat", relatively few present tense forms are used (N=6); their distribution follows the general pattern outlined for the real-life

accounts above, with the exception of two event clauses which occur in the simple present tense immediately preceding the dramatic peak. These are given in (67) below

In this story, the trickster Tenaliraman has nearly starved a cat by serving it scalding milk, such that it burned its tongue and now runs away whenever milk is presented. The king, seeing the pitiful condition of the cat, questions Tenaliraman, who explains that the cat refuses to drink milk. The king is skeptical and orders milk to be brought before the cat (all related in past tense). The narrator continues:

- (67)a. Koṇṭuva-ntu atu munṇāṭi va-ccā pūnai.. payaṅkaramā ōṭu-r-atu, rompa..
bring-AvP it before place-COND cat frightfully run-Pr-3sg.n very
b. rompa vēkamā ōṭu-r-atu, pāl- ai pātta-utanē.
very quickly run-Pr-3sg.n milk-ACC see- as soon as
c. "Enṇatā āccu, ippaṭi pūnai ōṭuratu.. enṇa paṇṇine" appaṭi ntṭu,
what.boy happened thus cat run-Pr-3sg.n what do-P-2sg. thus say-PFV-AvP
pūnaiy-ai piti- ccu, vāy- ai tira-ntu pā- ttā,
cat-ACC grasp-AvP mouth-ACC open-AvP look-COND
nākk-ellām appaṭiyē.. ventu pōy-iru- kk- u.
tongue-all thus-EMPH burn-AvP go-PERF-Pr-3sg.n
d. Uṭaṇē.. tenāṭirāmaṇ con-n-ān- ām, [8:32-35]
immediately Tenaliraman say-P-3sg.masc.-EVID
a. 'When (they) brought (the milk) and placed it before it, the cat **runs** away in terror, really..
b. really fast it **runs**, as soon as it sees the **milk**.
c. "What happened, boy; the cat runs away like this; what did you do?" asked the king, and picking up the cat, when he opened its mouth and looked, its tongue and everything are all burned (lit. have gotten all burned).
d. Then it seems Tennaiiraman said.

The dramatic tension in this narrative focuses on the anticipated reaction of the king to Tenaliraman's apparent wrongdoing in not feeding his cat properly. The trickster could be severely punished; instead, he succeeds in convincing the king that it is morally wrong to give milk to cats when people in the kingdom are starving. The act

of running away crucially precedes and leads up to the king's discovery of the cat's burned mouth. By switching into the present tense here, the narrator evaluates this and the immediately following clauses as having special significance; in this case, the effect is one of rhetorical underlining at the dramatic peak. As in example (66) above, the present tense encodes a dynamic, sequential event, rather than a background state or activity.

The three remaining texts in the genre -- "Tenāḷirāman and the Corrupt Palace Guards", "The Unlucky Bride", and "Krishna, Arjuna, and the Prince" -- exhibit a different pattern of tense usage altogether. More than 50% of all finite clauses in these texts are in the present tense, with present forms at least twice as frequent as past in each case. An examination of tense usage in these texts reveals that the present tense has largely taken over the prototypical narrative values normally associated with past in past tense based narratives; that is, its marked functional values (imperfective, background) have become neutralized or 'unmarked'.⁹² Predictably, therefore, the simple present is used for situations of all functional types, both background and eventive, without any particular evaluative significance.

Of the three present tense strategies evident in the folk tale genre, this latter appears to be most characteristic of the genre overall. The choice of present as the base or unmarked tense of narration in folk tales reflects, on the one hand, the apocryphal status of such stories: whether the events reported therein actually occurred at some point in past time is not only doubtful, but also relatively unimportant in comparison with the instructional, entertainment, and/or cultural

⁹² Presumably there exists a critical threshold of frequency of use beyond which unmarking of this sort occurs; it is impossible to determine with any precision where this threshold might be on the basis of the texts in the sample, however, since in all texts where present tenses predominate over pasts, they do so by a margin of 2:1 or greater.

value of the telling. Further, folk tales tend to be well-known, available in principle to all members of the speech community, or else fixed within a tradition; a narrator does not invent the version that s/he relates, nor will s/he be the last to relate it in that version. In other words, the narration of folk tales is both non-factual and non-unique. Past tense, however, has associations of objective factuality and unique occurrence. The use of present tense neutralizes these inappropriate associations, while preserving other contextually appropriate pastness values; as base tense, present takes on the unmarked values of pastness, including the non-salient encoding of sequential, dynamic, plot-line events.

The distribution of simple present tense forms across functional clause types supports this analysis. Out of 160 tokens in the genre as a whole, 26.9% occur in background, imperfective contexts, with the remaining 73.1% expressing events in sequence.

Eventive presents contrast functionally in Tamil folk tales with past tense clauses, which are also typically eventive.⁹³ Generally speaking, present tense forms have a broader functional range: while simple presents encode both background (free and restricted) clauses as well as foreground event clauses, simple pasts are largely restricted to the latter function, as noted in 6.1. As a consequence of this limited distribution, past forms take on a special value in present tense based narration. If we include past perfectives along with simple pasts, it becomes evident that aspectually (functionally) perfective past forms have a marked, evaluative value: they are used with those plot-line events which most succinctly summarize the plot development and advance the story-line, such that, taken together, clauses marked in

⁹³ Past tense accounts for between 17% and 27% of all finite clauses in each text; see table 8.

this fashion constitute a reasonably coherent synopsis of the plot as a whole. In the folk tales, which typically contain several episodes, past (perfective) clauses function to summarize the most crucial development within each episode. The most crucial development for the purposes of plot advancement is often the resolution or outcome, as in the following example:

- (68)a. Rājāv-ai pākṛay-ile kavalār-kaḷ varicaiyā ni- pp-āṅka.
king-ACC seeing-LOC guard- pl. row-Adv stand-F-3pl.
b. Rājā āṅke iru-nt-ār nṇā..mūṇu vācal..mūṇu vācal-le kavalār-kaḷ ni-pp-āṅka.
king there be-P-rsp COND 3 gate 3 gate-LOC guard- pl. stand-F-3pl.
c. Reṇṭu reṇṭu pēr- ā reṇṭu reṇṭu pēr- ā.
2 2 people-Adv 2 2 people-Adv
d. Appa uḷḷa viṭa-māṭṭ-ēn-n- t- āṅka.
then inside let-Fneg-1sg.-say-PFVP-3pl.
e. Appa tān tenāḷirāmaṇ colliy-iru- kk-ān. [9:4-8]
then EMPH Tenaliraman say- PERF-Pr-3sg.masc.
a. 'When he goes to see the king, the guards are standing (lit. will stand) in a row.
b. (When he asks) if the king was there, three gates- guards stand at three gates.
c. Two people (at each).
d. And they **refused** to let him in (lit. they **said**, "I **won't** let (you) inside").
e. Then, Tenaliraman says (lit. has said),'

In this example, the important development for the purposes of the story line is that Tenaliraman was refused entrance to the palace. While this event is potentially inferrable from clauses (a) and (b), it is summarized succinctly in (d), the only finite clause in the sequence to make use of the past (perfective) tense. The event of 'refusal' is thereby concluded, and in the following clause the narrator switches back to the present (perfect) tense to begin development of the next event, Tenaliraman's offering of a bribe to the guards. This event, too, is summarized in the past tense in a subsequent utterance (not included in the example), and so on throughout the text.

It should be clear that this strategy involves an evaluative component, i.e. in the selection of events as plot-line (see 3.5). In example (68), the guards' refusal to admit Tenaliraman, and his subsequent bribing of them, are crucial to the evaluative point around which the story is structured; namely, the existence (and punishment) of corruption. In fact, all of the events that might conceivably qualify as part of the basic plot (see appendix C for plot summary), with the exception of one,⁹⁴ are in the past tense in this story.

In other multi-episodic narratives, narrators selectively employ past tense marking to highlight certain episodes over others. This is the case in "Krishna, Arjuna, and the Prince", where a reading of only the past tense clauses produces a plot summary that is complete for some episodes while making no mention of others. This is however a deliberately ambiguous story with a surprise ending -- one hears it through believing that it is a story about the relationship of a father and son, only to discover at the very end that it is actually more directly concerned with the god Krishna and the archer hero of the Mahabharata, Arjuna. Accordingly, the past tense clauses in this present-tense based narrative are most frequent in scenes in which Krishna and Arjuna figure, and scarce or absent in scenes involving only the father and/or the son.

While past tense is used for events essential to the advancement of the plot, events in the present tense in the three folk tales tend to be secondary and/or redundant with past tense events; taken together, they do not produce summaries which capture the essence of the story. Typical examples of such secondary events

⁹⁴ The event in question is the king's offering of a reward to Tenaliraman after he has succeeded in outwitting a magician; the sentence relating this is in the simple present tense. A possible explanation for the use of the present tense here is that the narrator considered the king's rewarding Tenaliraman as a predictable event (it is in fact a common theme in Tenaliraman stories), and thus left it unevaluated.

include clauses which relate the predictable movement of participants from place to place (the verbs *vā* 'come' and *pō* 'go' alone account for nearly half of all simple present events), verbs of saying with quoted dialogue, and the events of looking (*pār*) and thinking (*nīnai*) preparatory to carrying out an act. As the base, or expected, tense of narration, the simple present may also appear with primary events, although it is more typical for primary events to receive some form of special marking, either perfective or past.

In general terms, it appears that the markedness values of the two tenses shift as a consequence of the relative frequency of their distribution; the predominant tense becomes neutral or unmarked, and the less frequent tense marked or salient. However, although the functional values of the present are neutralized when it is employed as the base tense in folk tale narration, present tense does not become the exact functional equivalent of past tense. Unlike the simple past, the simple present is often used with descriptive background clauses as well as with sequential events; moreover, present still enters into a functional contrast with past in that the latter takes on a more selective event-marking function.

Present tense in performed epics

The frequency of present tense in the performed epic genre is intermediate between that in the real-life accounts and in folk tales: it is neither rare, nor does it predominate over past to function as the unmarked tense of narration, such that its characteristic functional values become bleached. As table 8 shows, in only one text (*15) is present tense appreciably more frequent than past; past predominates in two others (*14 and *16), and the two tenses occur with roughly equal frequency in texts *12 and *13, with present nearly as frequent as past in the genre overall. The

performers of the epic narratives -- all of them professionals -- employ present tense in strategic and systematic ways. This systematicity, in combination with the relatively large number of tokens of use (N=113), makes it possible to arrive at an analysis which captures important functional properties of 'historical' present tense usage in the narrative sample as a whole.

Out of the total number of finite simple present forms, four are real-time presents, whereby the narrator steps back from his narration and comments from the perspective of the 'now' of the telling. Of these, three occur in *13, "The Dice Game" ('Our story begins from here'; 'These lines are in the original version (of the epic)'; 'This is the exciting part from now on'), and one is found in *15, "Rama in the Forest of the Demons" (in relating the amazement of one of the characters at the skill and beauty of the hero, the narrator adds, 'I'm amazed, too'). Excluding these, there remains a total of 109 tokens of simple present tense in the genre.

Simple present forms in performed epics are distributed over both non-eventive (34.9%) and eventive (65.1%) clause types. In the former contexts, they have imperfective aspectual value, refer to ongoing states or activities, and function to establish the setting for the story as a whole, or, alternatively, for a restricted portion of it, as in the real-life accounts described above. The most common verb in the static function is *iru* 'to be'; the restricted function subsumes a range of activity verbs including *pār* 'look', *nīnai* 'think', *ōtu* 'run', and *nīrātu* 'bathe'. An example of a background (orientation) state is given in (69), and a background (restricted) activity in (70):

- (69) Tūn onru **iru-kk-utu** alakāna tūn. [12:48]
 pillar one be-Pr-3sg.n beautiful pillar
 'There's a pillar, a beautiful pillar'.

- (70)a. Pārkkira itam-ellām kannan mayam-āka nīr-kir-ān.
look-PrAjP place-all krishna illusion-Adv stand-Pr-3sg.masc.
b. Eñke pātālum kannan.
where look-COND Krishna
c. "Itō kām, katti-vitt-ēn en uruvatt-ai. Eñke, kattu pār-pp-ōm."
here look-IMP show-PFV-P-1sg. my form-ACC where bind-AvP see-F-1pl.

(Cakatevan has boasted that he can capture Krishna. Krishna takes him up on it:)

- a. Everywhere (he) looks, an illusory image of Krishna is **standing**.
b. Wherever he looks, Krishna.
c. "Here, look, I'll show you my form (lit. I showed it). Let's see (if you can) capture (it)!" [16:48-50]

The pillar in (69) is a constant feature of the physical setting in which the events of the story take place. The illusory images of Krishna in (70) are a feature of the local scene only; in both cases, the simple present tense describes features of the scene which are co-temporal with subsequent actions (two men come to sit and think, one on each side of the pillar; Cakatevan begins to meditate amidst the repeating images of Krishna). These background uses are very similar to those illustrated in examples (64) and (65) for the real-life accounts.

The eventive uses differ in that the situations described must be logically understood to be events in sequence. Within this category, it is possible to identify four subtypes, three of which occur in restricted circumstances. The most general subtype, accounting for 80.3% of the eventive simple presents (N=71) in the genre, involves the use of simple present as an organizational device to open an episode or other narrative unit. In this usage, the present tense preserves the introductory and/or scene-setting function that it has in background clauses, but violates -- or perhaps better, neutralizes -- the requirement that the situations thus encoded be imperfective states or activities. Verbs of locomotion -- come, go, start out, run, etc. -- are especially common in this function, in that they transport a character to different

scenes, or alternatively, different characters to the same scene, and thus constitute natural episode beginnings.

Use of present tense alone does not suffice to define a narrative unit, however. Units introduced or 'opened' by means of a present tense form are usually 'closed' with a corresponding past tense form. In fact, of those simple presents which can be considered to open an episode, 86.5% are followed by an overt past tense form (or forms) which bound the episode at the other end. The clearest examples of this occur in the Bow Song text *14, "The Seven Maidens", where the same lexical verb, differentiated solely by tense marking, may serve both opening and closing functions. This is illustrated in (71):

- (71) A. Tēvalōkatt-ilē vāl- ntu -varakkūṭiya kaṇṇimār.
 god.world-LOC grow.up-AvP come-AjP maidens
 B. Capta kaṇṇimār-kaḷ.
 seven maidens- pl.
 A. Elu penkaḷ-um eṇkē varu-kir-ār?
 seven girl.pl.-and where come-Pr-3resp.
 B. Eṇkē varu-kir-ār?
 where come-Pr-3resp
 A. Anta kāṇcivanatt-irk-ē va- nt-ār.
 that Kanji.forest-DAT-EMPH come-P-3resp
 A. Maidens who are growing up in the world of the gods.
 B. Seven maidens.
 A. Where **are** the seven girls **going** (lit. coming)?
 B. Where **are** they **going**?
 A. They **went** to that very Kanji Forest.

In this example, the verb *vā* 'to come' is introduced in the present tense as a WH-question by the primary narrator (speaker A), and repeated by the secondary narrator (B). 'A' then answers his own question, employing *vā* in the past tense. The event which follows this one in sequence is also introduced in the present tense

('What **do** they **say** to one another?') and closed, after a lengthy quoted segment, with past ('they **spoke** disrespectfully'). This structural pattern repeats itself with different verbs throughout the text.

Although not of the same genre, example (66) from "Falling in the Well" can be analyzed as belonging to the same functional type. While in the Bow Song the device is utilized systematically as a means of organizing the text into smaller units,⁹⁵ and in the personal narrative it selectively highlights a single portion of text, in both cases what would otherwise be considered a simple event -- coming to a place, or saying something⁹⁶ -- is accorded internal structure by means of tense alternation. The use of present tense to open the event and past to resolve it recapitulates, on a local level, the global organization of Tamil narrative more generally.

Using tense alternations to delimit narrative units is not restricted to repetitions of the same (or semantically equivalent) finite verb, however. In text #16 -- "Bhima's Devotion" -- the narrator relates the successive attempts of three brothers who travel to Krishna's heavenly abode to invite him to have breakfast with their fourth brother, the king. In each case, Krishna refuses. Two of the three attempts have the structure 'X **goes**, thinking of all of the reasons why Krishna cannot refuse him', followed by 'Krishna **gave** the same answer'. Similarly, the plot of text #12 -- "Two Pious Men" -- involves two men who are visited by the goddess they regularly worship. Both of the scenes in which the goddess appears to one of her devotees are opened in present tense ('The goddess **makes** her appearance'; 'He **stands** in front of

⁹⁵ On one level, the units are simply sequential events; on another, they are performance episodes, in which dialogue between the narrators, singing, and musical accompaniment may take place. The example in (71) is uncharacteristically brief in this respect; more commonly, a dozen or more clauses intervene between the opening and the closing, including a song.

⁹⁶ In fact, verbs of saying such as *col* and *en* are especially frequent in this function.

the goddess worshipping'), and closed, after the goddess has made her offer, by the past tense clause 'he left'.

Closely related to this strategy is the strategy of shifting into present tense immediately prior to the narrative peak and/or resolution. An example of this has already been noted in the folk tale "Tenaliraman's Cat", where the cat **runs** away from the milk offered by the king just before Tenaliraman's trickery is revealed. A similar strategy is employed in *12, "Two Pious Men". When the goddess appears to her two devotees, she offers to give each man anything he wants, with the proviso that the other will receive twice as much of whatever he asks for. Neither man wishes to benefit the other, and so each thinks carefully about what to request. They must tell the goddess their request by 10:00. As they are thinking, the narrator relates:

- (72)a. Mani onpatēkāl, onpatarai, onpatēmūkāl āki- kitt-ē iru-kk-utu. (...)
 hour 9:15, 9:30, 9:45 become-CONT-EMPH-Pr-3sg.n
- b. Onpattainpatu, ainpattirantu, ainpattimūnu, ainpattinālu
 9:50, 52 53 54
 pōy-kkitt-ē iru-kk-utu.
 go-CONT-EMPH-3sg.n
- c. Iraṇṭu pēr- um oṭu-r- ān.
 two people-and run-Pr-3sg.masc.
- d. Eṅkē oṭi- n-ān?
 where run-P-3sg.masc.
- e. Karppa kirakatt-ukk-ullē oṭu-r- ān.
 inner sanctum-DAT-inside run-Pr-3sg.masc.
- f. Ivaṇ-um oṭu-r- ān.
 he- and run-Pr-3sg.masc.
- g. Oṭi pōy enna kēṭ-kir-ān?
 run-AvP go-AvP what ask- Pr- 3sg.masc.
- h. "Tāy- ē! Eṇ-akku oru kaṇṇu pōka-num" n- n-ān.
 mother-VOC me-DAT one eye go- be.necessary say-P-3sg.masc
- i. (B: Eppaṭi? Iraṇṭu pēr- um orē mātiriyāv-ā?)
 how two people-and same manner- Q

- j. Āmā "eṇ-akku oru kaṇ avu-ñcu pōka-ṇum" nu kēṭ-ṭ-āṇ. (...)
 yes me-DAT one eye perish-AvP go- be.necessary thus ask-P-3sg.masc.
- k. Ippa eṇṇā- cc-u katai;
 now what happen-P-3sg.n story
- l. Reṇṭu pēr- ukk-um reṇṭu kaṇṇ-um pō-cc-u.
 two people-DAT-and two eye-and go-P-3sg.n
- m. Reṇṭu pēr- um orē mātiri kēṭ-kir-āṇ.
 two people-and same manner ask- Pr- 3sg.masc.
- n. Reṇṭu pēr- ukk-um reṇṭu kaṇṇ-um pōy-iṭ- ṭ-atu. [12:62-79]
 two people-DAT-and two eye- and go-PFV-P-3sg.
- a. The time gets to be (lit. is becoming) 9:15, 9:30, 9:45. (...)
- b. It passes (lit. is passing) 9:50, 52, 53, 54.
- c. Both of them (lit. he) run.
- d. Where did he run?
- e. He **runs** into the inner sanctum (of the temple).
- f. He (the other guy) **runs** too.
- g. Having gone running, what **does** he ask?
- h. "O Mother! May I lose an eye" he said.
- i. (B: How's that? Both of them the same way?)
- j. Yes, "May I lose an eye", he asked. (...)
- k. Now, what happened (in) the story (is),
- l. they both lost both eyes.
- m. They both **ask** in the same way.
- n. They both lost both eyes'.

In this section of text, which constitutes the climax and resolution of the narrative, the first seven clauses are related in present tense, and the last seven clauses in past tense (with the exception of one clause in each). The example begins with two clauses in the present progressive which indicate the passing of time, and are clearly intended to create suspense. The subsequent four clauses relate how the characters run to the temple; these are also in (simple) present tense, with the exception of clause (d) in which the narrator switches from present back into the unmarked past tense to ask the question 'Where did he run?'. If this switch was intended to close off the event of running, the narrator apparently thinks better of it, however, in that he goes on to

repeat the verb 'runs' in the present tense in the two clauses that follow. The overriding motivation here seems to be to create a suspenseful build-up; this continues until the peak event of the story, the making of the request to the goddess. This event is introduced in present tense in (g) and completed in past tense in (h); there then follows a sequence of past tense clauses which narrate the resolution of the story. In the last two clauses, the narrator recaps the final section -- They both **ask** in the same way. They both lost both eyes' -- preserving the tense contrast and the contrast between build-up and resolution that it effectuates.

This strategy exploits the functional complementarity of past and present tenses in narration. Past, as a prototypically completive form, is naturally associated with resolutions and endings, both on the global and the local levels of narrative organization. The present tense in the uses described above appears to explicitly counter these associations, creating instead an association of opening along with an expectation of 'more to come'. These functions are related, on the one hand, to the aspectual **imperfectivity** of the present tense, and on the other, to its normative correlation with **scene-setting** in background or supportive contexts. As an imperfective form, the present tense in Tamil views situations from an internal, unbounded perspective; it is thus ideally suited to the description of ongoing situations, but may also be used expressively with situations of brief duration as a means of extending them, e.g. to create dramatic tension at the narrative peak. As a scene-setting strategy, present tense describes both static background and activities which remain constant with respect to some sequence of narrative events; at the same time, Tamil narrators extend this function to cover the beginnings of episodes and other narrative units, even when these are eventive.

As stated above, such usage accounts for 80.3% of the 'eventive' simple presents in the performed epics; it remains to account for the other 19.7%. These cases can be broken down into three functional types. The first summarizes a prior sequence of events as a means of providing background for the events of the story in question. There are five tokens of this type, three of which occur in "The Dice Game" in establishing the circumstances leading up to the desire of the main characters -- the Kauravars -- to get revenge on their cousins, the Pantavars. The narrator summarizes: 'Dharman (the Pantavar king) puts on a ceremony. Some of the Kauravars go to it. After the ceremony is over, the Kauravars return to Atsanapuram, their city'. That this is intended as background rather than the beginning of the event sequence is made explicit when the narrator then goes on to state: 'Our story starts from there'. The remaining two instances also occur in a narrative within a narrative in text #16, "Bhima's Devotion". On the one hand, the use of the simple present tense in event sequences of this type is consonant with its backgrounding function; alternatively, it may be viewed as a consequence of the fact that such sequences are plot summaries, which tend to be related in the present tense in Tamil (as in many other languages) for reasons independent of their grounding functions.⁹⁷

The remaining two categories of exceptions both occur in a single narrative, text #15, "Rama in the Forest of the Demons". This text is the only one of the performed epics in which present tenses predominate over past tenses overall, in a ratio of more than 2:1. In terms of the functional distribution of historical present

⁹⁷ The feature which conditions choice of present as the tense of plot summaries appears to be omnitemporal availability. The act of summarizing a plot abstracts it away from the time-bound sequence of events on which it is based and treats it as an entity with autonomous existence. Both movie and book plot retellings are invariably in present tense in Tamil, as indeed in other tensed languages as well.

tense forms, however, the text is intermediate between the present tense based narratives in the folk tale genre, which employ simple present for all clause types, and the other performed epics, where present tense forms selectively open narrative units. The majority of present tense forms in "Rama in the Forest of the Demons" work in conjunction with past tense forms to define structural units. There are, however, five present tense clauses (out of 26) which have a purely didactic, rather than an organizational function (i.e. the narrator pauses in the development of the plot to discourse on a philosophical point raised by some detail of the story), and four instances of simple present which relate events in sequence with no intervening or summarizing past tense usage. In the former instances, present tense functions as a 'non-narrative' tense, in that it allows the narrator to escape temporarily from the narrative proper in order to engage in a different type of discourse. In the latter instances, on the other hand, present tense functions as we would expect if present were the unmarked tense of narration, which indeed it might be determined statistically to be. It is possible that due to the additional use of present tense in didactic functions, a text which would otherwise follow the past tense based pattern becomes in fact 'base tense indeterminate', leading the narrator to slip into present tense based narration at times. If this hypothesis is correct, it suggests that the episode-opening strategy of the performed epics and the more general present tense based strategy of the folk tales are not discrete uses, but rather are two points along a single functional continuum.

Present tense in elicited epics

The elicited epics in the sample provide the clearest illustration of present tense based narration. Present tense forms exceed past tenses by a minimum of 3:1 (in

text #18) and by as much as 9:1 (in text #17). In these texts, present tense occurs in virtually every functional context. The following example, from #17, "The Marriage of Rama and Sita", is typical:

- (73)a. *Uṭanē rāmaṇ-ai.. tacarataṇ kūṭa anuppi vai- kkir-ān.*
 immediately raman-ACC Dasarata with send-AvP place-Pr- 3sg.masc.
- b. *Anuppi vai- ccā, atu kātṭ- ilē pōy, inta.. yākam ellām nata-kkir-atu.*
 send-AvP place-COND it forest-LOC go-AvP this ritual.fire all happen-Pr-3sg.n
- c. *Nata-kkum polutu, mēl iruntu.. inta.. tāṭakai, cupāku, māriṇaṇ ellām..*
 happen-FAjP time above from this Tataikai Cupaku Marican all
yākatt- ilē koṇṭuva-nta māmicam rattam ellātt-aiy-um koṭṭ-i
 ritual.fire-LOC bring- PAjP meat blood all- ACC-and sprinkle-AvP
acuttappaṭuttu-r-āṇka.
 pollute- Pr-3pl.
- d. *Uṭanē ivaru.. rāmar-um lakṣmaṇar-um enṇa paṇ-r-āṇka;*
 immediately they Rama-and Lakṣmana- and what do- Pr-3pl.
- e. *vil ampu vai-ccu, ampu pōṭṭu, tāṭakaiy-aiy-um cupākuv-aiy-um*
 bow arrow place-AvP arrow put-AvP Tataikai-ACC-and Cupaku-ACC-and
konn-uṭu-r-āṇka.
 kill- PFV-Pr-3pl.
- f. *Māriṇaṇ-ai koll-a pār-ttā, anta ampu avaṇkaḷ-ai.. avar-ai rompa tūram*
 Marican-ACC kill-INF try-COND that arrow they-ACC he- ACC very far
koṇṭupōy eṇkayō kaṭar-karaiy-ile pōṭṭ-iṭu-tu.
 take-AvP somewhere sea- shore- LOC put- PFV-Pr-3sg.n
- g. *Ataṇālē.. yākam.. rompa. nallā.. tāṭai illāma muṭi-ṇcu pōy-iṭu-tu.*
 therefore ritual.fire very well hindrance w/o finish-AvP go-PFV-Pr-3sg.n

(King Dasaratha is persuaded to send his two sons Rama and Lakṣmana to the forest to assist some sages in defending their ritual fire against demons:)

- a. Then Dasaratha **sends** Rama along with (the sage).
- b. Having sent (them), it- having gone to the forest, the ritual fire and everything **is taking place** (lit. takes place).
- c. While it's taking place, Tataikai, Cupaku and Marican **are polluting** (lit. pollute) from above by sprinkling the meat and blood they brought on the ritual fire.
- d. Then, he.. Rama and Lakṣmana, what they **do** is,
- e. positioning their bows and arrows, placing arrows (in their bows), they **kill**

Tataikai and Cupaku.

- f. When they try to kill Marican, the arrow carries them.. carries him a long way and **drops** him somewhere on the shore of the ocean.
- g. Thus the ritual fire **finishes** successfully, without hindrance'. [17:32-38]

Of the seven clauses in this example, two (b and c) relate ongoing, simultaneous activities ('the ritual fire is taking place'; the demons 'are polluting') which function as restricted background for the arrival of the two heroes and their subsequent actions. The remaining clauses describe sequential plot-line events ('Dasaratha sends him..'; 'they kill Tataikai and Cupaku';⁹⁸ 'the arrow..drops (Marican)..'; 'the ritual fire finishes successfully'). All of these are in present tense (either simple present or present perfective); thus it does not appear that tense distinguishes between background and plot-line events. Nor is tense involved in the opening or closing of episodic segments. Clauses (b) - (g) constitute a clear episode within the overall text, an episode that contains an initial situation (the defiling of the ritual fire by the demons) and a resolution (R. and L. kill the demons and the fire finishes successfully).⁹⁹ Rather than contrast formally between the two functions by means of tense alternation, the narrator employs aspect marking: simple present for the opening and setting of the scene, vs. present perfective in the three clauses relating its resolution. On the one hand, this points to the importance of opening and closing narrative units in Tamil narration; it does not, however, assist us in delimiting the range of present tense functions in elicited epics.

Rather than attempt to analyze every instance of present tense, it is useful to consider the more specialized deployment of past tense forms. As discussed in 6.1, past

⁹⁸ The question in clause (d) describes the same event as the statement in clause (e) and thus is not strictly speaking in a sequential relationship to it; the two clauses work together as a unified rhetorical device (see Herring, to appear a.).

⁹⁹ This episode in fact constitutes the entire text of *15, "Rama in the Forest of the Demons".

tense is used in different systematic functions in the two texts in which it is rarest; in *17, it begins the two major episodes of the story, and in *19, it refers exclusively to prior completed situations. In light of what we have seen of the episode opening function of present tense, the use of past tense to introduce episodes in *17 is especially interesting, suggesting that the functional values of the two tenses have completely reversed, although such a claim would clearly require further evidence.

In text *18, "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet 1", the incidence of past tense forms is somewhat higher, and here the pattern is reminiscent of that for past tense usage in folk tales: simple past and perfective past forms selectively highlight sequential events of the plot line which the narrator evaluates as 'core' in his or her interpretation of the story. As noted in 6.1, the past tense clauses in text *18 cluster around those events which relate to the unjust murder of the heroine's husband by an otherwise just king, and the consequences of that murder. Taken together, these clauses would not produce a very complete summary of the story as a whole; thus the strategy is not as systematic as it is in some of the folk tales, but it is clearly functionally related. On the continuum of present tense usage alluded to above, this text is situated somewhat beyond the folk tales in the direction of exclusively present tense based narration (see table 15 below).

The preference for present tense in elicited epics can be traced, as in the case of folk tales, to the timeless value of the stories within the cultural context. Both of the stories represented in the sample are ancient and well-known. In addition, there exists an authoritative, original written version of each story, which, although in archaic language, can be read with the assistance of modern Tamil commentaries. Two of the narrators are likely to have read all or parts of the original texts; even without having read them, however, an educated person would be aware of their existence.

Although the narrators were not asked to summarize the plots of the books, their narrations resemble plot summaries in their almost exclusive use of present tenses. Use of present tense in this case avoids the inappropriate associations of 'single occurrence' -- while the events on which the stories were originally based happened only once, the stories themselves have a timeless quality -- and, as with the folk tales, also avoid 'objective verifiability', since both stories contain larger-than-life and/or miraculous elements.¹⁰⁰

6.2.3 A unified account of Tamil 'historical present' functions.

Although on the surface the narrative functions of the 'historical' present tense appear to vary considerably from genre to genre in Tamil, they all can be seen to derive from a single functional prototype whose values are determined in relation to the values of the narrative past. While past has associations of boundedness, perfectivity, sequence, plot-line events (foreground), semelfactivity, and factual verifiability, the functional prototype for present involves open-endedness, imperfectivity, simultaneity, background contexts, omnitemporality, and the irrelevance of actual occurrence. Not all of these values are necessarily activated in any single usage -- in fact, the latter two appear to operate primarily in the selection of a base tense for narration, at least in the texts included in this study -- however the potential to activate them is always inherent in the choice of a present, rather than a past tense form, where past is the narrative norm.

¹⁰⁰ A number of Tamilians claim that "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet" is based on historical fact; the narrator in text #19 explicitly disclaims this position, however, by inserting into the conclusion of her narration phrases such as 'Some people say...', 'they claim...', and 'but I don't know'.

In order to be descriptively accurate for the entirety of the sample, however, this generalization must be qualified in two respects. First, the extension of present tense function away from background contexts to the openings of episodes or events must be noted. This use is, however, well-motivated by the above generalization, in that it develops the open-endedness feature of the present prototype, in contradistinction with past tense in its resolution/boundedness function. It is not impossible that this extension was ultimately responsible for the weakening of the association of present tense with narrative background, thereby paving the way for the use of present as base tense in all functional contexts.

The second qualification concerns the relative frequency of occurrence of the two tenses within a given text and/or genre, and the resulting markedness values of each. The assumption here (one clearly supported by the data) is that past and present tenses work together in Tamil narrative in functionally interrelated ways. It appears to be the case that the more frequent a form, the more generalized its functional value; conversely, the rarer of the two tenses in any given text or genre has a more specific or marked value. This qualification interacts with the first, in that as the frequency of present tense use increases, its functions generalize increasingly away from the prototype outlined above. Simultaneously, the relative frequency of past tense forms decreases and the remaining forms take on increasingly delimited functions.

This can be illustrated by comparing the four narrative genres with respect to frequency and tense functions. In the genre with the lowest frequency of present tense -- real-life accounts -- present forms are restricted to (notionally) imperfective, co-temporaneous situations in background contexts, whereas the narrative functions of past tense are very broad. At the other extreme, elicited epics, which have the

highest concentration of present tense forms, employ present tense over a broad range of narrative functions, while the narrative functions of past tense are limited to the selective highlighting of sequential, plot-line events.¹⁰¹ The remaining two genres fall in between these two extremes, with performed epics patterning more like real-life accounts, and folk tales more like elicited epics. This is summarized in table 15:

	RLA (Pr=15.4%)	PE (Pr=37.1%)	FT (Pr=59.2%)	EE (Pr=73.1%)
past	general	general, esp. plot-line events	plot-line events; episode/event closure	selected plot- line events (foreground)
present	background (orient./restr.), setting	episode/event opening	general, esp. 2ndary events & background	general
base tense	past		present	

Table 15: Past and present tense functions by genre

This table can be read both horizontally and vertically. The horizontal dimension represents a continuum of present tense usage, ranging from 15.4% for the real-life account genre on the left to 73.1% for the elicited epics on the right.

¹⁰¹ I exclude from this characterization the rather idiosyncratic uses of past tense in the two texts in which it is rarest. In addition to the fact that they are attested in only a single text each, the uses themselves can be seen to derive not so much from the narrative functions of past tense, as from its 'core' semantics; that is to say, location in time prior to a point of orientation.

(Theoretically, the continuum could be extended further in both directions, such that it ranges from 0-100%, and indeed it would be necessary to do so in the event that we were to plot the location along it of individual narrative texts.) Corresponding to frequency of present tense usage, the functions of the two main narrative tenses -- past and present -- exhibit a complementary pattern of generalization and specification. The narrative functions of past tense become increasingly restricted as we read from left to right, while the opposite is true for 'historical' present functions. Note, however, that it is not simply the case that the two tenses exchange functional values: past tense retains an association with sequential, plot-line events, and present tense an association with background contexts, throughout.

Reading the table vertically, we note that past and present interrelate in four different systems in the four genres. Real-life accounts and elicited epics are functionally parallel in that both make use of a system in which a single tense carries out the majority of narrative functions, with the other tense used sparingly for contrastive effect in clearly-delimited narrative contexts. Narrators of performed epics and of folk tales, on the other hand, exploit the contrast between the two tenses on a more regular and systematic basis. In performed epics, where the base tense is typically past, present bears a marked value as opener of a narrative unit; this in turn generates the inference that past tense bounds such units at their resolution, although it is probably more accurate to characterize the functions of past tense in more general terms, since it has other functions in the genre as well. In folk tales, on the other hand, the markedness values are reversed; present tense is now statistically dominant, and past tense usage must be viewed as marked, i.e. as a device for signalling closure or resolution of plot-line events, with present tense expressing all remaining functions (including, of course, event openings). Although it is possible to

view these as four discrete functional systems, it is clear that each is related to the next in a scalar fashion.

The analysis of the Tamil historical present developed here has implications for the claims of researchers on narrative tense usage in other languages. Two differing analyses have been proposed regarding the basic function of the historical present in English oral narrative. The first of these, authored by Wolfson (1979, 1982), holds that the primary function of tense shifts in narration -- either from past to present, or present to past -- is to indicate event boundaries. The traditional view that present tense makes events 'more vivid' by presenting them as though they were occurring 'now' is discredited by Wolfson, who argues, rather, that present tense is temporally indeterminate; its functional value in narration derives not from its inherent semantics, however, but rather from the contrast created by alternating tense forms.

The second view, articulated in the work of Schiffrin (1981) and Fleischman (1985), asserts that the primary function of the historical present is as a 'foregrounding' device to selectively highlight dynamic, sequential events of the narrative plot line. The highlighting effect derives, according to these authors, from the immediacy or vividness of employing a tense form which has as its basic meaning 'situation co-temporaneous with speaker's now'. This approach is compatible with Longacre's (1981) observation regarding the use of tense shifts at the narrative peak, in that peak events are dramatically important and hence especially likely to be selected for evaluative highlighting.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Silva-Corvalán (1983) makes this point explicitly in her discussion of tense alternations in Spanish oral narrative.

Generalizing cross-linguistically, the Tamil data can be seen to support both of the above views. There is clear evidence in the performed epics and folk tales of the complementary use of present and past tense to delimit events and/or larger episodes. At the same time, there is an evaluative component to all present tense usage in past contexts, and vice versa -- the marked or unexpected tense form selectively highlights those clauses in which it appears.¹⁰³ Further, we have seen that Tamil narrators shift into present tense at or immediately prior to the narrative peak. In the analysis of the Tamil historical present given above, each of these functions is related to the other via the functional present tense prototype, in combination with principles of markedness based on relative frequency of use. The fact that a unified account of this sort can be constructed for Tamil suggests that it may be possible to integrate the disparate analyses of the English historical present as well.¹⁰⁴

In other respects, the Tamil data are not consistent with the English-based accounts. In the opening and closing of narrative units in Tamil, the direction of the tense shift is not irrelevant; rather, present tense systematically signals opening and past tense closure; moreover, only one of these is signalled explicitly in any given text and/or genre, leaving the complementary function to be attributed to the base tense by inference. As regards the highlighting function of present tense, it is clear that the present tense in Tamil is associated not with foreground or plot-line events, but rather with its functional complement, background (including secondary events). Finally, it is not necessary to derive the highlighting function of present tense, e.g. at the narrative peak, from a core meaning of present time reference; rather, highlighting is a consequence of the contrastive use of tenses, whereby present takes

¹⁰³ Evaluation of this sort is not the same as 'foregrounding' in Fleischman's sense, however, as pointed out in Herring (1985).

¹⁰⁴ Such an account is developed for French in Fleischman (1990).

on marked values in normally past contexts. It is not clear to me at this point whether these inconsistencies represent genuine differences between the Tamil and the English historical present tenses, or whether the insights gleaned from the Tamil analysis -- and particularly those involving considerations of shifting markedness values -- might not be applied to the analysis of the English data such that the two languages would be found to be more similar than different in these respects.

6.3 Future.

6.3.1. Traditional accounts.

As is the case for future 'tenses' generally, the semantics of the Tamil future is somewhat controversial. The future in Tamil is used with both future time and omnitemporal (especially habitual) time reference, and this fact is duly noted in most descriptive grammars. Authors differ, however, with respect to which sense is considered primary. Lazarus (1878) and Arden (1942) view future time reference as 'basic' and 'usual', with the habitual as a secondary, conventionalized use (along with various other uses for Lazarus; see below). For Asher (1985), on the other hand, the two are separate, independent functions, and Lehmann (1989) takes yet a different view as evidenced in his statements that "the future tense is, especially, used to express habitual or repeated actions or events" (68) and that "[t]he future tense expresses various modalities rather than referring definitely to future time" (Lehmann 1989:67).

Although a relationship between future tense and modality is found in numerous languages,¹⁰⁵ such is not developed in any clear or systematic manner in Tamil grammars. Lehmann's modalities include 'habituality', 'conjecture', and

¹⁰⁵ See for example Ultan (1978) for a general cross-linguistic survey and Fleischman (1982) for Romance.

'desiderative'; the latter two, at least, constitute good modal notions, yet the examples provided by Lehmann involve conjecture and desire only as inferences generated by knowledge of the world ('Tomorrow it will rain' (conjecture); 'Whatever will I do!' (desiderative)), rather than as features of meaning encoded explicitly by future tense morphology. Asher (1985:158) also claims that future tense may have modal value, and gives examples of 'volitional' and 'predictive' uses; again, however, the modality in the examples given seems to reside not so much in the meaning of the tense forms as in the nature of our knowledge of events in the world ('I'll wait for you at the station' (volition); 'Raman will be in the office till five' (prediction)). Finally, Lazarus, while making no explicit claims regarding modality, mentions the use of future tense to express 'doubt', citing as an example the following:

- (74) Intac cēlai pattu kejam iru-**kkum**.
 this sari ten yard be-F3sg.n

Unfortunately he does not translate the example into English. My own interpretation accords to this use of future tense a meaning not of doubt per se, but rather of inference and/or approximation, i.e. 'This sari is *about* 10 yards (long) (I'm guessing)'. Although Lazarus' use of the term 'doubt' is somewhat misleading, this is the best example of a modal use of future tense in the descriptions considered here.

The Tamil future tense thus has future time and omnitemporal referential value, and in addition some modal uses, the exact nature of which remains to be determined. Among the omnitemporal uses, several sub-types can be identified. As indicated above, future expresses habitual activities or actions, as in (75):

- (75) Avar appaṭi tān pēcu- v-ār.
 he thus EMPH speak-F-3resp.
 'He always talks like that' (Asher 1985:156)

This usage is not restricted to situations which still hold true in present time; rather, it applies equally well to habitual situations entirely bounded in the past, in which case it is best translated into English by 'used to' or 'would', as in (76):

- (76) *Cinna vayat-il nān pamparam viḷaiyātu-v-ēn.*
 small age-LOC I top play- F-1sg.
 'When I was young, I used to/would play with tops' (Lehmann 1989:68)

In the former usage (but not the latter) the future tense may also be replaced with the present tense, as noted in 6.2.1.

The use of present and future tenses overlap in other areas of omnitemporality as well. Both may be used with generic statements such as 'Cows eat grass' and 'The sun rises in the east' (Paramasivam 1983a), and also in expressions of occupation ('He does carpenter work') and ability ('Sāttan dances/knows how to dance') (Lazarus 1878). Paramasivam (1983a:223) argues that the use of present and future in omnitemporal propositions is not semantically equivalent, however. He distinguishes between the two on grounds that the present, but not the future tense, necessarily includes within its scope of reference present time (speaker now). Given a statement such as 'She gets up at 5:30 every day' which can be expressed using either the present or the future, it is possible to explicitly counter the inference that 'she got up at 5:30 today' by appending a modifying proposition such as 'But today she got up at 7:00' to the future tense version, but not to the present tense version. Further evidence of a meaning difference between the two habitual tenses is the fact that future, but not present, can be used to refer to past habitual activities, as in (76) above.

Both future and present tenses can also be used with future time reference. Lehmann claims that a semantic distinction is evident here as well, with present tense referring to immediate future, and future tense to distant future events. However no other grammarians mention such a distinction (Asher attributes 'immediate future'

time reference not to the present per se but rather to the present tense use of *pō* 'go' in the *pō* + infinitive construction), and Paramasivam is of the opinion that present is in the process of replacing future tense in the function of future time reference altogether.¹⁰⁶

6.3.2 Future tense in narration.

Of the three tenses in Tamil, future is by far the least frequent in the narrative sample, accounting for only 10.4% of finite verbal clauses (145 tokens) overall. The overwhelming majority of these are simple future forms, although aspect-marked futures of all types are found as well. The morphological distribution of future tense forms is given in table *16:

Grammatical form	Tokens of use	Percent of total future
simple future	91	62.8%
future perfective	13	9.0%
future progressive	12	8.3%
future perfect	15	10.3%
future kol	3	2.1%
neg/modal	10	6.9%
other (patu)	1	.7%
Total:	145	100%

Table 16: Breakdown of future tense forms in narrative sample

None of the aspects exhibits any special statistical affinity with future tense.

¹⁰⁶ "Etirkālattaik kuripatarku nikaḷ kalamē ikkālattiḷ mikutiḱum payaṇṇṇatukiratu" (Paramasivam 1983a:222).

Future forms are used in narrative with a variety of meanings. These may be subsumed under the general headings **imperfective** and **irrealis**. The imperfective uses, which account for the majority (79.9%) of future tense forms in the sample, involve the description of **habitual activities** (58.6%) and **durative states** (17.2%). Uses of this type function as orientation (and less frequently, restricted) clauses to provide background information about a participant or a setting. Habitual activity futures, as the name suggests, characterize narrative participants in terms of the activity or activities with which they are habitually associated, while durative state futures ascribe to them static properties. Both types are illustrated in example (77):

- (77) a. *ānā vantu cinṇa vayacu-ḷey-ē vantu rauṭittanāṃ ellāṃ paṇṇi-kittiru-pp-āṇ.*
 but TOP small age-LOC-EMPH TOP rowdiness all do- CONT-F-3sg.masc.
 b. *Ānā koṇcam nallā.. pēcu-v-āṇ ellā viṣayam.*
 but a.little well speak-F-3sg.masc.all thing
 c. *Anta ūr- ile irunta palitiks ellāṃ avaṇ-ukku tāṇ teriy- um koṇcam.*
 that town-LOC be-PAJP politics all he- DAT EMPH be.known-NP a.little
 d. *Muñciy-um koṇcam aḷakā iru-kkum.* [3:4-7]
 face- and a.little beautiful be- F3sg.n
 a. 'But uh- even when he was a kid he **was always getting** in trouble.
 b. But he **kinda spoke** well (about) all (different) things;
 c. he **kinda knew** all the politics in the town.
 d. And he **was** kinda good-looking'.

Clauses (a) and (b) relate, in future tense, past habitual activities of the boy in question. Clause (d), on the other hand (as well as clause (c), which contains a non-past modal) attributes to him a static quality. The sequence occurs near the beginning of a lengthy real-life account in which the boy figures as hero/antihero. In these clauses, the narrator establishes early on the mixed qualities¹⁰⁷ of the protagonist.

¹⁰⁷ In fact, this is only a small portion of the orientation section of this narrative; the narrator goes on to explain how the boy has been to jail several times, his involvement with local politics, etc.

The use of future tense for past habitual actions is consonant with the descriptions given in traditional grammars. The 'durative state' future, on the other hand -- although functionally related to the habitual activity future in narrative -- is never mentioned. This usage is of interest for several reasons. First, it does not appear to be a phenomenon restricted to narrative discourse. 16% of its occurrences are explanatory asides which have real-time, rather than past narrative time, reference. For example, in "Falling in the Well" the narrator relates how a gash on his forehead was stitched up and then, pointing to the scar on his forehead, says:

- (78) Intā kōtu kōtā iro-~~kkum~~. [2:93]
 here line line-Adv be- F3sg.n
 'See, there's all these lines here'.

Despite the surface resemblance of this construction to that used to illustrate the 'doubt' or 'guess modality' in example (74), no uncertainty is being expressed here; on the contrary, the fact of the existence of the scar is being asserted. The durative static future thus appears to be another use which must be included in sentence-level descriptions, yet which is neither modal nor temporal.

In narrative, durative state futures are problematic in that they appear to compete functionally with aspectually imperfective present tenses. What motivates a narrator to encode a descriptive background state in the future tense, rather than in the present? A comparison of imperfective futures with imperfective presents in texts where both are used (N=8) reveals the following functional contrasts. To begin, future background clauses, whether stative or active, occur overwhelmingly in orientation functions (91%), i.e. to give background information which holds true throughout the narrative, while restricted uses of future forms are rare (9%). Present tense background clauses, on the other hand, favor restricted contexts (71.1%) over orientation contexts (28.9%). Further, what present forms do appear in orientation

contexts tend to describe ongoing background activities (see for example (64) above) rather than states. These distinctions characterize background presents and futures in the real-life accounts and in one of the two folk tales which have static futures.

In the remaining folk tale and in the epics, the distinction appears to be one of peripheral vs. central participant description, with future accorded the former function and present the latter. In "The Dice Game", for example, durative static futures characterize a river mentioned only once in passing in a sung interlude, while durative static presents introduce and describe the human participants in Duryodhana's court. Similarly, in "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet 1", future tense is used for explanatory asides involving non-central, inanimate referents -- the words of a song sung by one of the characters in the narrative,¹⁰⁸ and the source of the pearls placed in the queen's ankle bracelet¹⁰⁹ -- whereas present tense forms describe central and human referents, i.e. the anklets proper and the Cera king and his poet brother who hear the story and immortalize it.

Finally, the narrator of text #19, "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet 2", extends the functions of future tense to include digressions more generally. Between the sequential events of Kovalan returning to his wife Kannaki (after a long affair with the dancer Madavi; see synopsis, appendix C) and Kovalan and Kannaki setting off for the town of Madurai to start a new life, a segment of 11 future-tense clauses occurs in which the financial circumstances of the married couple are explained. This segment includes not only habitual past activities (Kovalan 'would take all of Kannaki's jewelry

¹⁰⁸ The song -- a devotional hymn to Krishna supposedly sung by the heroine when she receives omens of her husband's death -- does not in fact even occur in the original version of the story, but rather is added by the narrator (a Vaisnavite priest) in an attempt to bring the theme of the story more in line with the devotional stories he usually relates.

¹⁰⁹ This too is a detail added by the narrator.

and sell it; having sold it, he would give the money to Madavi') and durative states (Kannaki 'was sitting at home alone'; 'all that remained were the bracelets on Kannaki's ankles'), but also logically sequential events ('After he'd given everything away, he came home'). Later in the narrative, future (perfect) is also used to encode the prior event of the theft of the queen's anklet by the royal jeweler. In each case, the situations described are off the sequential plot line; they are encoded, by means of the future tense, as explanatory asides.

The association of future tense with explanation and digression is also evident in the second major category of narrative future use, *irrealis*. *Irrealis* uses account for 17.2% (N=25) of futures overall, and comprise two distinct functional sub-types. The first of these I term **hypothetical**, in that it deals with possible but unrealized situations. Of the 16 tokens of this function, eight occur in 'then' clauses of 'if/then' constructions, and four others in 'then' clauses where an 'if' clause is contextually inferrable. Examples of the former type can be seen in the following example from the performed Kathākālākshēpam epic "Bhima's Devotion":

- (79)a. Paiyan paritcaiy-ile pās āy- it- tā viṭṭu- kku va- ntu
 boy exam-LOC pass become-PFV-COND house-DAT come-AvP
 "nān pās āy- it- t- ēn appā" enru collu-**v-ān**.
 I pass become-PFV-P-1sg. father QUOT say- F-3sg.masc.
- b. Avan peyil-a pōy-t- tā it- ai col- ratu- kku viṭṭu- kku varu-**v-ān- ā**;
 he fail-Adv go-PFV-COND it-ACC say-PrVN-DAT house-DAT come-F-3sg.masc-Q
- c. **vara-mātt-ān**.
 come-Fneg- 3sg.masc.
- d. Nallā verrikaram- ā muṭicc- iru- nt-ān- ē ā- nā
 well success- Adv complete-PERF-P-3sg.masc-EMPH become-COND
 "annā nān kūṭṭiṇṭu vantū-t- t-ēn" nnu collu-**v-ān**. [16:88-91]
 older.bro I bring-AvP come-PFV-P-1sg. QUOT say- F-3sg.masc.

- a. 'If a boy passes an exam, he'll come home and **say**, "I passed, Dad!"
- b. If he fails, **will** he **come** home to report it?
- c. He **won't**.
- d. If (Cakateva) had been successful, he **would have said** "Older brother, I've brought him".

This example functions as an evaluative interlude between the events of Krishna's refusal of Cakateva's invitation to breakfast, and Cakateva's avoidance of his brother the king upon his return. Cakateva's motives for avoiding his brother are explained via the analogy of a schoolboy who has failed an exam. The if/then constructions in (a) - (c) describe contingencies that are generally true, making use of a non-finite conditional ending on the first clause and finite future forms in the second. In (d), an explicitly counterfactual cause and effect relation is encoded by means of the same formal devices. While we may infer a contrast between the two situations along the lines of generic vs. specific, the narrator has chosen to encode them identically, i.e. as unrealized or hypothetical.

In another hypothetical usage, future clauses anticipate the outcome or consequences of the narrative actions. This use, too, is evaluative, in that it creates dramatic tension. An example is found in "Two Pious Men" at the narrative peak. In addition to the use of contrastive present and past tense forms discussed in 6.2.2, the narrators employ irrealis future tense forms to create suspense by reminding the audience of the logical consequences of the devotees' requests before relating the actual outcome. Note the cooperative interplay between the principal (A) and the secondary narrator (B) in the following exchange:

- (80) A: () "eṇ-akku oru kaṇ avu-ṇcu pōka-num" nu kēṭ-ṭ-āṇ.
me-DAT one eye perish-AvP go- be.necessary thus ask-P-3sg.masc.
B: Kēṭ-tāl?
ask-COND
A: Avan-ukku reṇṭu kaṇṇ-um pōy-iṭ-um le?
he- DAT two eye- and go-PFV-3sg.n TAG
B: Ā ā
yeah yeah
A: Āka "nān-um oru kaṇṇu pōka-num nu kēṭ-tāl, avan-ukku?
therefore I-and one eye go-be.necessary QUOT ask-COND he- DAT
B: Reṇṭu kaṇṇ-um pōy-iṭ- um.
two eye- and go- PFV-3sg.n
A: Reṇṭu kaṇṇ-um pōy-iṭ- um illaiy-ā.
two eye- and go- PFV-3sg.n TAG-Q
Ippa enna ā- cc-u katai;
now what happen-P-3sg.n story
reṇṭu pēr- ukk-um reṇṭu kaṇṇ-um pō-cc-u.
two people-DAT-and two eye-and go- P-3sg.n
A: '(...) "May I lose an eye", he asked.
B: If he asks (that)?
A: He [the other guy] **will lose** both eyes, right?
B: Yeah, right.
A: So if (the other guy) asks, "May I lose an eye too", then he [the first guy]?
B: (He)'ll **lose** both eyes.
A: He'll **lose** both eyes, right?
Now what happened in the story is,
they both lost both eyes'.

Given the explicitly rhetorical nature of such usage, i.e. to heighten dramatic suspense at the narrative peak, it is not surprising that it is most frequent in professionally performed narratives, where it constitutes a deliberate strategy.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ The professional narrator FE, who has texts in three genres, employs the hypothetical future in all three texts, although it is most frequent in his performed epic.

The second irrealis sub-type I term **inferential**, in that the narrator infers, rather than asserts, the truth of the narrated proposition. There are nine instances of this usage, all of them in real-life accounts, and all but two of which are encoded in the future perfect.¹¹¹ Rather than representing a function which is narrative discourse based, the inferential future functions on the local clause level to express the modal notions of speaker uncertainty or approximation regarding the content of a proposition. The majority of uses (N=6) occur in text #3, "The Japanese Girl", where they encode the speaker's indirect knowledge of the narrated events. An example from this text is the following:

- (81) Appuram vantū, anta kutirai mēlē ēṛ- i,
 afterwards TOP that horse on climb-AvP
 anta vaṇṭi koṇca tūram tāṇ pōy-iru-pp-āṇ. [3:115]
 that cart a.little far EMPH go- PERF-F- 3sg.masc.
 'Afterwards, he climbed on the horse,
 and the cart- he **must've gone** kinda far'.

The narrator relates these events from the perspective of one who heard about them, along with the other residents of the village, only after the boy was found dead next to the broken cart; since he was alone at the time, others were left to infer the circumstances leading up to his death.

In the three other narratives in which it occurs, the inferential future expresses approximation, as in (82):

- (82) Nāṇ ciṇṇa vayac-ā iru-kkum pōtu,
 I small age-Adv be- FAjP time
 kittatatta .. oru .. paṇṇireṇṭu vayacu iru-kkum, (...) [2:1]
 approximately one twelve year be- F3sg.n
 'When I was a kid, I **must have been** about .. oh .. 12 years old, (...)'

¹¹¹ An equal number of perfects appear in non-inferential future contexts, however; thus the correlation between perfect and inference is not categorical.

This usage appears to be essentially the same as the 'doubt' use of future tense noted in Lazarus (1878) and illustrated in (74) above.

Taken together, imperfective and irrealis uses of future tense account for 93.1% of future tense tokens (N=135) in the sample. Of the remaining 6.9%, 2.8% (N=4) refer to sequential events in explanatory asides; this use is restricted to text *19 (see discussion above). An additional 2.8% also refer to sequential events, but function quite differently from the explanatory asides. Rather, they serve as episode/event openers in which the imperfective unboundedness value of the future creates an expectation of 'more to come'. This usage is attested as far back as the 5th century narrative epic *Cilappatikāram* (the original source of texts *18 and *19); in Modern Tamil, however, it has largely been taken over by the present tense (see discussion in 6.2.2 above). There is evidence that the future episode/event openers in the sample are relics of an older usage: all occur in the performed epic genre, which exhibits other archaic features in addition;¹¹² moreover, of the two instances which occur in a Bow Song narrative, both are found in sung, rather than spoken, portions of the performance.¹¹³ Thus in example (82) below, line (a) -- which contains a future tense form -- is sung, and line (b) -- containing the same verb repeated in present tense -- is spoken:

- (82)a. Tāya kāy- ai kaiy- il etu- ttu tarumarājan etu col- v- ān?
dice pieces- ACC hand- LOC take- AvP Dharma.king what say- F- 3sg.masc.
b. Ivan tān col- r- ān. (...)
he EMPH say- Pr- 3sg.masc.
c. "(...)Etu urai- pp-āy cakuni" en- r- ān. [13:108-109; 114]
what speak- F- 2sg. Cakuni say- P- 3sg.masc.

¹¹² E.g. use of existential *u/*, and a preference for simple tenses over compound aspectual forms.

¹¹³ On the use of archaisms in sung narration, see Emeneau (1979), Wadley (1989), and Herring (1990).

- a. 'Picking up the dice pieces, what does (lit. what **will**) King Dharma **say**?
- b. He himself speaks. (...)
- c. "(...) What **will** you bet, Cakuni?" he **said**.'

The event of saying is opened in (a) in future and closed in (c) in past. The strategy is thus functionally identical to that discussed in 6.2.2, in which present replaces future.

The remaining 1.4% of future tense tokens comprise a single instance in which future tense refers to **ability** ('A few people could play (lit. **will** play) the piano' [4:20]), and an instance with **prospective** aspectual value ('(The cat) **was** about to (lit. **will**) put its mouth to the scalding milk [8:17]). The former, omnitemporal use illustrates the ability sub-type mentioned in Tamil grammars; in the narrative text in which it occurs, it functions as imperfective background. The latter use is perhaps best considered a sub-type of irrealis meaning; it functions in this instance to slow down the narrative action at a point of dramatic tension for expressive effect.

The functions of future tense discussed above are summarized in figure 5:

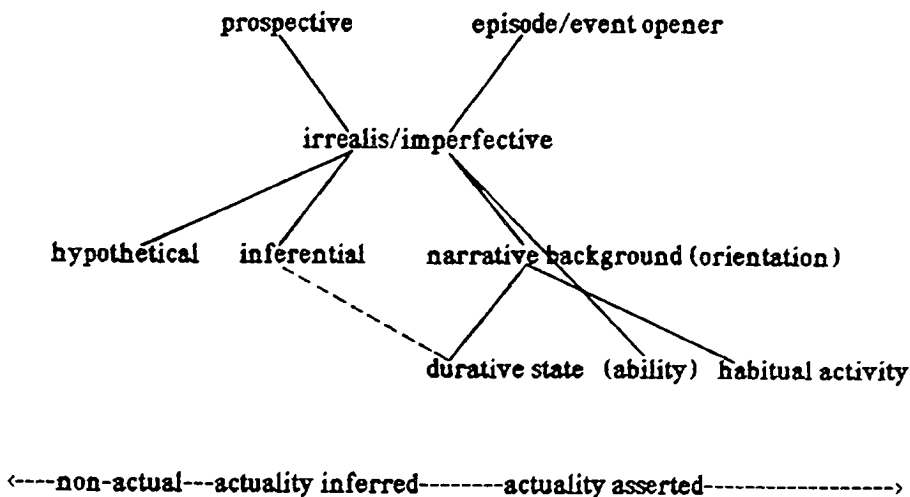


Figure 5: Narrative functions of future tense

My analysis characterizes future 'tense' in Tamil narrative as crucially involving both the modal notion 'irrealis' and the aspectual notion 'imperfectivity'. While the uses deriving from the former are not specialized for narrative, but rather reflect the modal properties of future tense more generally, the latter notion gives rise in narration to functionally specialized strategies which interact with the functional specializations of the other tenses as described in the earlier part of this chapter.

At the same time, it is possible to view the two sets of functions as related along a continuum of epistemic actuality, with the inferential uses constituting a link between the hypothetical (non-actual) futures and the actuality of the descriptive orientation futures. This approach allows for alternative interpretations of the origins of the durative static function, the least predictable extension of a future tense form among those considered. On the one hand, the static future can be hypothesized to have extended along functional lines, i.e. by virtue of the functional similarity between description of a narrative participant in terms of the activities with which it is associated, and the same participant's inherent (static) attributes. In support of this view, we may note that the narrator of example (77) mixes habitual activities and durative states freely in her characterization of the narrative protagonist, yet all of the clauses taken together serve a common narrative function.

Alternatively, durative state futures can be viewed as developing from the irrealis dimension, moving along the epistemic continuum in the direction of actuality via the notion of inferred actuality. According to this view, the formal similarity between the expression of inferred states -- as in (74) and (82) -- and asserted states -- as in (77d) and (78) -- is mirrored on a deeper level, with the interpretation of a particular instance of use determined by context and the presence of modalizing adverbials such as *kittatatta* 'approximately', etc. In support of this

analysis, it can be noted that several durative state futures (but no habitual activity futures) appear in if/then constructions, which must, however, be interpreted as bleached of their hypothetical modality. One such example is clause (c) of the following:

- (83)a. *Mīcai muṭiy-ellām kuṭumi ellām vacc-uru-pp-āru.*
 moustache hair- all topknot all place-PERF-F- 3resp.
 b. *Appaṭi paṭ- ṭ- avar avaru.*
 thus experience-P-PN3resp he-resp
 c. *Avar-e pā- tīāl- ē payam-ā iru-kkum.*
 he-ACC see-COND-EMPH fear-Adv be- F3sg.n
 d. *Būtam mātiri iru-kkum.* [2:51-54]
 ogre like be-F3sg.n

(the narrator describes the village doctor from his perspective as a 12-year-old:)

- a. 'He **wore** a moustache and his hair all in a topknot and all.
 b. He (was) that kind of person.
 c. He **was** scary even to look at (lit. if (you) even look at him, (it) **will be** scary).
 d. He **was** like an ogre'.

Although the if/then construction in (c) is structurally parallel with those in the hypothetical uses in (79) and (80) above, the situation described in this clause is factual and realized (in uttering the clause, the narrator effectively asserts that he was scared at the sight of the doctor). Although the *pāṭiṭa* 'if (you) look' construction has grammaticalized such that the literal interpretation of cause-and-effect is no longer always appropriate, the existence of constructions of this type provides evidence for the hypothesis that durative state futures are irrealis futures bleached of their irrealis modality; the demonstration of this hypothesis, however, must await further investigation.

Chapter 7: Aspect

While tense encodes the location of a situation in time, aspect as a grammatical category is concerned with the 'internal temporal constituency' of a situation (Comrie 1976:5). The 'internal temporal constituency' is not objectively given, but rather reflects the perspective taken by the speaker on the situation -- whether it is viewed from the outside, as a unified whole, or from within, in terms of its internal structure. These two contrasting perspectives form the basis, in numerous languages, for the grammatical distinction **perfective** vs. **imperfective**. A third category, **perfect**, is often considered an aspect as well, although its basic meaning in fact subsumes both aspectual and temporal notions.

Perfective aspect as defined by Comrie (1976) is distinct from the notion of 'completion', although the two terms are often confused in the grammatical literature.¹¹⁴ While one might logically expect a marker of 'completive aspect' to focus on the end-point or completion of a situation, such is not a necessary component of the meaning of perfectivity, which views situations rather as 'complete' (i.e. having a beginning, a middle, and an end) -- but internally undifferentiated -- wholes. Comrie suggests that the meaning of 'completion' arises as an inference from the use of perfective alongside of imperfective forms:

since the imperfective indicates a situation in progress, and since the perfective indicates a situation which has an end, the only new semantic element introduced by the perfective is that of the termination of the situation. (1976:19)

He notes further that when used with stative verbs, perfective forms in a number of languages focus on the initial point of entry into a state, or ingressive aspect, a fact

¹¹⁴ As will be seen below, the literature on Tamil is no exception.

which he takes as further support for the claim that perfectivity is not synonymous with completion.¹¹⁵ In Tamil, as noted in 6.1, simple past tense is susceptible to the interpretation of aspectual perfectivity; accordingly, both the simple past and the perfective auxiliary *viṭu* may give rise to completive and ingressive inferences.

Imperfective aspect explicitly focuses on the internal temporal properties of situations, viewing them as extended over time. Comrie distinguishes between two types of imperfectivity: habitual, and continuous; continuous aspect can be further sub-divided into 'progressive' and 'non-progressive', the former of which is associated with continuous activities and the latter with continuous states. In Tamil, habitual aspect is expressed by means of the future tense (see 6.3), and thus does not constitute a morphological aspect in the sense of the others considered here. Both progressive and non-progressive senses are conveyed by means of the 'continuative' auxiliary *kittiru*.

Perfect aspect refers, generally speaking, to prior (complete) situations with current relevance. As such, it has both an aspectual and a temporal component. My reasons for including the Tamil perfect auxiliary *iru* in the category of aspect, rather than tense, are based largely on the morphological similarity of the perfect construction to the other Tamil aspects -- each is formed from a semantically 'main' verb in its past adverbial participle (AvP) form, followed by a finite, agreeing form of the auxiliary -- as opposed to the simple inflection involved in the formation of the

¹¹⁵ The use of perfective forms to focus on beginnings would appear to contradict the claim that perfectivity views situations as undifferentiated wholes. Comrie suggests two possible explanations: that stative verbs might actually be ambiguous between a static and an ingressive meaning -- in which case, perfective simply denotes a whole or 'complete' view of the entry into the state -- , or alternatively, that perfective forms, which normally do not occur with states, are available to denote entry into a state "since otherwise there would be little use for the perfective forms of these verbs" (20).

tenses. Further, the auxiliary *iru* has functions in addition to the perfect, some of which are more clearly aspectual (e.g. *iru* is a formative element in the continuative auxiliary *kittiru*, and functions as a continuative on its own with certain verbs). Perfects express a variety of meanings in the languages of the world; common among these are the perfect of result, the perfect of experience, the perfect of recent past, and the inferential perfect; most of these can be expressed in Tamil by means of the auxiliary *iru*.

It is possible to identify other aspectual categories as well, such as iterative and inceptive, but as Tamil lacks explicit morphological devices for signaling these distinctions, they will not be considered further here. Conversely, Tamil possesses a great variety of verbal auxiliaries, a shifting subset of which are periodically classed as 'aspectual', but which convey in addition to aspectual notions (i.e. perfectivity and continuation) expression of the positive or (more typically) negative attitudes of the speaker toward the situation described (e.g. *ā*, *pō*, *pōlu*, *tolai*). I exclude 'attitude auxiliaries' from consideration here on the grounds that they appear only infrequently in narrative texts.

7.1 Perfective.

7.1.1 Traditional accounts.

Of the various candidates for perfective aspect in Tamil, the auxiliary *viṭu* is by far the most frequently used and the least restricted in its distribution. The meaning of this form, however, has thus far managed to elude exact description. As a lexical verb, it translates as 'to leave' or 'to let'. In its aspectual function, it has been referred to variously in the grammatical literature as 'intensive', 'definitive', 'completive',

'perfective', and 'perfect'. Each of these characterizations is considered separately below.

Intensive

In an early grammar, Lazarus (1878) described *viṭu* as one of three auxiliaries¹¹⁶ which "variously emphasize their principals" (141). Similarly, Arden (1942) considers *viṭu* to be one of a miscellaneous set of "intensive verbs" which "intensify the meaning (of the verbal participles to which they are added)" (282); in his examples, *viṭu* is translated as 'up' or 'away', e.g. 'A cat ate up that fish' and 'I sent him away'. Fedson (1981), although arguing for a different terminology, asserts that "there is an *emphasis on the action* denoted by the verb, rather than the actor, when *viṭu* follows it" (82; italics in original). The term "intensive" is also found in Kumaraswami Raja (1966). While a number of scholars have thus proposed this characterization, it is too broad to be truly useful. In particular, it does not provide a description specific enough to distinguish the meaning of *viṭu* from that of other 'intensive' auxiliaries such as *pō*, *pōṭu*, etc.

Definitive

Other scholars (Shanmukam Pillai 1968; Gair et al 1978; Paramasivam 1983a) employ the term 'definitive' or 'definite' to refer to the *viṭu* construction. In their descriptions, however, they do not distinguish clearly between the notions of 'definitiveness' and 'completion'. In Herring (1988), I observe that a 'definitive' interpretation is favored when the *viṭu* construction is in future tense (or in present tense with future time reference), while the 'completive' interpretation is favored

¹¹⁶ The others are *pō* 'to go' and *iṭu* 'to place'.

with past tense verbs. Traditionally, however, this distinction is not explicitly stated. Gair et al simply identify two uses of the 'definite' construction: to express "emphasis or certainty", and to express "completion of the action" (1978:256). Paramasivam (1983b), while employing the term 'definitive', gives as its basic meaning "completion of an act"; conversely, Schiffman (1969, 1979) uses the term 'completive' in reference to *viṭu*, but paraphrases its meaning as "definitely, completely, for sure" (1979:39), and translates it in his examples by means of the English adverb 'definitely'.

Terminological inconsistencies aside, the 'definitive' analysis is criticized by both Fedson (1981) and Annamalai (1985), who point out that aspectual *viṭu* can co-occur with explicit expressions of uncertainty with no resulting contradiction. This is shown in the following example:

- (84) Appā oruvēlai nālaikk-ē vantū- (vi)ṭ-alam. (Annamalai 1985:89)
 father perhaps tomorrow-EMPH comeAvP- *viṭu*- may
 *'Father may perhaps definitely return tomorrow itself'.

Moreover, there is no redundancy in sentences containing *viṭu* along with adverbs such as *niccayamā* 'definitely' or *kaṭṭayam* 'certainly', although neither adverb could be used in a sentence such as (84) above without creating a logical contradiction.

Completive

Another popular account of *viṭu* is as a marker of 'completive' aspect. This is the characterization adopted by Schiffman (1969, 1979), Dale (1975), Hart & Hart (1979), and Annamalai (1985), among others. Dale assumes *viṭu* "to convey a sense of the completion of the action represented by the main verb" (1975:215). Similarly, Hart & Hart write that *viṭu* is used when "the action of the verb is complete", citing as an example the (English) sentence 'I read the (whole) book yesterday' (1979:162). As evidence for the completive view, several scholars point to transitive/intransitive

sentence pairs in which *viṭu* may not appear in the first sentence when the second is an adversative clause with a negative verb, e.g.:

- (85a) *Nān palliy-ai kon-r-ēn.*
 I lizard-ACC kill-P-1sg.
 'I killed the house lizard'.
 (85b) *Nān palliy-ai konru- vit- t- ēn.*
 I lizard-ACC killAvP- *viṭu*-P-1sg.
 'I killed the house lizard'.
 (86) *Ānāl palli cākav-illai.* (Annamalai 1985:82)
 But lizard die- NEG
 'But the house lizard didn't die'.

Sentence (85a), in which the verb *kol* 'kill' is in the simple past tense, can be followed by the sentence in (86) without contradiction; the sense of 'killed' in the first sentence would then simply be reinterpreted to mean 'attempted to kill'. If *viṭu* is added to the verb *kol*, however, as in (85b), it is no longer possible to follow it with (86). The ungrammaticality of sequences such as (85b)-(86) is taken as evidence that *viṭu* specifies the meaning of completion in clauses in which it appears, since if the act of 'killing' is completed then it is impossible to state that the thing killed did not 'die'.

This analysis is also problematic, however. To begin with, not all Tamil verbs exhibit the contrast illustrated in (85); Annamalai (1985) restricts the phenomenon to transitive accomplishment verbs, but as Fedson (1981:85) points out, there are many transitive accomplishment verbs (to say nothing of other transitive verb types, and all intransitives) for which a reading in the simple past tense of 'tried to X, but did not succeed' is impossible -- that is, where simple past alone is as 'completive' as *viṭu*. Thus the evidence for the completive function of *viṭu* is limited. As an alternative, Fedson (following Comrie 1976) suggests that 'completeness', rather than 'completion', describes the nuance of meaning contributed by *viṭu* in examples such as (85):

"When *viṭu* is used, the transitive [accomplishment] is viewed as a whole, and one cannot focus on a part of it" (1981:84). She further points out that *viṭu* may be used with verbs which are inherently completive, such as *muṭi* 'to finish', with no redundancy.

Perfective

In one account surveyed, the label 'perfective' appears to be merely a terminological variant of the more traditional terms. Asher (1985:160) labels *viṭu* the 'perfective of certainty',¹¹⁷ stating that it "implies that an event did take place or will take place for sure. The feature of completeness or finality is generally prominent ..." (160). Although it is the *perfective* of certainty, Asher glosses it as COMPL (completive) in his examples.

Others employ the term perfective in a more restricted sense, i.e. to refer to a "complete action or event...within a point or period of time" (Lehmann 1989:209) or a situation "view[ed] (...) in its totality" (Fedson 1981:85). Lehmann further offers an explanation for the sense of definiteness commonly attributed to the use of *viṭu* in future tense, suggesting that the meaning of completeness in the future "implies for the speaker that the action or event will definitely occur" (210). Thus the basic sense of *viṭu* is not 'definiteness', since this can be explained as an inference; nor is it 'completion' in the sense of focus on the end point of a situation, but rather it is 'perfective' in viewing a verbal situation as a complete, unanalyzed whole.

Yet what exactly does it mean to say that in using *viṭu*, a Tamil speaker views a situation as whole? The notion of perfectivity as defined by Comrie and applied to

¹¹⁷ For Asher, the 'perfective of certainty' is one of several 'perfective' auxiliaries which include as well the 'perfective of intent' (*pōtu*), the 'perfective of change of state' (*pō*), and the 'perfective of prior completion' (*ā*) (1985:160-4).

Tamil by Fedson and Lehmann appears to lack functional motivation. Comrie states that "perfectivity involves lack of explicit reference to the internal temporal constituency of a situation, rather than explicitly implying the lack of such internal temporal constituency" (1976:21). This would seem to imply that perfective marking has a negative function, rather than actively contributing a specific feature of meaning which motivates its use by speakers.

Fedson addresses this question partially for Tamil in her observation that the use of *viṭu* conveys a "non-durative, punctual view of a dynamic situation" (85), giving an "active meaning" (89) to stative verbs on the relatively infrequent occasions when these occur with the perfectivizing auxiliary. Yet the deeper question of why a "punctual view" might be desirable is left unaddressed. For an answer to this question an examination of how the form is actually used would seem to be required.

Perfect

The last important semantic analysis to be considered is one which treats *viṭu* as a marker of 'perfect' aspect. Although no scholar takes this to be the primary meaning of *viṭu* -- since Tamil has another 'perfect' auxiliary, *iru* -- several (Annamalai, Fedson, Lindholm) note that past tense *viṭu* may signal the present result of a prior completed action, and it is not uncommon to find example sentences translated by the English present perfect, even where no explicit analysis of *viṭu* as a perfect marker is to be found (e.g. Lehmann 1989). Fedson classifies the 'perfect' functions of *viṭu* into three types -- the perfect of result, the perfect of persistent situation, and the recent past or "hot news perfect" -- and gives convincing examples of each. With regard to the last type, she notes that a nuance of 'unexpectedness' is frequently involved, a claim also advanced by Steever (1983). Annamalai, on the other

hand, states that "to use *viṭu*, the speaker must *anticipate or desire* its occurrence or non-occurrence" (1985:91, emphasis mine).

The picture that emerges from these various descriptions is complex at best, chaotic at worst. The meaning of *viṭu* appears to vary depending on the tense with which it is used -- 'definitive' for present and future, and 'complete(d)' for past. Moreover, with some past tense verbs, it gives a sense of 'completion' (i.e. focus on the end point), with others, a sense of 'inception', and with still others, neither of the above. The general notion of 'perfectivity' encompasses the data descriptively, but does not shed much light on how and why the form is used, particularly since it is not contrasted with an imperfective form in any of the descriptions given, but rather with the simple (usually past) tense. Finally, *viṭu* functions as a 'perfect' alongside its 'perfective' uses, in which capacity it expresses speaker's attitude, although there is disagreement over whether the event described is 'expected' or 'unexpected' from the point of view of the speaker. No wonder learners of Tamil find the use of *viṭu* difficult to grasp, and no wonder simple one-sentence characterizations in pedagogical grammars are so unrevealing!

7.1.2 Perfective aspect in narration.

In this study, I adopt the term 'perfective' to refer to the aspectual uses (excluding the perfect) of Tamil *viṭu*, for reasons which will be developed below. Of the three aspects considered here, the perfective is most frequent in the narrative sample, accounting for 17.2% of all finite verbal clauses overall. The large majority of these occurrences are in past tense (69.9%), followed by present (24.7%), with future perfectives relatively rare (5.4%). Some variability is evident in the distribution of perfective forms across tenses and across genres. This is shown in table 17:

	RLA	FT	PE	EE	tense total:
past	64 (94.1%)	58 (75.3%)	24 (75%)	21 (33.9%)	167 (69.9%)
present	1 (1.5%)	17 (22.1%)	2 (6.3%)	39 (62.9%)	59 (24.7%)
future	3 (4.7%)	2 (2.6%)	6 (18.7%) ¹¹⁸	2 (3.2%)	13 (5.4%)
genre total:	N=68	N=77	N=32	N=62	N=239 (100%)
% verbal cl:	21.5%	19.7%	8.1%	21.4%	17.2%

Table 17: Distribution of perfective *viṭu* with respect to tense and genre

As table 17 shows, past perfectives are most frequent in the real-life accounts, and least frequent in elicited epics, in keeping with the preferred base tense for each genre as discussed in chapter 6. Similarly, present perfectives are most frequent in elicited epics, and least frequent in real-life accounts and performed epics. Genre effects aside, perfective aspect shows a preference for past tense over the other two tenses overall. Perfective marking is roughly equally distributed across the four genres, with the notable exception of the performed epics, which contain significantly fewer *viṭu*-marked clauses.

Despite these distributional variations, a single function can be attributed to the form in all genres. The auxiliary *viṭu* selectively highlights the main sequential events of the narrative plot-line, especially resolutions. Its use is evaluative, rather than a reflection of the inherent properties of the narrated events themselves. Contrary to the observations of Hopper (1979) and Hopper and Thompson (1980) that perfective aspect tends to correlate with high "transitivity" features such as

¹¹⁸ All 6 tokens of future perfective in the performed epics occur in text *12, 'Two Pious Men'.

dynamicity, punctuality, and transitivity itself, verbs marked with *viṭu* in Tamil are mostly intransitive -- the most frequently occurring being *ā* 'become; happen', *pō* 'go', *vā* 'come', *col* 'say', and *en* 'say' -- and need not be notionally dynamic or of brief duration. On the other hand, there is a strong correlation between the use of *viṭu* and 'important' plot-line events. Taken together, clauses marked in this fashion typically constitute a fairly complete synopsis of the basic plot itself, although such synopses may be redundant in spots, in that *viṭu*-marked events evaluated as especially important by the narrator are sometimes repeated and/or paraphrased, also with *viṭu*. This is illustrated in the following example, which is an extraction of all of the *viṭu*-marked finite clauses from the performed epic narrative "The Seven Maidens":

- (87)a. (...) *kāttavarāya cuvāmi ellōrukku ilaiya kaṇṇi kaṭṭakkūtiya*
 Kattavaraya Swami everyone-DAT young maiden wear-Adj
paṭṭ-ālaiy-e kaiy-ināl eṭuttu, oru puliyāmputar-ilē maraiṭtu
 silk-dress-ACC hand-INST take-AvP one tamarind.tree-LOC hide-AvP
vaṭṭu- viṭ- ṭ- ār.
 placeAvP-PFV- P-3resp
 b. *Atikamāṇa kavalaṭṭ-āki- viṭ- ṭ- atu.*
 great worry- becomeAvP-PFV-P-3sg.n
 c. (...) *tarkolaiy-ē ceytu-viṭ- ṭ- āl.*
 suicide-EMPH doAvP- PFV-P-3sg.f
 d. *Ceri. Tann-utaiya uyir-aiy-ē viṭṭu- viṭ- ṭ- āl.*
 okay self- GEN life-ACC-EMPH leaveAvP-PFV-P-3sg.f
 e. *'Inimēl uyir-ōṭu irukka-kkūṭātu' enru tarkolai ceytu-viṭ- ṭ- āl.*
 henceforth life-with be- PROHIB QUOT suicide doAvP- PFV-P-3sg.f
 f. *Kāñci vaṇatt-irku vantu- viṭ- ṭ- ār paramēsvaṇ.*
 Kanji forest- DAT comeAvP-PFV-P-3resp Lord.Shiva
 g. *'Cākāta cūṭalaiy- ilē nī cāmpal-āka pō' enru capittu- viṭ- ṭ- ār.*
 undying burning.ground-LOC you ashes- Adv go-IMP QUOT curseAvP-PFV-P-3r

- a. '(...) Kattavaraya Swami took the silk dress of the youngest maiden in his hand and **hid** it in a tamarind tree. (line 24)
- b. (She) **got** very worried. (line 39)
- c. She **committed** suicide. (line 40a)
- d. Okay. She **quit** her life. (line 40b)
- e. Thinking "I must no longer live", she **committed** suicide. (line 41)
- f. Lord Shiva **came** to Kanji Forest. (line 56)
- g. He **curse**d (Kattavaraya Swami), saying, "Go (burn) to ashes at the immortal burning ground". (line 58)

Of the 64 finite clauses in the text, these seven, containing *viṭu*, effectively summarize the important developments in the narrative.¹¹⁹ The youngest maiden's suicide is rhetorically underlined by paraphrase and repetition in three separate clauses (clause (d) is uttered by the secondary narrator), since this is the event on which the rest of the story pivots, and hence has particular evaluative significance.

In most of the texts, the clauses highlighted by *viṭu* correspond well to what one might predict to be the most important plot-line events on the basis of the notional content of the stories themselves. Indeed, almost all such events are marked by *viṭu*,¹²⁰ if anything, narrators use *viṭu* more frequently than content alone would

¹¹⁹ The text itself is a portion of a much longer oral performance; the section included for analysis in the sample constitutes one episode within it. The episode is a crucial one for the performance as a whole, however, in that it explains the "sin" that Kattavaraya Swami has committed which results in the degraded life that he is forced to lead subsequently.

¹²⁰ Several of what appear to me to be notionally important plot-line events do not have *viṭu*, however; these include the event of the snakebite itself in the text "Snakebite", the prince's murder of his second wife and subsequent suicide in "The Unlucky Bride" (see synopses, appendix C), and a number of less crucial but still important events in the performed epics. Varying accounts can be proposed for these omissions: the snakebite event is rhetorically highlighted by other means (see ex. (46) and discussion in 5.2.2. above), and in the performed epics, we have simply to note that perfectives are relatively infrequent; their use highlights not all but only the most evaluatively important plot-line events. I have no account for why *viṭu* is not used with the deaths in "The Unlucky Bride" -- they are, if not evaluatively important, part of the resolution of the story -- other than to speculate that the narrator does not wish to draw special attention to them, perhaps because they are his own addition to the traditional folk tale.

seem to warrant, i.e. to highlight additional clauses which are perceived to contribute to the particular evaluative point of their telling. In one text, however -- "Krishna, Arjuna, and the Prince" -- a more selective strategy is employed. This text was narrated in an informal setting¹²¹ by a professional narrator, FE, whose skill in narration has already been noted.

The story concerns a brave but hot-headed young prince who, when left to rule the kingdom in his father's absence, gets into a fight with the god Krishna and the archer hero Arjuna, and fells them with his arrows. When he proudly tells his father of his deeds upon his return, the king -- a pious devotee of Krishna -- becomes furious and disowns his son, banishing him from the kingdom. The prince, broken-hearted and protesting, goes off to live in the forest.

Meanwhile, Krishna and Arjuna pick themselves up from the battlefield. Arjuna is outraged to have been beaten by a mere boy. Krishna plans their revenge: disguising himself as an old man, he runs to the palace crying that a lion-demon has captured his only son, and will not release him unless offered the sacrifice of the left side of the king's body. The noble king immediately offers to sacrifice himself, and picks up his sword. But the old man tells him that the lion will accept the sacrifice only if the king is cut in half by his own son.

The king is persuaded to summon his son from the forest, who is found sitting under a tree weeping. When he hears of the reason he has been summoned, his grief is great, but accepting it as his fate, he takes the sword and is about to bring it down on his father's head. At that moment, a tear appears in the king's right eye. Disgusted with the king for being afraid to die, Krishna calls off the blow, but then a voice is

¹²¹ The setting was the narrator's home. The audience was made up of his family, myself, my research assistant, and several neighbor children.

heard which explains the king's feelings: he is not afraid to die; rather his right side grieves at being unable to participate in the noble sacrifice as well. Impressed by the king's greatness of spirit, Krishna forgets himself and calls out to Arjuna to come witness the event. Krishna and Arjuna are revealed before the assembled company in their true identities.

Immediately the king falls down at Krishna's feet and begs his forgiveness for his son's terrible deed. But Krishna laughs it off, complimenting the prince on his bravery and marksmanship. He explains that he came to their kingdom to teach Arjuna a lesson. Arjuna, it seems, had been growing boastful of late; Krishna wanted to show him that there were others in the world who were both better archers, and more pious devotees of Krishna, than he. Having accomplished this end, he bids the king forgive his son, and he and Arjuna go on their way.

This story has a "surprise" ending; until the very end, the audience is led to believe that what it is primarily "about" is the conflict between the king and his son, with the fight with Krishna and Arjuna as the cause of the conflict, and their subsequent attempt at revenge as the means by which the king and his son will presumably forgive one another and become reunited. In light of the surprise ending, however, these events must be reinterpreted and their relative saliency reversed. In actuality, the relationship of the king to his son is of secondary importance to the lesson which Krishna is teaching Arjuna. The distribution of *ritu* in the text supports this latter interpretation. The majority of the *ritu* clauses relate the actions of Krishna and Arjuna. Further, the core events of every scene involving either Krishna or Arjuna are highlighted by *ritu*. In contrast, although *ritu* is used for the king's anger with and banishment of the prince, neither of the scenes involving the prince banished in the forest (after his initial banishment, and when

the king's ministers are sent to seek him for the sacrifice) contains a single instance of it. Once Krishna reveals his true intentions, no further instances of *viṭu* are used. It is a tribute to the skill of the narrator that he manages to keep the ending a secret not only from the characters in the narrative, but from the audience as well; yet on a subtler, grammatical level he signals to his audience throughout to attend to certain events which will ultimately be revealed to have special significance. The narrative thus illustrates in a particularly striking fashion the evaluative potential of *viṭu* as a plot-highlighting device.

Although the narrator in the above example has exercised his evaluative choice rather freely, his choices nevertheless conform to the tendency for *viṭu*-marked clauses to describe discrete, unique, and complete events (i.e. actions or changes-of-state) in chronological sequence. Of the total instances of *viṭu* in the narrative sample, 86.5% exhibit this tendency. The narrative evidence thus supports the characterization of *viṭu* as aspectually perfective, and also lends indirect credence to the intuitions of those who label it 'intensive' or 'emphatic', since in its textual highlighting function it intensifies or emphasizes the content of the clauses in which it appears in relation to other clauses. I will return to this point in 7.1.3 below.

The remaining 13.5% of uses are exceptional in a variety of respects, each deviating from one or more of the prototypical features mentioned above. The most significant category of 'exceptions' (5.9%) involves the use of *viṭu* to encode unique, complete events which occurred, strictly speaking, prior to the events of the main plot-line at its current stage of unfolding, i.e. out of sequence. In the clearest cases, the *viṭu* construction is translatable by means of the English perfect:

- (88)a. *Ērkaṇavē aracaṇ oru cilamp-ai .. iṇaṇ-ukku ceyyaratu-kkāka vēṇṭi*
 already king one anklet-ACC he- DAT doing- PURP request-AvP
koṭutt- iru- kk-āṇ.
 giveAvP-PERF-Pr-3sg.masc
- b. *Anta cilamp-ai inta porḱollan .. enṇa paṇṇi-iru- kk-āṇ.*
 that anklet-ACC this goldsmith what doAvP-PERF-Pr-3sg.masc
- c. *Tavarāṇa muraiy- ilē .. payaṇ paṭutt- it- t-āṇ.* [18:77-9]
 mistaken manner-LOC use cause.to.experienceAvP-PFV-P-3sg.masc
- a. 'Already the king has given him an anklet to do some work on.
 b. What has the goldsmith done with that anklet?
 c. He's **made use** of it in a corrupt manner (i.e. for his own benefit).'

In this example, present perfect forms alternate with *viṭu* in the past tense to refer to essentially the same events. The use of *viṭu* in clause (c) may lend extra emphasis (the fact that the goldsmith has misappropriated a royal anklet is crucial to the plot as a whole, and is currently relevant at this point in the text), but the event related is clearly out of sequence.

In other, less clear, cases, the narrator appears to simply back up and resume his or her narrative sequence from an earlier point. Consider the following example:

- (89)a. *Koṇca nēram kaḷiccu vant- iru-ccu,¹²² takaval vant- iru-ccu.*
 little time passAvP comeAvP-PFV-P3sg.n news comeAvP-PFV-P3sg.n
- b. *Rājāmaṇi kīḷa vilunt- ut- t- āṇ.*
 Rajamani down fallAvP-PFV-P-3sg.masc
- c. *cettu pōy- it- t- āṇ vant- iru-ccu.*
 dieAvP goAvP-PFV-P-3sg.masc comeAvP-PFV-P3sg.n
- d. *Anta kutirai iṇka va- otacc- uru-ccu.*
 that horse here com- kickAvP-PFV- P3sg.n
- e. *Iṇka oru neramp-ō enṇav-ō cunt- iru-ccu.*
 here one nerve- DUB what- DUB contract-PFV-P3sg.n
- f. *a ..., appuram, anta- avaṇ aṇkēy-ē cott- ut- t- āṇ.*
 afterwards that he there- EMPH dieAvP-PFV-P-3sg.masc

¹²² See Appendix B for discussion of the morphological differences between this form of *viṭu* and the auxiliary *iru*.

- g. Ku- tūkki- ttu vantu oru- one hour-ō two hours-kku
 hor(se)- liftAvP-PFVAvP comeAvP one one hour-DUB two hours-DAT
vīṅk- **itu-ccu** otamp-ellām.
 swellAvP-PFV-P3sg.n body- all
- h. Īṅka appuṛam vantu avan-e **putaicc- uṭ- ṭ- āṅka**. [3:116-124]
 here afterwards comeAvP he-ACC buryAvP-PFV-P-3pl.
- a. 'A little while later it **came**; the news **came**.
 b. Rajamani **had fallen** (?fell) **down**.
 c. (Word) **came** that he **had died** (??he died).
 d. The horse **kicked** (?had kicked) him here.
 e. A nerve or something here **contracted** (?had contracted).
 f. Afterwards, he **died** (?had died) right there.
 g. The hor(se)- they carried (him) back and his whole body **swelled up** (??had swelled up) for about an hour or two.
 h. Afterwards they **buried** (*had buried) him here'.

This example presents a problem for analysis in that the same form -- past tense *viṭu* - is used throughout, yet the events related in (b) and (c) are logically prior to the arrival of the news in (a) (and indeed are formally subordinated to it by the repetition of the verb *vantiruccu* '(word) came' in (c)), while the event in (h) must have taken place after the arrival of the news. Even more problematic are the events related in clauses (d) - (f), for it seems that here, regardless of whether or not the narrator intended *viṭu* in (b) and (c) to encode prior events, she has adopted the prior time as the new narrative time line, and is simply relating events in sequence; indeed she catches up with her original point of departure and continues on with the story in (g) and (h). Two different interpretations of this passage are possible: either the narrator intends *viṭu* to signal 'event in sequence' in some of the clauses and 'prior event' in others (leaving it to context to ascribe the appropriate interpretations), or else it is the same, perfective *viṭu* in each case, but with the feature of sequentiality

neutralized¹²³ -- a neutralization sanctioned, perhaps, by the existence of a 'perfect' *vitu* which is non-sequential. Lacking compelling evidence for either view, I leave this as a question for future research. It should be noted, however, that the events in this example are important plot-line events, regardless of their sequence; thus the use of *vitu* is evaluatively motivated.

The second category of exceptions (2.9% of total *vitu*) involves out-of-sequence events which take place later in the narrative, or which would hypothetically take place if a certain course of action were followed. All such uses serve an explanatory, rather than a strictly narrative, function, and five out of seven of them are in future tense.¹²⁴ The remaining two examples, which are in past tense, are reportative statements delivered from the perspective of the narrator's now (e.g. "The expenses for our going (to the doctor) came out to be ten or twenty rupees at the time" [2:40]); it is not clear what principle motivates the use of *vitu* in these, but it does not appear to be one exclusive to narrative.

Habitual (i.e. non-unique) occurrences are also expressed with *vitu* (2.1%); all of these are explicitly marked as habitual by the use of future tense. The instances of habitual *vitu* are restricted to two texts -- "The Japanese Girl" and "Two Pious Men". In both, they occur in sections describing sequences of discrete habitual actions characterizing the main participants. Thus while the feature of 'unique occurrence' typically associated with *vitu* is violated, the features of completeness, event and sequence are preserved.

¹²³ In oral narration in English it is not uncommon for temporal "back-tracking" to occur without an explicit shift in tense-aspect; this may be an instance of a similar phenomenon, the apparent temporal embedding in clause (c) notwithstanding.

¹²⁴ For a discussion of three of these instances, see example (80) in section 6.3.2.

In several interesting examples (1.3%), the completeness feature alone is violated. These are clauses in which *viṭu*, in conjunction with future tense or the *pō* + INF 'about to' construction, gives a heightened sense of imminence, as in (90):

- (90) *Ivaṇ vāl-e ṇṇki talaiy-ai vaikka pōy- t- t- ān.* [11:178]
 he sword-ACC raiseAvP head-ACC placeINF goAvP-PFV-P-3sg.masc
 'Raising his sword, he **was just about to drop** it on (the king's) head'.

Although one might argue that the condition of 'being about to' do something is expressed here as a complete whole, the more natural interpretation, I feel, is that something is *incomplete*, a usage which results in increased dramatic tension.

The final category of exceptions involves states. Many stative predicates, when employed in past tense and/or with perfective *viṭu*, signal a change of state; specifically, the inception of the state. Predicates of this type which occur with *viṭu* in the corpus include optionally-ØV predicates with dative subjects (see 5.2.2) such as 'be happy', 'be sad', 'be angry', and 'know', as well as *āku* 'be, become' in 'She was (i.e. turned) all blue on the outside' [5:17]. These expressions function as sequential events much like prototypical *viṭu*-marked clauses. There are, however, three instances (1.3% of total *viṭu*) where an unbounded state is indicated, and where overlap occurs between the state and the events of the neighboring clauses. Two of these instances occur in "The Japanese Girl":

- (91)a. *Avaṇk-ammā mēle oru cantēkatt-ile viṭṭ-ai viṭṭu vant- ut- t- ān.*
 their- mother on one doubt-LOC house-ACC leaveAvP comeAvP-PFV-P-3sg.m
 b. *Ēṇk-appā kūṭay-ē irunt-ut- t- ān.*
 our-father with- EMPH beAvP-PFV-P-3sg.masc
 c. *Ēṇk-appā āṇkay-um iṇkay-um pōkum pōtu ellām avan kūṭṭittu pōy,*
 our-father there-and here-and goFAJP time all he bringAvP goAvP
at- ellām palakki viṭṭ- ut- t- ān.
 that-all frequentAvP letAvP-PFV-P-3resp
 a. 'In disapproval over his mother('s behavior), he **left** home.

- b. He **was** always with my father.
- c. Whenever he was going anywhere, my father would bring him along and let him hang around (with him) and all'.

Obviously, the state of 'being with [the narrator's] father' in (b) is contemporaneous with the father's permitting the boy to hang around with him in (c); indeed it is likely that (c) is intended as an elaboration of (b), and that the two clauses thus represent the same situation. The question remains, however, why the narrator chooses to encode them in the past perfective, rather than in a form which would allow for an interpretation of temporal unboundedness. While I cannot be certain of her motives, it is noteworthy that this narrator uses a great many past perfective forms, to the point where she might be said to have adopted the use of past perfective as a basic narrative strategy. The situation in which the main character spends time with the narrator's father is subsequent to the event of his leaving home, and the situation is also bounded at the other end by the boy's departure with a horse and cart (leading directly to his death), which is in fact the next plot-line event to be related, albeit after 22 clauses of intervening orientation. The narrator might thus have intended the description of the boy's relationship with her father as a single, unified event among others in the primary narrative sequence; at least, she presents it as such.

The final instance of an unbounded *viṭu*-marked state occurs in "The American Students' Swimming Pool":

- (92)a. Appuṛam ōvar tēṅk-le iruntu oru paip valiyā taṇṇiy-e anta rūm-kkulḷe
afterwards over tank-LOC from one pipe through water-ACC that room-inside
vittu nerappi, a- tāṇ avaṅkaḷ-utaiya tiṭṭam.
letAvP fill!AvP that-EMPH they- GEN plan
- b. Nallā .. cuvar .. iṇvaḷavu uyaratt-ukku **vant-** iṇu-ccu.
well wall this.much height- DAT comeAvP-PFV-P3sg.n
- c. "Enṇatā itu vamp- ā pō-ccu" inta māṭiri n-t-tu ..
what.boy this obscenity-Adv go-P3sg.n this manner say-PFV-AvP

vittukkārar-ukku itu **teriñcu** **pōy-** **iru-ccu.**
 landlord- DAT this be.knownAvP goAvP-PFV-P3sg.n

- a. 'Afterwards their plan (was) to fill up the room by letting water through a pipe from the tank on the roof.
- b. The wall **came up** this high.
- c. Thinking "What on earth, this is obscene" .. the landlord **found out** about it.

From context, we know that the height of the wall of the swimming pool being built inside the house remains the same throughout the landlord's discovery of it, and indeed until the students are persuaded to abandon their project some 12 clauses later. Yet this state is presented as though it were a discrete, bounded event in linear sequence. The section of text in which the example occurs is characterized by a high concentration of rhetorical underlining devices. It is the site of the only ØV construction and the only present tense finite verb in the narrative. It also begins a sequence in which six out of the seven *vitu* clauses found in the story appear. The use of *vitu* in (92b) is doubly evaluated, since in addition to the normal highlighting effect of the perfective form, its use with a state rather than an event is highly marked. In this case, it seems that the markedness effect is intentionally sought by the narrator, i.e. to draw attention to a state which is pivotal to the narrative plot, as well as being outrageous and amusing. Thus what is being disregarded in this use of *vitu* is all but its evaluative, highlighting effect.

7.1.3 Perfective vs. Past.

The narrative functions -- both prototypical and "exceptional" -- of perfective *vitu* overlap, to some extent, the narrative functions of past tense as identified in 6.1. Both typically encode discrete sequential events which are of unique occurrence. This similarity of function arises from the fact that perfectivity, which views situations as complete wholes, and pastness, which situates them in past time, both

give rise to the inference that situations thus encoded are ended or bounded,¹²⁵ and can thus be treated as discrete entities. These discrete entities, in turn, can be strung together in sequence to create/represent narrative plots.

At the same time, the two verbal categories differ, in that perfectivity lacks the objective, factual associations of past tense; moreover, perfectivity is 'evaluative' (on the third, global level; see 3.5) in a way that past tense is not. The evaluative impact of narrative perfectivity derives not from reversal of markedness values,¹²⁶ but rather from its use to select, from among all the events included in an act of narration, those which comprise the basic plot, and to draw attention to them by means of an overt linguistic marker (e.g. *viṭu*). This is the function which Hopper (1979a, 1979b, 1982) refers to as 'foregrounding'. For Hopper, foregrounding is the core or basic function of aspectual perfectivity; it is realized most fully in narrative discourse, but it gives rise to various "additive" meanings on the sentence level such as, e.g. in Malay, 'perfect' tense and focus or intensification of the meaning of the element with which it is associated. The Tamil data provide evidence in support of Hopper's observations. If 'perfectivity' is the basic meaning of *viṭu*, then it is not surprising that this meaning is most clearly manifested in communicative contexts where events in sequence are expressed, i.e. in narration.¹²⁷ Indeed the behavior of *viṭu* in narrative is remarkably consistent, as compared with the disparate array of meanings it is claimed to express in individual sentences. Moreover, narrative perfectivity involves two components of meaning, and these can be seen to account for the two principal uses of *viṭu* noted in Tamil grammars. The completeness feature, which views

¹²⁵ In typical or 'unmarked' cases, i.e. in the absence of indications to the contrary.

¹²⁶ Although it can of course be used in atypical contexts for markedness effect.

¹²⁷ By 'narration' here I intend any account of past experience, however brief, which occurs in a communicative context.

situations as complete wholes, gives rise to the value of 'completion'. The highlighting or 'foregrounding' feature gives rise to the 'intensive' (and by extension, the 'definitive') value. If this analysis is correct, it underscores the importance of expanding grammatical descriptions to include discourse-level regularities, since the latter may provide crucial clues to understanding the former.

7.2 Continuative.

7.2.1 Traditional accounts.

The Tamil continuative auxiliary *koṭṭiru* (*kittiru* in spoken Tamil)¹²⁸ is a compound auxiliary which is itself made up of two auxiliary elements: *koṭu* (adverbial participle form of *kol* 'to take, hold'), and *iru* ('to exist; be located'). Like the other aspectual auxiliaries in Tamil, it follows the adverbial participle form of the main verb with which it is semantically associated.

The meaning of this auxiliary is given as 'progressive', 'continuous', or 'durative' in Tamil grammars. Pedagogical grammars (e.g. Gair et al 1978; Hart & Hart 1979) note the functional similarity of the Tamil auxiliary and the English 'progressive tense', translating sentences containing *koṭṭiru* with English 'is verbing', 'was verbing', and 'will be verbing'. In keeping with this tendency, Fedson (1981) observes:

No one who has written about Tamil in English, especially native speakers of English, has had any difficulty describing this construction and the *iru* perfect, because English has parallel categories. This construction denotes progressive aspect. (110)

Progressive aspect, for Fedson, is used "when a dynamic situation is on-going at the time of reference" (114). A similar view is evident in Lehmann's (1989) statement that

¹²⁸ For variations on this pronunciation, see Appendix A.

progressive *koṇṭiru* describes "an action or event on-going at the moment of another temporal point" (207-8). The progressive use of *koṇṭiru* is illustrated in (93):

- (93) *Nān arai- kk- uḷ nulai- nta pōtu en nanpan tūṇki- koṇṭiru-nt-ān.*
 I room-DAT-in enter-PAJP time my friend sleepAvP-CONT- P-3sg.masc
 'When I entered the room, my friend **was sleeping**'. (Paramasivam 1983a)

At the same time, the comparison with the English progressive is misleading in certain respects. Fedson herself notes several differences in meaning and usage: *koṇṭiru* can mean either 'be verbing' or 'continue verbing'; it occurs with imperatives and with statives; yet at the same time, "it has a narrower use in some ways than the English progressive" (114). This last observation refers, no doubt, to the fact that Tamil *koṇṭiru* is used less frequently than the English progressive overall, due to the ability of the Tamil simple present tense to refer to ongoing situations at the time of reference (e.g. *Nān paṭikkirēn* 'I study/am studying'), where in English the progressive is normally required. Lehmann also mentions a difference between the Tamil and English 'progressives': *koṇṭiru* can be used "irrespective of whether the main verb is stative or non-stative" (207).¹²⁹ Unfortunately, neither Fedson nor Lehmann give examples of the use of *koṇṭiru* with stative verbs where it would not also be possible to use the progressive in English; this is not to say, however, that such examples do not exist.

For other Tamil grammarians, the *koṇṭiru* construction is 'durative', denoting "durative or continuous action" (Schiffman 1979:42), "continuous action" (Hart & Hart 1979:162), or "an action [that] extends over some period of time" (Gair et al 1978:290).

¹²⁹ Lehmann's statement raises a terminological issue. Comrie (1976) defines 'progressive aspect' in general as 'non-stative'; according to Comrie's definition, Tamil *koṇṭiru* is not 'progressive', but rather 'continuous'.

When *koṇṭiru* is used exclusively in this sense (i.e. rather than as a progressive), it is possible to follow it with the perfective marker *viṭu*, as in (94):

- (94) Nāl muluvatum **vilaiyāti-koṇṭiruntu-viṭ- t-ān**.
 day whole playAvP- CONTAvP PFV-P-3sg.masc
 'He **played continuously** the whole day'.¹³⁰

Here the activity of 'playing' is not related to any other point or period of time; rather it is viewed as a complete whole characterized by the property of duration.¹³¹ In its durative sense, *koṇṭiru* differs from the English progressive, since the expression of continuation or duration in English is not typically achieved by use of the progressive alone, but rather requires the addition of adverbs such as 'continuously', 'still', or the use of periphrastic expressions such as 'keep on (verbing)'.

Many of the grammars surveyed recognize, at least implicitly, that *koṇṭiru* has both of the meanings noted above. Fedson and Gair et al mention both uses, and Asher explicitly states that in Tamil, "no distinction is drawn between continuous and progressive" (1985:163). Others attempt to restrict the meaning of *koṇṭiru* to that of 'progressive' aspect, while reserving the durative meaning for one or more of several closely related constructions. Thus Lehmann and Paramasivam both consider *koṇṭiru* to be progressive (i.e. relating a situation to a point in time), while *koṇṭu vā* (*koṇṭu* + *vā* 'to come'), or *vā* as an auxiliary alone, express durativity (relating a situation to a period of time). (Fedson adds to this list *koṇṭu pō* (< *pō* 'to go') and *koṇṭu kiṭa* (< *kiṭa* 'to lie'), which express continuation along with the additional nuances of activity 'allowed to continue unchecked' and 'without interference' (1981:119, 124).) Also described as durative is the expression *koṇṭē iru*, created by the suffixation of the

¹³⁰ Example from Fedson (1981:116); my translation.

¹³¹ Such an utterance could function as a sequential event in a narrative sequence. For examples of sequential *koṇṭiru*-marked clauses, see 7.2.2.

'emphatic' clitic *-ē* to the *koṇṭu* element in *koṇṭiru*. There is general agreement among Tamil grammarians that these latter types express durativity; what disagreement exists concerns whether *koṇṭiru* expresses durativity as well. On the basis of the collective evidence available in the studies considered here, however, it seems clear that it does.

In the present study, I employ the term 'continuative' to refer to the *koṇṭiru* construction, as well as to the related constructions with *vā*, *pō*, *kīṭa*, and *-ē*. *Koṇṭiru* is 'continuous' as defined by Comrie (1976); that is, it occurs with both stative and non-stative main verbs (although in the narrative data, continuative statives are infrequent). Moreover, while it expresses continuation in both its progressive and durative senses, it does not necessarily express progressive aspect (i.e. relationship to some other point or period in time) in its durative sense, as shown by (94) above. The term 'continuative' therefore more accurately reflects the semantic range of the construction than does the term 'progressive'.

7.2.2 Continuative aspect in narration.

There are 74 instances of continuative auxiliaries in the narrative sample; of these, the majority (64.9%) are in the present tense. Table 18 below shows the distribution of continuative forms by tense and genre:

	RLA	FT	PE	EE	tense total:
past	8 (33.3%)	2 (10%)	3 (17.6%)	1 (7.7%)	14 (18.9%)
present	7 (29.2%)	18 (90%)	12 (70.6%)	11 (84.6%)	48 (64.9%)
future	9 (37.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (11.8%)	1 (7.7%)	12 (16.2%)
genre total:	N=24	N=20	N=17	N=13	N=74 (100%)
% verbal cl:	7.6%	5.1%	4.3%	4.5%	5.3%

Table 18: Distribution of continuative auxiliaries with respect to tense and genre

The preference for present tense with continuative aspect is evident throughout, with the exception of the real-life account genre, where continuative forms are distributed roughly equally across the three tenses. In keeping with its tendency to favor aspectual auxiliaries over simple tensed forms, the real-life account genre also makes the most frequent use of continuatives of the four genres. With a frequency of 5.3% of verbal clauses in the sample overall, the continuative is the least frequent of the verbal categories analyzed in this study.

Included in the 74 instances are all instances of *koṇṭiru*, as well as continuative forms in *koṇṭu vā*, *vā*, and *pō* (no instances of continuative *koṇṭu pō* or *koṇṭu kiṭa* were found in the sample). The breakdown of continuative types is given in table 19:

continuative type	frequency
<i>koṇṭiru</i> plain	55
with <i>-ē</i>	12
total <i>koṇṭiru</i> :	67 (90.5%)
<i>koṇṭu vā</i> plain	2
with <i>-ē</i>	2
total <i>koṇṭu vā</i> :	4 (5.4%)
<i>vā</i>	2 (2.7%)
<i>pō</i>	1 (1.4%)
total continuatives:	74 (100%)

Table 19: Frequency of continuative types

It is immediately obvious from this table that continuative forms other than *koṇṭiru* are rare in Tamil oral narrative. One might be tempted to speculate -- in line with the claims of Lehmann, Paramasivam, and others -- that this is a reflection of the meaning difference between 'progressive' *koṇṭiru* and the other 'durative' types, with 'progressive' being a notion more favored in narration, i.e. as a device for signalling restricted clause types, as it is in English. This hypothesis is only partially borne out, however, by a functional analysis of the data.

koṇṭu vā, *vā*, and *pō*

The seven clauses which make use of a continuative other than *koṇṭiru* do indeed describe situations which extend over a period of time. In each case, the meaning component of 'duration' is relevant and appropriate to the context, although

the precise interpretation of the durative component varies considerably from use to use. Thus of the four tokens of continuous *koṇṭu vā*, one describes an iterated event ('He just keeps on losing' [13:134], two others summarize ongoing situations ('Their marriage is going along very happily' [18:5]; 'The husband goes along like this, forgetting his wife completely' [19:22], and the remaining instance describes a characteristic or habitual activity which functions as background orientation for the narrative as a whole ('The Pandavars are ruling/rule (over a continuous period of time) the kingdom' [16:1]). It is difficult, therefore, to ascribe a precise meaning to *koṇṭu vā*, other than that of general duration.

Nor is it illuminating to contrast *koṇṭu vā* with *vā*. The two instances of continuative *vā* are virtually identical in function and meaning to the example involving the Pandavars above, and indeed appear in the same text. In one, a habitual activity is involved ('His younger brothers are serving/serve him (over a continuous period of time) [16:3]), and in the other, a continuous state ('They are living/live a life of devotion to Krishna' [16:6]), both of which function as narrative orientation. On the basis of this very limited evidence, the two forms *koṇṭu vā* and *vā* appear to be in free variation.

In contrast, the single instance of continuative *pō* appears to contain what Fedson terms an 'attitudinal' nuance. This example is given as (95) below:

- (95) *Avan appatīy-ē ninnu- pō-r- ān.* [9:34]
 he thus- EMPH standAvP go-Pr-3sg.masc
 'He just **stands** there/**goes on standing** there'.

The subject here is a magician who has just been outwitted; context tells us that he continues to simply stand as he is dumbfounded and unable to take any action. Thus, he continues the activity in spite of himself, i.e. 'unchecked' by his conscious control.

In other respects, however, the sense of 'keep on/go on verbing' recalls the first use of *koṇṭu vā* given above.

The question which must be considered is whether these 'durative' uses might not also be considered 'progressive'. The two uses that I have translated 'keep on/go on verbing' function as complete events; no other event or activity intervenes while they are in process; they are thus 'perfective' in function.¹³² For the other five uses, the situation is less clear. As alluded to above, one of the *koṇṭu vā* and both *vā* clauses describe situations which hold throughout the course of the narrative -- that is, they are co-temporaneous with all of the narrative events. This is a functional context in which the English progressive is often found.¹³³ Moreover, if we take the *koṇṭu vā* example 'The Pandavars are ruling the kingdom', we find that four clauses elsewhere in the sample with very similar function and content (i.e. 'X is ruling the kingdom') all use the 'progressive' *koṇṭiru* form. Similarly, the *koṇṭu vā* clause 'Their marriage is going along very happily' appears paraphrased eight lines later with *koṇṭiru*, and the same situation is also expressed with *koṇṭiru* in another version of the story by a different narrator. In all three cases, the situation of the happy marriage can be viewed either as an event complete in itself, or as preparatory background for the more central event of the husband taking up with a dancing girl. In short, it is impossible to rule out a progressive reading for these uses; however, it may be that by using *koṇṭu vā* or *vā* rather than *koṇṭiru*, the narrator is choosing to focus on the continuous duration of the situation, rather than on the fact that it temporally overlaps with other events.

¹³² This is generally true of clauses employing 'keep on' and 'go on' in English as well.

¹³³ For example, consider a narrative which begins, "One summer I was living in Santa Cruz, and I was working at a McDonald's..."

Even such a conservative interpretation is problematic, however. As will be seen below, *koṭṭiru* may also be used to focus on duration, even in contexts where no temporal overlap is involved. Thus the distinction between the 'durative' forms and the 'progressive' *koṭṭiru* cannot be maintained. Why, then, is one sometimes used in place of the other? It is possible that they are stylistic variants, one of which contributes an additional nuance of duration (as with 'verbing' and 'verbing along' in English). Given the infrequent use of the *-vā* continuatives, moreover, it is likely that these latter are more stylistically constrained. In support of this view, it should be noted that the *koṭṭu vā* and *vā* forms are found only in the epic texts.

-ē

If no clear distinction of meaning can be maintained between the various continuative forms discussed above, what then of the 'durative' formed by the addition of the 'emphatic' particle *-ē*? Is it possible that *-ē* accounts for the 'durative' uses of the otherwise 'progressive' *koṭṭiru*? Fedson (1981) characterizes *-ē* as follows:

The notion of continuous progressiveness, 'continue, keep on verb-ing', is indicated by the affixing of the emphatic *-ē* to *koṭṭu*. That this indicates extended duration of a dynamic situation is predictable from the durative notion of *koṭṭu*. (115; emphasis in original)

In the narrative sample, 12 (17.9%) of the uses of *koṭṭiru* and two (50%) of *koṭṭu vā* contain the particle *-ē*, as indicated in table 19. While an interpretation of 'extended duration' is possible with some of these uses (especially those with *koṭṭē vā*), of the 12 *koṭṭē iru* examples, only one is clearly durative. This is given below:

- (96) A. "... enṛu kavalāka irukkakkūṭiya kattavarāyaṇ-ai
 QUOT guard-as being Kattavaraya-ACC
 kēvalamāka pēci- kkoṭṭiru-nt-ār.
 dangerously speak-CONT- P- 3pl.

- B. *Ēlu pen-kaḷ-um kuṛaivā pēci- kkoṇṭē iru-nt-ār.* [14:13a-b]
 7 girl-pl.-and slightly speak-CONT(EMPH)-P- 3pl.

A. 'Saying "...", they were talking dangerously about Kattavaraya who was the guard (there).

B. The seven girls **went on and on, talking** disparagingly'.

In this section of a Bow Song text -- "The Seven Maidens" -- , narrator A's utterance follows a sequence of no less than 36 clauses which relate the various insulting things that the seven maidens are saying about the guard, whom they believe to be sleeping on the job. They do indeed talk 'on and on' about him, and it is this continuous stream of verbal abuse, rather than just a few comments, which ultimately provokes the guard (who was listening all the while) to respond. There seems to be no natural interpretation of narrator B's use of *-ē* in his elaboration of narrator A's statement, other than that he is commenting on the continuous and extended nature of the girls' disparaging talk.

Other examples are ambiguous between an interpretation of 'duration' and of 'intensity'.

- (97) *Nallā kuticc-ittu .. jāliyā .. miyūcik vāciccu-kittē iru- pp-ōm.* [4:24]
 well smokeAvP-PFVAvP happily music playAvP- CONT(EMPH)-F- 1pl.
 'We'd smoke (dope), and then **be playing** music happily'.

Here it is possible to interpret *kittē iru* as indicating either that the musicians used to play for a long time after getting stoned, or else that regardless of how long they played, they would really get into it (i.e. 'we'd just be playing away, having a great time').

In still other examples, an 'intensive' interpretation is clearly favored:

- (98) "... appaiyā .. appaiyā" *nṇu kēttu-kkittē iru-pp-ēn-ē oliya,*
 thus-Q thus-Q QUOT listen-CONT(EMPH)-F- 1sg.-EMPH aside.from
nāṇ etuvum col- r- atu kiṭaiy- ātu. [4:39]
 I anything say-Pr-VN be.available-NEG

'I'd **just be listening** and going "oh yeah? really?"; other than that, I didn't say a thing'.

Here the sense is not that the narrator listened over a long period of time, but rather that he did nothing but listen; that is, he listened to the exclusion of any other activity (i.e. agreeing or offering advice).¹³⁴ A number of other examples are of this type as well.

It appears, therefore, that a more accurate account of the semantics of *-ē* with a continuative is emphasis or intensification. According to this view, 'extended duration' is one of a number of possible inferences that intensification of the verbal meaning might give rise to. A more neutral translation of example (96) above might thus read, 'The seven girls **talked and talked** disparagingly', with the emphasis on 'talking' -- in conjunction with the immediately prior context -- leading to the inference that the talking was intense with respect to duration (rather than, say, singleness of focus). One consequence of this analysis is that Fedson's account of *-ē* as emphasizing the 'durative' meaning of *koṇṭu* must be replaced with a statement to the effect that it is the semantic content of the main verb which is emphasized, rather than that of the grammaticalized, semantically bleached auxiliary *koṇṭu*.

The *-ē* form is thus not explicitly durative; neither does it exhibit a correlation with progressivity. Slightly more than half of the instances of *koṇṭē iru* relate directly to some other point or period in time, as in (98) above, where the activity of 'listening' is co-temporaneous with the activity of the American students' 'talking'. The remaining instances function as more or less autonomous events, as in example (97), or allow for both a progressive and a durative interpretation, as in (96). It thus

¹³⁴ In Tamil conversation, backchannel responses such as *appaṭiṟā* 'oh really?' serve a purely phatic function, and are an integral feature of 'listening'. Thus the emphasis the narrator places here on listening (and not talking) is in no way contradicted by the report that he uttered *appaṭiṟā*.

appears that *-e* does not contribute directly to progressive meaning, nor indeed to continuative meaning generally speaking.

koṭṭiru

The majority of continuative tokens involve the "plain" form *koṭṭiru* -- *kittiru* in Spoken Tamil -- , and it is to the uses of this form that we now turn. The basic value of *kittiru* in the narrative sample is aspectual **imperfectivity**, or focus on the internal temporal constituency of a situation. This imperfectivity is of two main types: **durative**, whereby a situation is marked as having an extended internal structure, and **progressive**, whereby a situation is viewed as co-temporaneous with or 'in progress' at the time of another situation. The two meanings in effect represent different focuses of attention within the imperfective prototype, since situations which have internal duration are likely to overlap with other situations, and indeed it is not uncommon for both features of meaning to be available in contexts where Tamil *kittiru* is used. The two meanings nevertheless represent distinct values of the form, as can be seen from examples of its use where one meaning, but not the other, is appropriate.

A considerable percentage -- about one-third -- of *kittiru* uses are not progressive. That is, they are presented as complete wholes which function as non-overlapping units in the narrative, but in which a focus is nevertheless accorded their internal temporal structure. This focus is typically created for the purpose of expressing the continuous nature of the situation over an interval of time, but it may also serve other, more expressive ends. An example of the 'continuous' or durative type is given in (99):

- (99) Appaṭi..rompa nēram..varaikkum paci tūkkatt-ai marant- ē
 thus much time until hunger sleep-ACC forgetAvP-EMPH
pēc-ittiru-pp-āṇka. [6:15]
 talk-CONT- F- 3pl.
 'They **would go on talking** like that for a long time, forgetting all about
 hunger or sleep'.

Here the durative view of the 'talking' encoded by the *(k)ittiru* form is reinforced by the adverbials *rompa nēram varaikkum* 'for a long time' and *paci tūkkattai maranē* 'forgetting all about hunger or sleep'. The context here suggests that the event is 'objectively' durative, in addition to being viewed subjectively by the narrator as such.

A more purely expressive use is illustrated in (100) below:

- (100)a. Maṇi onpatēkāl, onpatarai, onpatēmūkāl āki- kittē iru- kk-utu.
 hour 9:15, 9:30, 9:45 become-CONT(EMPH)-Pr- 3sg.n
 b. Pattu maṇikku kēṭṭ-āka- num.
 10 o'clock ask-becomeINF-be.necessary
 c. Kēṭkav-illai enṛāl varam kiṭaiy- ātu.
 askINF NEG if boon be.available-NEG
 d. Onpattaiṇpatu, aiṇpattiraṇṭu, aiṇpattimūnu, aiṇpattinālu
 9:50, 52 53 54
pōy-kkittē iru-kk-utu. [12:62-65]
 go-CONT(EMPH)- Pr- 3sg.n
 a. 'The time is **getting to be** 9:15, 9:30, 9:45...
 b. (They) have to ask by 10 o'clock.
 c. Otherwise, (they) don't get a boon.
 d. It's **passing** 9:50, 52, 53, 54...'

In this example the continuative is used to express not a durative situation, but rather the rapid and inexorable passage of time as a deadline approaches. The process of time passing is here presented in terms of its internal process, tick by tick of the clock, as it were. The event is not objectively durative; subjectively, however, its realization is viewed as drawn out, i.e. in psychological time. The use of emphatic *-ē* further contributes to the dramatic suspense created by this evaluative, internal perspective.

In neither of the examples above is an interpretation of temporal overlap appropriate; rather both situations function as discrete events -- a habitual, orientation event in (99), and a plot-line event in (100) -- capable of appearing as a unit in a larger event sequence.

Conversely, *kittiru* sometimes encodes progressivity alone, i.e. with situations viewed as ongoing at the time of some other occurrence, but which lack extended duration. Thus, for example, in "The Japanese Girl", the narrator sets the stage for the meeting between the 'hero' and the Japanese girl by describing the activity in which the girl is engaged when the boy first encounters her:

- (101)a. *Inta ponṇu vantu, kīḷa utkāntu .. pēci- **kkittirunt-iru- kk-u**,*
 this girl TOP down sitAvP talkAvP-CONTAvP- PERF-Pr- 3sg.n
 b. *appa .. anta .. itellām kutt- iru- pp-āṅka illai? bāj. (...)*
 then that this.all pierceAvP-PERF-F- 3pl. TAG badge
 c. *Grīn kalar-le rawnt-ā ippati, anta bō ellām toṅkīra mātiri,*
 green color-LOC round-Adv like.this that bow all hangPrAjP manner
 d. *anta .. anta ponṇu vantu, kētt- irunt-iru- kk-u, "itu enna" appaṭi nnu.*
 that that girl TOP askAvP-PERF-PERF-Pr-3sg.n this what thus QUOT
 a. 'It seems the girl **was** sitting down **talking**.
 b. and the- they (the participants in the agricultural meeting) have this thing
 pinned on, right? A badge. (...)
 c. Green color, round like this, with a bow and everything hanging down;
 d. the .. the girl, it seems she asked (him), "What's that?" [3:32-36]

As far as I am able to ascertain, there is no intended inference here that the girl and her Japanese companions were talking for a long time; indeed, the narrator was not a direct witness to the events -- as she indicates by her use of the inferential perfect in clauses (a) and (d) -- and thus quite likely does not know whether the talking went on over an extended period of time or not. The use of the continuative is motivated rather by the desire of the narrator to relate the girl's talking -- i.e. as a restricted

background activity -- to the core narrative event in (d), in which the boy and girl meet.

In an even clearer example of non-durative progressive usage, *kittiru* encodes what appears to be a punctual event. This example appears in "Krishna, Arjuna, and the Prince" at the point where Krishna and Arjuna are revealed in their true identities before the king and his family. Immediately prior to this event, the prince had been about to bring his sword down on the king's head:

- (102)a. *Renṭu pēru vēṣam- um kalaiṅcu pō- r- atu.*
 two people disguise-and dissolveAvP go-Pr-3sg.n
 b. *Avan vetṭa-r- at- e appatīy-ē nirutti-kkittiru-kk-āṇ.*
 he cut- Pr-VN-ACC thus- EMPH stopAvP-CONT- Pr- 3sg.masc
 c. *Vāḷ- ai vaccu-kittu appatīy-ē ni- kkuṛ-āṇ. [11:192-4]*
 sword-ACC hold- SIM thus- EMPH stand-Pr- 3sg.masc
- a. 'Both of their disguises melt away.
 b. He (the prince) is **stopping** his cutting just like that.
 c. He's just standing there holding the sword'.

Clearly no appreciable duration is involved in the event of 'stopping' the sword; indeed it is most likely instantaneous, or nearly so. One possible interpretation of this usage is that it is intended to be subjectively durative, as in (100) above, i.e. in order to create dramatic suspense for the listener. While this interpretation cannot be ruled out, an even more plausible account is that the narrator intends the act of 'stopping' to be understood as co-temporaneous with the revelation of the identities of Krishna and Arjuna, which transpires over a span of several clauses preceding clause (a) in the above example. The use of a simple tense here would imply that the two events occurred in sequence; in fact, however, the prince was probably already holding back his blow even as Krishna and Arjuna shed their disguises, since both events were in involuntary reaction to the miraculous intervention of a disembodied voice a moment

earlier. The interpretation of simultaneity is further supported by the fact that a third co-temporaneous situation -- one involving the king -- is related with *kittiru* in the clause immediately following the sequence given above ('The king **is closing** his eyes/**keeping** his eyes **closed**, right?' [11:195]). Thus three sets of participants -- Krishna and Arjuna, the prince, and the king -- are simultaneously engaged in doing three different things -- losing their disguises, stopping a sword, and keeping their eyes closed. By his use of tense/aspect marking (simple present vs. continuative present), the narrator represents the first of these as a foreground event, and the other two as backgrounded to it. This is in keeping with the overall strategy employed by this narrator to highlight the participation of Krishna and Arjuna in the story, i.e. to bring out the 'hidden' plot.

The above examples notwithstanding, non-durative uses of *kittiru* are infrequent in the sample overall. In the majority of uses, an interpretation of both extended duration and temporal overlap is possible.

The use of *kittiru* serves a variety of functions within the narrative text. The most common is the encoding of ongoing activities which function as local background to narrative events, that is, of 'restricted' clauses in the sense of Labov and Waletzky (1969) and Labov (1972). One example of this type is (101) above. A further example is given below:

- (103)a. Appa rājā- kittā pō-nā aṅke oru vēṭikkai **naṭantu- kittu iru-kk-u**.
 then king-LOC go-COND there one spectacle happenAvP-CONT- Pr-3sg.n
 'Then when he goes to the king, a spectacle **is taking place**'. [9:14]

In this narrative function, Tamil *kittiru* closely resembles the English progressive. One might wonder, however, at the relative scarcity of *kittiru* forms in Tamil narrative, as compared with the higher frequency of progressives in English

narrative. Is the Tamil construction used only in some restricted clauses, and if so, which ones?

In fact, *kittiru* is used systematically in Tamil to encode restricted clauses expressing dynamic activity. Restricted state clauses, on the other hand, typically make use of the simple present tense (e.g. (102a) above). What accounts for the low frequency of this usage overall, however, is the fact that restricted clauses in Tamil are often non-finite. The narrative functions of non-finite clauses have not been considered in this study, and their structural analysis presents a unique set of considerations which I will not undertake to analyze here. However, it may be noted that when the action of a non-finite verb is simultaneous with the action of the finite verb, simultaneity can be marked on the non-finite verb by a variety of means, including the simple conjunctive (adverbial) participle form (AvP), or AvP plus *koṇṭu* (*kittu*). This is illustrated in the following example:

- (104) "Ayyō namakku oru kaṇ pō-ccu, ini kaṇ illāma enna panna muṭi-yum"
 alas us-DAT one eye go-P3sg.n now eye without what doINF be.able-NP
 appai nnu colli- *kittu*, enakku āṇa kaṇ teriy-atu.
 thus QUOT sayAvP-SIM me-DAT but eye see- Pr3sg.n
 '(I'm) saying, "Oh no, I lost an eye, what am I going to be able to do now
 without an eye", but I can see with the eye (the whole time)'.

Here the 'ability to see' and the narrator's 'saying' overlap in time; had they been uttered as two separate finite clauses rather than one, a finite continuative form could have been used with 'saying'. The availability of a strategy whereby non-finite clauses are structurally subordinated to a single finite verb decreases the number of contexts where finite continuatives can be used in Tamil narrative.

In its capacity as a marker of ongoing background activities, the continuative may also function as a device for opening a scene or indeed, as orientation for the

narrative as a whole. Narratives which open with a continuative clause to the effect that 'X is/was ruling the kingdom' are examples of the latter function. This appears to be an indirect consequence of the continuative's backgrounding function, however, rather than a function encoded by the continuative form explicitly.

The durative uses of *kittiru* give rise to a variety of functions in the narrative texts as well. A total of seven instances (10.4%) express the meaning 'verbing all the while', where the extent of the verbing is contextually determined by the duration of the situation with which it is co-temporaneous. Example (98) above illustrates this usage. An additional four instances (6%) express situations which are viewed as continuous up to the point of reference. In three out of the four cases, that reference point brings with it a change in the situation; the continuous situation no longer obtains, and thus a past tense form of *kittiru* is used (e.g. 'Until then, he'd just **been calling** him "Son"' [11:188]). In the one remaining use, the situation continues up to and including the present moment ('They **are stumbling around** there (still)' [12:81]). Finally, the 12 instances (16.2%) which occur in future tense express habitual past activities in which the subject was 'continuously engaged'. Examples of this type can be seen in (77a) and (97) above. In addition to these more specialized semantic functions, *kittiru* is also used to express simple extended duration, irrespective of progressivity (exx. (96), (99)).

We must conclude that *kittiru* has both durative and progressive meaning, in oral narrative at least. There is thus no clear distinction between *kittiru* and the other continuative types discussed earlier, save possibly a stylistic one. Moreover, the clitic *-e* does not differentiate between durative or progressive functions of any continuative type. For a number of reasons, it appears that the durative meaning is historically basic, with the progressive sense a more recent development in Tamil.

One argument in support of this view is that the literal meaning of the sum of the components of the *koṇṭiru* construction implies extended duration: 'be located in, or exist in (*iru*), a state of holding on to (*koṇṭu*) the action of the main verb'. Second, durative uses are statistically more frequent; in the narrative sample, all but several instances of the construction describe durative situations, while only two-thirds admit of a progressive interpretation.¹³⁵ Finally, there is a distributional bias according to genre, whereby durative uses are most common in the two epic genres.¹³⁶ As indicated earlier, these genres preserve older patterns of verbal usage, suggesting that the durative meaning of *koṇṭiru* is older.

7.2.3 Continuative vs. Present

In its progressive function, continuative aspect is similar to present tense in Tamil in that both are aspectually imperfective forms employed in background functions; moreover, both may function to set the scene for a narrative event. This similarity of function is reflected in the fact that the two forms frequently co-occur.

The two also differ considerably. Aside from certain obvious differences in their range and frequency of use, it is also possible to distinguish between them functionally in contexts where either might be expected to occur. The 'progressive continuative' is typically associated with restricted **activity** clauses, or in those cases involving 'rule of a kingdom', with orientation activities. In contrast, present tense is favored for the expression of restricted and orienting **states**. The continuative

¹³⁵ It could be argued of course that all of the durative instances are also progressive in the sense of being 'in progress at the time the narrative participants perceive them', but this same argument could be applied to all narrative situations, including events.

¹³⁶ 80% of total continuatives in the epic genres are durative in function, as opposed to less than half in the non-epic genres.

progressive is specified for the features of co-temporality, internal perspective, and duration; it contrasts in these respects with the **simple tenses**. Present tense, on the other hand, takes its functional values in contrast with those of **past tense**; it may take on imperfective values such as co-temporality, internal perspective, etc., but only by virtue of neutralizing the opposite, perfective values associated with pastness. These distinctions are summarized in table 20 below:

progressive use of continuative	present tense
contrasts with simple tense	contrasts with past tense
+ co-temporaneous	Ø co-temporaneous
+ internal perspective	Ø internal perspective
+ duration	Ø duration
Ø scene/event opening	+ scene/event opening
activities	states

Table 20: Progressive use of continuative vs. present tense

Present tense in fact subsumes virtually all of the functions of the continuative. Thus when a continuative form is found, it must be interpreted in light of the specific, positive nuance of meaning that it carries -- a nuance that will typically focus on the internal structure of the situation described.

7.3 Perfect.

7.3.1. Traditional accounts.

The principal means of expressing 'perfect' aspect in Tamil is by means of the auxiliary *iru*. Like the other aspectual auxiliaries described in this study, *iru* -- which as a lexical verb means 'to be located; exist' -- follows the adverbial participle form of the main verb, and takes tense, person, number, and gender marking when finite.

Missionary grammars (Lazarus 1878; Arden 1942) give as the meaning of this construction 'perfect', 'pluperfect', or 'future perfect', depending on the tense used. On the basis of the limited examples provided in these sources, the reader is led to infer that *iru* is analogous in function to the English perfect tense, e.g.

(105) *Nān patitt- iru- kkir-ēn.*

I studyAvP-PERF-Pr- 1sg.

'I have studied'.

(Arden 1942:267)

The supposed similarity between the Tamil and the English perfects has also been explicitly invoked in recent times. The quote by Fedson (1981) given in 7.2.1 above includes the perfect along with the continuative as examples of "parallel categories" between the two languages. Schiffman (1979) describes the meaning of the Tamil perfect as follows:

iru gives the nuance which we have in English with the perfect tense, i.e. that the result of the action continues, or is still relevant. [An example is] *nān vāṭirukkṛēn* 'I have come (and I'm still here)' (1979:40).

Most modern grammatical accounts, however, ascribe several functions to the *iru* auxiliary, only one of which -- the 'perfect' proper (i.e. what I refer to here as the 'perfect of current relevance') -- strongly resembles the use of the English perfect. Thus Schiffman (1969, 1979) identifies separate 'perfect', 'stative', and 'suppositional'

functions of *iru*.¹³⁷ Paramasivam (1983) notes the same three functions, characterizing the latter however in terms of 'indirect knowledge' rather than 'supposition'. Similarly, Lehmann's (1989) three functional types are 'perfect', 'progressive', and 'indirect knowledge'. To this basic list we must add the observations of Annamalai (1985), Asher (1985), and Gair et al (1978) that *iru* may also be used to refer to "a situation that has held at least once in the period leading up to the present" (Asher 1985:159), i.e. as an 'experiential perfect', as in 'Have you ever gone to America?'.

Perfect of current relevance

The 'perfect' meaning of *iru* referred to in the descriptions above indicates a completed event which has relevance to a later point in time. Typically, this later point is the speech event, although it may also be a point in the past (as in 'I **had** already **sent** the letter before I heard the news'), i.e. when the auxiliary is inflected for past tense. Gair et al note that "the Tamil past perfect is not very common (...) whenever it is used the ordinary past tense of the verb may be used instead" (1978:255). Fedson argues however that

[a] past perfect in Tamil cannot usually be replaced by the simple past in felicitous speech. If it is replaced by the simple past, there is a loss of meaning. (...) The hearer has no grounds for assuming that the earlier situation is felt by the speaker to be "relevant" in any particular sense to the time of reference. (1981:37)

There is also a future perfect in Tamil (e.g. 'He **will have finished** the house by the time you arrive'). It is not uncommon for this form to take on modal functions as well, i.e. to express 'possible' or 'hypothetical' result, as in:

¹³⁷ The example given above in the quote from Schiffman illustrates only the first of these.

- (106) Nī it- ai **ceyt- iru-pp-āy- ā?**
 you this-ACC doAvP-PERF-F- 2sg.-Q
 'Would you **have done** it?' (Hart& Hart 1979:162).

Despite these different tense possibilities, present tense is by far the most common in the current relevance function. Unlike the English perfect (in American English, at least), the Tamil present perfect may co-occur with specification of the time of the past event:

- (107) Nēttu tanti vēra **koṭutt- iru- kkir-ēn.**
 yesterday telegram besides giveAvP-PERF-Pr- 1sg.
 'I **have**, besides, **given** him a telegram yesterday'.¹³⁸ (Fedson 1981:45)

Note that in this usage, the perfect refers to two time frames simultaneously: the time of the past event ('given'), and the time of the current situation (in this case, the speech event ('have')). In order to avoid confusion, I refer to this use of the Tamil perfect as the 'perfect of current relevance', reserving the term 'perfect' for the AvP + *iru* construction more generally.

Perfect of resultant state

The second commonly mentioned function of the auxiliary *iru* is as a marker of ongoing state. In this use, it must be translated into English either by the progressive, or by a 'be + adjective' construction, as in the following examples:

- (108) Kumār nārkaḷiy-il **uṭkārnt-iru- kkir-ān.**
 Kumar chair- LOC sitAvP- PERF-Pr- 3sg.masc
 'Kumar is sitting in the chair' (lit. 'having sat, is').

¹³⁸ The translation with the present perfect is acceptable in Indian English. This may account for why Fedson presents it without comment, and also for her statement that "the Tamil forms with *iru* 'be' (...) (when they are not statives) always translate as English perfects" (1981:38).

- (109) Katai *tirant- iru- kkir-atu*.
 store openAvP-PERF-Pr- 3sg.n
 'The store is open' (lit. 'having opened, is').

In these examples, the auxiliary *iru* focuses not on the past event -- 'sitting down' in (108), or 'opening' in (109) -- , but rather on the state which results from the completion of that event. It is also possible to interpret the perfect in both examples as expressing current relevance (i.e. 'He has sat down on the chair'; 'The store has opened'); the difference in interpretation is a reflection of which feature (or features) of the situation receives the focus -- whether it is the past action, the state which results from it, or both simultaneously.

Various attempts have been made to account for the stative uses of *iru*. For Annamalai (1985:124), all uses of the auxiliary *iru* are 'stative', in that they relate situations in which "at the conclusion of an event its effect stays on or exists as a state". Similarly, Hart & Hart (1979:162) characterize the *iru* construction as basically 'resultative', giving as its literal translation "be in the condition of having (verbed)". Such accounts do not of course help to explain why in some of its uses it receives a more eventive, and in others, a purely stative, interpretation. In addressing this point, Annamalai suggests that this variability is a function of the lexical meaning of the main verbs with which the construction is used, with only "inchoative" verbs allowing for 'stative' meaning. He further proposes that a number of these -- for example *utkārntiru* 'be sitting' and *paṭuttiru* 'be lying down' -- have lexicalized as new verbal entities, as evidenced by the fact that they may occur in imperative form,¹³⁹ unlike the AvP + *iru* construction in general. Lehmann (1989) also notes an interaction between the meaning of the main verb and the auxiliary, such that *iru*

¹³⁹ The command *utkārntiru* would then be an order to 'remain seated!', in contrast with *utkār* 'sit down!'.

can be said to express both "'perfect' and 'progressive' aspect, depending on the aspectual class of the main verb" (1989:205).

Perfect of inference/indirect knowledge

The third major function of the Tamil perfect is to indicate inference or indirect knowledge of a prior event. Fedson summarizes this usage as follows:

The inferential construction indicates that the speaker infers from direct evidence or from other sources, that a certain situation held prior to the time of reference, which is usually the time of the speech event (...). The nuance conveyed is one of stronger certainty than supposition. (...) *Iru* in the inferential, does commit the speaker to the validity of what he is stating, but at the same time disavows first-hand knowledge of what he is saying (1981:48).

An example of this use is given in (110). The parents of a young man who has gone to Bombay have just received word of his arrival (example from Fedson 1981:50):

- (110) Pankajam: [reading telegram] Innikku kālaiy-ē pāmpāy vant- āccu.
today a.m.-EMPH Bombay comeAvP-became
Mīnākṣi (mother): Appaṭi nnu nēttu koṭutt- iru- kir-ān.
thus QUOT yesterday giveAvP-PERF-Pr- 3sg.masc
Pankajam: [reading telegram] 'Arrived Bombay this morning'.
Meenakshi: He must have sent (lit. has sent) (the wire) saying that yesterday

The mother in this example draws an inference regarding the time the telegram was sent, presumably based on her knowledge of her son's plans, etc. and general world knowledge (i.e. of how long a telegram takes to arrive from Bombay). The inference is encoded by means of the perfect *iru* auxiliary.

Some writers (Paramasivam 1983; Lehmann 1989) restrict this use of the perfect to the present tense. Annamalai allows that it occurs when *iru* is inflected for future tense as well, but that its meaning is slightly different: it indicates that "the

likelihood of the occurrence is less". "Since the future is non-definite", he states, "the vouching of the concluded event is also non-definite and to that extent the inference is weakened" (Annamalai 1985:132). An example given by Annamalai is the following:

- (111) *Nērru rāttiri maḷai peyt- iru- kkum.*
 yesterday night rain rainAvP-PERF-F3sg.n
 'It **would have** (probably has) rained last night'.

As Fedson points out, however, future tense alone has a modalizing function in Tamil, which is that of indicating approximation or near certainty.¹⁴⁰ Fedson thus restricts the inferential use of *iru* to the present tense, along with the other authors noted above, except in free indirect speech, where the shifting of tenses could result in an inferential perfect inflected for past tense.

Experiential perfect

The last function of *iru* is to encode past experience, as in the sentence 'He has eaten dosai'. This meaning is only available when present tense is used (Annamalai 1985). Whereas in English it is possible to disambiguate between the experiential and the current relevance meanings of the perfect by overt linguistic means, e.g. the presence or absence of a determiner (the same sentence with a determiner -- 'He has eaten the/some dosai' -- cannot be experiential), the Tamil equivalent of this sentence is potentially ambiguous between three different perfect interpretations, as illustrated below:

- (112) *Avan tōcai cāppitt-iru- kkir-ān.*
 he dosai eatAvP- PERF-Pr- 3sg.masc
 a. 'He **has eaten** the dosai'. (current relevance)
 b. 'He **must/seems to have eaten** the dosai'. (inference)
 c. 'He **has eaten** dosai'. (experience)

¹⁴⁰ See 6.3 above.

It would appear that the evidential function is again a matter of relative focus. Perfects indicate complex situations, involving two temporal points and two aspectual perspectives. In the case of the evidential perfect, the principal focus is on the past, completed event, rather than on the resultant state which carries over into present time (Annamalai 1985:136).

The functions identified in this section for Tamil *iru* demonstrate that the construction is broader in its semantic scope than the English perfect, or at least, that the Tamil perfect cannot always be translated by the English perfect. Perfects are relatively infrequent in English oral narrative, as noted by Labov (1972) and others. Is the wider range of meanings of the Tamil perfect reflected in its use in narrative?

7.3.2 The perfect in narration.

7.3.2.1 Distribution, frequency, and structure.

Perfect *iru* appears a total of 122 times in the narrative sample. Of these, 6 are untensed uses found in 'double perfect' constructions (see discussion below), and 116 are tensed. Tensed perfects account for 8.3% of all finite verbal clauses in the sample, making perfects more frequent than continuatives, but only half as frequent as perfectives. The distribution of perfect forms with respect to tense and genre is given below:

	RLA	FT	PE	EE	tense total:
past	11 (20.4%)	2 (6.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13 (11.2%)
present	29 (53.7%)	31 (93.9%)	15 (100%)	12 (85.7%)	87 (75.0%)
future	14 (25.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (14.3%)	16 (13.8%)
genre total:	N=54	N=33	N=15	N=14	N=116 (100%)
% verbal cl:	17.1%	8.5%	3.8%	4.8%	8.3%

Table 21: Distribution of perfect *iru* with respect to tense and genre

Table 21 shows that most perfects in Tamil narration (75%) are present perfects, irrespective of genre. This is the strongest correlation between aspect and tense observed in the data. It is partially accounted for by the fact that two out of the four basic functions of the perfect -- inferential and experiential -- are essentially limited to the present tense. There are also discourse-based reasons for the predominance of present perfects in narrative as well, as will be seen below.

The frequency of perfects of all tenses is greatest in real-life accounts, followed by folk tales, but is rather low in both epic genres. There is, however, immense variation in the frequency of perfect forms from text to text within genres. This can be seen by referring to table 9 in section 4.2. As table 9 shows, the majority of narrators in the real-life account and folk tale genres make little or no use of the perfect. What accounts for the higher figures for those genres is the fact that three individual narrators -- narrators #3, 5, and 9 -- employ finite perfect forms for more than 20% of their utterances overall. The strategies employed by these narrators will be discussed in detail below. If we exclude these three texts from the sample, the

distribution of perfect forms appears considerably more uniform, and relatively infrequent overall.

'Double perfect' forms represent a more general phenomenon whereby the perfect auxiliary *iru* co-occurs with another aspectual auxiliary modifying the same main verb. One such instance involves the continuative *kittiru* followed by *iru*[3:32]; in another the perfective *viṭu* follows *iru*[11:76], and in the six remaining cases, *iru* follows another auxiliary *iru* [e.g. 3:36, 9:52]. In each case, the second auxiliary attaches to the non-finite adverbial participle form of the first auxiliary, as it would to a main verb (ex.: *pēci-kkittirunt-irukkirā!* 'It seems she was talking'). Double aspect marking provides particularly compelling evidence for the separate functions of the perfect.

Each of the major functions of the perfect described in Tamil grammars is attested in the narrative data. Although the boundaries separating these functions are not always clear (is the intended focus on an event with current relevance, or on its resulting state? Is a stative embedded in a sequence of inferential perfects inferential as well, or purely stative? Can an experiential perfect have current relevance as well?), I have classified each use according to its predominant function, based on context. The results of this classification are presented in table 22 below:

Function	Number of tokens	% of total perfect
current relevance	39	32.0%
resultant state	36	29.5%
inference/indirect knowledge	40	32.8%
experiential	1	0.8%
preterit (w/ double <i>iru</i>)	4	3.3%
other	2	1.6%
Total:	122	100%

Table 22: Functions of perfect *iru* in narration

Each of these functions is considered separately below.

Experiential

Of the four major functions of the Tamil perfect, the experiential function is by far the least common in narrative. The single clear instance of an experiential perfect occurs in the sample when a narrator asks the listener directly whether she is familiar with the type of item being described:

- (113)a. Appuram, koṇcam nālu .. eṇka viṭṭ- ile vantu oru kutirai oru vaṇṭi iru-nt-atu.
 then a.few day our house-LOC TOP one horse one cart be-P-3sg.n
 b. Cinna rēklā vaṇṭi, pātt- iru- kk-āy-ā, at- ellām? [3:105]
 little rekla cart seeAvP-PERF-Pr-2sg.-Q that-all
 a. Then, for a few days there was a horse and a cart at our house.
 b. A little rekla cart; **have** you (ever) **seen** one?"

Thus utterance is, however, non-narrative in function. It seems that Tamil narrators do not encode the fact that a participant has had a particular experience unless that

experience is currently relevant to the plot development. The example below is functionally ambiguous:

- (114)a. Anta tāṭakai oru pen.
 that Tatakai one girl
 b. Āṇāḥ aval rāṭṣasi.
 but she demon
 c. Aval-āle ettanaḥ- ē riṣi-kal alintu- pōy- iru-kkir-ārkaḥ. [15:2-4]
 she-INST how.many-EMPH sage-pl. perishAvP-goAvP-PERF-Pr- 3pl.
 a. 'Tatakai (is) a woman.
 b. But she('s) a demon.
 c. How many sages **have perished** because of her!'

Here the fact that Tatakai has killed many sages is given as part of her past experience. None of the murdered sages is physically present, nor indeed are their individual deaths relevant. At the same time, the event of their collective murders is currently relevant (within the time-frame of the story), in that the boy-hero Rama is about to shoot her as a consequence of these past actions.

Current relevance

The majority of occurrences of current relevance perfects function unambiguously. In such uses, the current result of a prior event is evoked, typically to establish a background against which subsequent narrative events unfold:

- (115)a. Inta aruccuṇaṇ .. cinṇa paiyaṇ-ā māriy- iru- kk-āṇ- ē;
 this Arjuna little boy- as changeAvP-PERF-Pr-3sg.masc-TAG
 b. avan 'ō' nṇu kattu-r- āṇ.
 he oh QUOT yell- Pr-3sg.masc
 a. 'Arjuna .. **has changed** into a little boy, right?
 b. He yells "oh!"

The event of Arjuna's transformation into a little boy has already been related (in the simple present tense) several clauses earlier. The present perfect in (115a) refers

back to that event, at the same time signalling that its results continue to be relevant; that is, Arjuna is still a little boy, and it is in this guise that he starts yelling, as if afraid. As a marker of current relevance, the Tamil perfect functions similarly to the English perfect, and can generally be translated by such. Some exceptions to this can be found, however, e.g. when a specific past time adverb is used in the Tamil sentence, as in (116):

- (116) Appa riṣiy-e ninaikkum pōtu..riṣi enṇa colli- vitt- iru-**kk-ān**..munṇāle.
 thensage-ACC thinkFAjP time sage what sayAvP-letAvP-PERF-Pr-3sg.m before
 ?'Then when he thinks of the sage..what **has** the sage **advised** before?' [10:84]

In this example, the character attempts to recall some advice which will enable him to solve a riddle (and in the process, win a beautiful bride). The current relevance of the sage's uttering of the advice is evident; in fact, the advice was intended for this very situation. The present perfect is, however, odd in the English translation, largely because of the temporal adverb *munṇāle* 'before'.

Present perfect forms account for 69.2% of all current relevance perfects in the narrative sample. Past perfects occur in this function less frequently (20.5%). An example of a past perfect with current relevance is given below:

- (117)a. Avvaḷavu kaṣṭamā vēle pāttu- kiṭṭ-ē iru- **kkum** pōtu
 that.much difficult-Adv work doAvP-CONT(EMPH)-FAjP time
 enṇa āy- ir- u- ccu;
 what happenAvP-PFV-Pr-3sg.n
 what happenAvP-PFV-Pr-3sg.n
 b. kēniy-ile pōy, tanni etu- kka pōy- **iru- nt-ēn**.
 well- LOC goAvP water take-INF goAvP-PERF-P- 1sg.
 well- LOC goAvP water take-INF goAvP-PERF-P- 1sg.
 c. Mēle iruntu ulle viḷunt- it- t- ēn, tavari.
 above from inside fallAvP-PFV-P-1sg slipAvP
 above from inside fallAvP-PFV-P-1sg slipAvP
 a. 'When we were working really hard like that, what happened?
 b. I **had gone** to the well to get water.
 c. I fell in from above, (I) slipped.'

The event that the narrator intends to introduce here by means of the rhetorical question 'what happened?' in (116a) is the event in (116c), his falling into the well. Both clauses are encoded identically as important narrative events (in fact, the same event) by means of the past perfective. Before relating this event, however, he decides to supply some background information -- an explanation of why he was near the well in the first place -- encoding it by means of the past perfect as temporally prior to the event of something (important) happening. This usage recalls the use of past perfects in English narration.

Future perfects comprise only 10.3% (N=4) of current relevance perfects. Of these, two encode past habitual events whose relevance resides in establishing the background for subsequent events (in text #3, the main character's dishonest activities which landed him in jail). The third use expresses a past situation as hypothetical, i.e. as the result of a logical inference ('Only farmers **would have** come (to an agricultural meeting)' [3:30]). The motivation for the future tense in the final instance has already been mentioned in the section on future tense. The narrator of the text in which this example occurs appears to employ future tense idiosyncratically to encode explanatory asides. In explaining the actions of a goldsmith when he sees an anklet which is identical to one that has been stolen from the queen, the narrator states:

- (117) Unmai-ile oru porḱollan t̃an at- ai tirutiy- iru- pp-ān. [19:58]
 truth- LOC one goldsmith EMPH that-ACC stealAvP-PERF-F- 3sg.masc
 'Actually it's a goldsmith who **has stolen** (lit. would have stolen) it'.

The current relevance function of these examples is contextually clear; what is less evident is why future tense should be used. In short, no systematic function appears to be attached to the use of the future perfect in the current relevance function.

Resultant state

Another common use of the perfect in Tamil narration is to describe ongoing states resulting from some past action. Clauses containing this type of perfect are aspectually imperfective, and function typically as orientation and restricted clauses of the narrative background. Like other markers of imperfective states, stative perfects prefer the present tense (see 6.2.2); this is however a preference conditioned by the narrative uses of the present tense, rather than by any restrictions on tense co-occurrence with the stative perfect. Indeed, stative perfects are found in all three tenses -- present (75%), past (11%), and future (14%) -- and interact predictably with the narrative functions of the tenses.

Present perfects of resultant state may describe the 'now' of the narrative situation, or less commonly, the 'now' of the act of narration, i.e. when the narrator steps out of the narration momentarily to comment from the perspective of the time of the telling. An example of this latter type is given in (118):

- (118) *En tampi innum kūṭa anta stamp ellām vecc- iṭu- k-k-ān.* [3:74]
 my younger.bro still even that stamp all keepAvP-PERF-Pr-3sg.masc
 'My little brother still even **has** (lit. has kept) all those stamps'.

Here the narrator relates an event in the narrative -- the fact that her brother requested and collected stamps from their adopted brother's Japanese girlfriend -- to a continuing state in the present moment. Elsewhere, the state obtains in narrative time, i.e. concurrent with the unfolding of the narrative events. When the newborn infant of a woman who has been bitten by a cobra in her hospital bed begins crying, her roommates, unaware of what has happened, call to her to attend to the child. The narrator then states:

- (119) Ivaṅkaḷ-ukku cūya uṇarve-ē illāma paṭutt-iru- kḱ-āṅka.
 she.resp.pl-DAT self feeling-EMPH without lieAvP- PERF-Pr-3resp.pl
 'She's lying there (lit. has lain down) completely lifeless'.

In this example, the only possible interpretation of the perfect aspect is as a marker of resultant state, since the woman in question has been lying down throughout the narrative; in fact she is a corpse at this point in the story.

Stative perfects function similarly in the past tense. In text #7, no present tense forms are used. Thus in order to describe an ongoing state, the narrator of this text employs the past perfect:

- (120) Pō-ratu- kku paṭil atu āṅkey-ē uṭkārntu-iru- nt-atu. [7:20]
 go-PrVN-DAT instead it there-EMPH sitAvP- PERF-P- 3sg.n
 'Instead of going (to the lion), it **was sitting** (lit. had sat) right there'.

Here the subject, a rabbit, is described not as simply having sat down, but as remaining in the state of being seated, an interpretation reinforced by the presence of the emphatic clitic *-ē* on the locative adverb *āṅke* 'there'. The rabbit's obstinate refusal to move angers the lion, and sets the stage for the actions which follow. In another text, a past stative perfect is used to indicate a state which is ongoing at the time of another past action:

- (121)a. Nērā araṇmaṇai-kku pō-ṇ-āṇ.
 straight palace- DAT go-P-3sg.masc
 b. Rājā uṭkārnt-iru- nt-ār. [11:103-4]
 king sitAvP- PERF-P- 3resp
 a. 'He went straight to the palace.
 b. The king **was sitting** (lit. had sat down) (on the throne)'.

Clause (121b) is a somewhat formulaic utterance which functions to introduce the king into the scene. The event of his actually sitting down, while inferrable from the fact that he is seated, is irrelevant here.

In these examples, the compound verbal construction *utkāratiṛu* 'be seated' appears to function as a separate lexical item from the simple verb *utkār* 'to sit', as suggested by Annamalai (1985). Extending this observation further, we may posit a lexical distinction between *vaicciṛu* 'to keep' and *vai* 'to put/place', and *paṭuttiṛu* 'to be lying down; to sleep' and *paṭu* 'to lie down'; in each case, the addition of the auxiliary *iru* transforms the meaning of the verb from that of dynamic action to imperfective state. In support of this account, it may be noted that the clear majority (77.8%) of stative perfect uses involve one of these three verbs.¹⁴¹

Future tense encodes habituality and/or durative states, as discussed in 6.3.2 above. Given that the perfect also has a stativizing function, the question naturally arises as to why both a stative perfect and future tense should be used. The lexicalization hypothesis provides a partial explanation. Two out of the five instances of future stative perfect involve the verb *paṭuttiṛu*, in the sense of 'to sleep', and one involves the verb *vaicciṛu*, in the sense of 'to wear'.¹⁴² The remaining two instances occur in sequence in text #3, and are given below:

- (122)a. appa..anta..it-ellām **kutt-** **iru- pp-āṅka** illai? bāj.
 then that this-all pierceAvP-PERF-F- 3pl. TAG badge
 b. At- e **kutt-** **iru-pp-āṅka**. (...)
 that-ACC pierceAvP-PERF-F- 3pl.
 c. Anta..anta ponṇu vantu kētt- irunt- iru- **kk-u**, "itu enṇa" appaṭi ṇṇu.
 that that girl TOP askAvP-PERFavP-PERF-Pr-3sg.n this what thus QUOT
 a. Then..the..they **have** this thing **pinned on** (lit. will have pinned), right?
 a badge.
 b. They **have** it **pinned on**. (...)
 c. The..the girl, it seems she asked (him), "What's that?"

¹⁴¹ In order of decreasing frequency, they are: *utkār* (36.1%), *vai* (22.2%), and *paṭu* (19.4%). The remaining eight instances (22.2%) comprise seven different verbs, one of which is repeated once.

¹⁴² See section 6.3.2, example (83a).

Future tense here indicates habituality or characteristic behavior: participants at conferences typically wear badges. As for the use of the perfect in clauses (a) and (b), if we rule out the possibility that it is expressing inference,¹⁴³ we are left with the conclusion -- entirely reasonable in context -- that its function here is to indicate a resultant state, i.e. the fact that they have the badges pinned on (are wearing them), as opposed to the action of pinning itself. While this use might be construed as lexicalized as well, there are no further examples of *kuttiyiru* in the sample, and thus the evidence for such a claim is limited. It may be accurate to state, however, that in general the creation of new stative verbs by means of the perfect auxiliary is at least theoretically possible whenever the consequences of an action can be viewed as constituting a tangible result.

Inference/indirect knowledge

The two functions discussed above -- current relevance, and resultant state -- occur with roughly equal frequency, and their occurrence is distributed evenly across those texts in the sample which make use of the perfect auxiliary. In contrast, the perfect in its inferential or indirect knowledge function, although as frequent as the other functions overall, is largely restricted to four texts within the sample: 90% (N=36) of all inferential uses occur in text #3, 5, 9, or 10, while the remaining 10% (N=4) are scattered as isolated instances across four different texts. In other words, while inference is one of the main functions that the *iru* perfect can express, not all

¹⁴³ Given that the second perfect (at least) in the double perfect construction in (122c) does express inference/indirect knowledge, the possibility that the perfects in the immediately preceding clauses are inferential as well cannot be entirely excluded. However context favors the interpretation that the perfects in (a) and (b) are perfects of resultant state.

Tamil narrators make use of this function. This is a curious finding which will be explored further below.

Inferential perfects follow main verbs of all aspectual types: that is, they co-occur with actions, activities, and states. Indeed, when a verb which is inherently stative is followed by *iru*, inference is the only interpretation possible, as in (122):

- (122) *Inta kāy pēca-kkūṭiya cakti vāynta kāy- ā irunt-iru- kk-u.* [10:128]
 this fruit speak-able power obtainPAjP fruit-as beAvP-PERF-Pr-3sg.n
 'It seems this fruit was a fruit which had obtained the power to speak'.

Here *iru* as a main verb (meaning 'to be') is followed by the *iru* perfect. Other states are also presented in the sample as inferred, including *kīṭa* 'to lie' and *teri* 'to be known'. Since these verbs are already stative, the use of the perfect cannot function as a stativizer with them; nor can it focus on the current relevance of a completed action, since no action is involved.

Another context in which the perfect is unambiguously inferential is when it is the second of two auxiliaries in a 'double auxiliary' construction. In the following example, the first perfect auxiliary encodes resultant state, and the second, inference:

- (123) *Appa nāṭṭ- ile..ūḷal. laṅcam. perukiy- irunt-iru- kk-u.*
 then country-LOC decay bribery grow.greatAvP-PERF- PERF-Pr-3sg.n
anta kālatt-ilēy-ē. rājā kālatt-ile. [9:2]
 that time- LOC-EMPH king time- LOC
 'It seems that in the country decay.. bribery.. was prevalent (lit. had grown great).. at that time. At the time of the king'.

The inferential perfect never appears in the past tense. Future tense accounts for five instances (12.5%) of inferential use, with the vast majority (87.5%) appearing in the present tense. This distribution tends to support the claims of Tamil grammarians that the inferential function is associated primarily with the present perfect. In further support of this claim, the five instances of future perfect can be

seen to express a different nuance of 'inference' than present perfect inferentials. While the latter encode the speaker's indirect knowledge of the situation described, the former encode the speaker's inference arrived at on the basis of his or her knowledge, however that knowledge was obtained. One instance of this use was given in 6.2.3 above (see ex. (81)). Another example is the following:

- (124)a. Appa ivan-ukku inta reṇṭu mūṇu vārttai iru-kkum illai;
 then he- DAT this two three word be-F3sg.n TAG
 b. 'agricultural association'. anta māṭiri reṇṭu;
 agricultural association that manner two
 c. avaṇka pēciy- iru- pp-āṇkaḷ illai, meeting-le;
 they speakAvP-PERF-F- 3pl TAG meeting-LOC
 d. anta māṭiri reṇṭu mūṇu vārttai-kaḷ vaiccu, avan colli- t- t-āṇ. [3:37-40]
 that manner two three word- pl. placeAvP he sayAvP-PFV-P-3sg.masc
 a. 'And he has (=knows) these two or three words, right;
 b. 'agricultural association', those two;
 c. they **would have said** (them), right, in the meeting;
 d. he replied, using those two or three words'.

The narrator of this text appears to encode a distinction between information that she knows because the boy whom the story is about told her, and information that she herself has surmised. At this point in her narrative, she reconstructs an account of how the boy (who spoke no English) would have been able to communicate with the Japanese girl, i.e. that he would have picked up a couple of words from the conference. She encodes her surmise as such by means of the future perfect form.

In contrast, the present perfect serves a function which is perhaps better described as 'indirect report' than 'inference'. In this usage, the perfect indicates that the narrator did not witness the reported events directly, but rather has them on someone else's authority. Rather than employing this strategy to suggest that the factuality of the reported events is in doubt, however, narrators who use this device

appear to be motivated by the desire to create authority for their texts. In case the listeners should doubt the truthfulness or accuracy of the narrator, they should still accept the narrative report, since it originates from an external (and unimpeachable) source.

The argument in support of this view is based primarily on the distribution of the strategy across narrators and across text types. If the present perfect were expressing indirect knowledge alone, we would expect to find it in 3rd person narratives but not in 1st person narratives, at least in the real-life accounts. The conventionalized nature of folk tale and epic narration makes it difficult to predict whether indirect report would be encoded in these tellings; we might, however, predict differences based on genre (e.g. evidentiality marked for folk tales, but not for performed or elicited epics, or vice versa). Alternatively, if the strategy expressed speaker's doubt about the reliability of the reported information, we could expect to find it associated with the more clearly 'fantastical' folk and mythological tales, but less so with real-life accounts (even those in the 3rd person), since informants were explicitly urged to relate incidents that were true, and seemed concerned to convince the listeners of their factuality, no matter how incredible the events described.

The actual distribution of the phenomenon rules out the latter hypothesis, and only partially supports the former. Evidential perfects are lacking in 1st person accounts, as expected. However they are used in only one of the two 1st person mediated accounts (both of which involve considerable 3rd person narration), and one out of two 3rd person 'public domain' accounts (see table 31 section 3.4). The remaining two texts which exhibit the phenomenon are folk tales; however, three other folk tales lack it. Finally, it is absent entirely from the epics, both performed and elicited.

A more systematic picture begins to emerge when we consider the backgrounds of the narrators themselves (table 2, section 3.4). All four of the narrators who employ the strategy are non-Brahmins. Three -- RC, FC, and FD -- have close ties with village or rural communities, either because they reside there, or have left there to come to Madurai only recently. A different but overlapping subset of three -- RE, FC, and FD -- are of low socio-economic standing relative to the group represented in the sample as a whole. Finally, the two individuals who are members of only one of the above groups are women. There are thus three intersecting factors -- urbanization, socio-economic status, and gender -- which correlate with the systematic expression of indirect evidentiality in Tamil narration. Each of the four narrators who employs the strategy is on the lower end of the social scale with respect to two of these three factors (non-urban, poor, and/or female). It would be misleading, however, to suggest that the only function of the strategy is to signal relative social status. It is not found in the speech of these narrators in all text types, but rather is only used in those for which the speaker's source of information is indirect.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, it is probable that the strategy is a relatively conventionalized feature of the speech community of which the speaker is a member, rather than a choice determined by speakers purely on the basis of whether or not they think their listeners are likely to believe them.

An illustrative contrast can be seen in the two real-life accounts classified as 'public domain'. Both were told to me by women of approximately my own age and with whom I was on friendly terms, but whose social relationships to me differed considerably. The narrator of text *5, "Snakebite", was employed by me as a servant.

¹⁴⁴ For example, in 1st person accounts related by RE (not included in the sample), no evidential perfect forms appear.

The narrator of text #6, "Hm!", was a teacher of Tamil at an institute where, several years earlier, I had been a student. The content of both narratives is somewhat improbable, although both were presented as absolute truth.

In text #6, one instance of the evidential perfect is used ('One day, Vellaittol **went** to Kuñcan Nampiyar's house when Kuñcan Nampiyar wasn't there, **it seems**' [6:21]). This evidential encodes the perspective of one of the principal characters of the story, Kuñcan Nampiyar, who must infer what happened at his home when Vellaittol told him that he had visited in his absence.¹⁴⁵

In text #5, in contrast, fully half of all verbal clauses are marked with the evidential perfect. A section of this text is given below:

- (125)a. "Pillaiy-ai tottiy-ile pōttu- t- t- ōm- ē! Eppaṭi namma kiṭṭa pāl
child-ACC cradle-LOC putAvP-PFV-P-1pl.-EMPH how us LOC milk
kuṭi- kkum" appaṭi nnu ninaiccu-ttu, ivāṅka **mulicc- iru-kk-āṅka**.
drink-F3sg.n thus QUOT thinkAvP-PFVAvP she awakenAvP-PERF-Pr-3pl.
b. **Muliccu pārtā, inta mātiri pāmpu uruvatt-ile pakkatt-ile**
awakenAvP lookCOND this way snake form- LOC side- LOC
irunt-iru-kk-u.
beAvP-PERF-Pr-3sg
c. "Ayyō pāmpu" nnu colli taṭṭi vitav-um, paḷiccu nnu or- ē kottu.
oh.no snake QUOT sayAvP hitAvP leave-as.soon.as flash QUOT one-EMPH bite
d. Marupaṭiyum kiṭṭa tirumpa vantu nikkav-um, tirumpa
again LOC again comeAvP stand-as.soon.as again
taṭṭi vitt- iru- kk-āṅka.
hitAvP leaveAvP-PERF-Pr-3pl.
e. Tirumpa or- ē kott-uḷe, irantu kott-uḷe, appaṭiy-ē anta ammā
again one-EMPH bite-LOC two bite-LOC thus-EMPH that mother
irantu pōy- iru- kk-āṅka.
dieAvP goAvP-PERF-Pr- 3pl.

¹⁴⁵ In fact, Kuñcan Nampiyar draws incorrect inferences, leading him to fight with his wife, and thereby to prove his friend's point regarding the significance of "hm!". His lack of direct knowledge is thus crucial to the point of the story as a whole.

- f. Teriy- ille avaṇkaḷ-ukku, avvaḷavu t̃ṇ.
 be.known-NEG she- DAT that.much EMPH
- g. Vāy-ile iruntu nuraiy-ā vantu avaṇka cettu kiṭant-iru- k̃k-āṇka.
 mouth-LOC from foam-Adv comeAvP she dieAvP lieAvP- PERF-Pr-3pl.

(A sleeping mother feels the sensation of something nursing at her breast):

- a. "But I put the baby in the cradle! How could it be drinking milk from me" she thought, and **woke up, it seems**.
- b. When she woke up and looked, the snake's body **was** right next to her, it **seems**.
- c. As soon as she realized, "Oh no, a snake!" and struck out at it, in a flash, a terrible bite.
- d. Again..when it came and raised up again, she **struck out at it again, it seems**.
- e. In another terrible bite, in two bites, the mother **died** just like that, **it seems**.
- f. They didn't know, the others; that was all (that happened).
- g. She **was lying** there **dead** with foam coming out of her mouth, **it seems**.

Indirectly evidentiality is here marked redundantly. In general, although in none of the four texts is it employed categorically for each and every finite clause, it is employed more frequently than is strictly necessary to communicate that the information as a whole was indirectly acquired. Perhaps because of this tendency towards redundancy, the evidential force of the construction has weakened in the speech of the narrators who use it, resulting in a perfect form which functions not unlike a simple past tense or preterit in some of its uses.

Preterit

The clearest evidence for the claim that the Tamil perfect can also function as a preterit is found with 'double perfect'-marked verbs. As noted above, the second perfect auxiliary in such constructions is invariably inferential in function. While the first auxiliary may indicate one of the other perfect functions (see for example (123) above), there are four instances where none of these other functions is

contextually appropriate, and where the main verb + 1st perfect must be considered the functional equivalent of a simple past tense verb. Consider (126) below:

- (126)a. "Enna-nka en- akku 'pāti tā- r- ēn' n- ka- ē; enke" nnu.
 what-POL 1sg.-DAT half give-Pr-1sg. QUOT-POL-EMPH where QUOT
- b. Uṭanē "appā micca pātiy-ai ivan-ukku kututt- iru" appaṭi nnu
 immediately boy remainder half-ACC he- DAT giveAvP-PERF thus QUOT
colliy- irunt- iru- kk-āru.
 sayAvP-PERF sayAvP-PERF-Pr-3resp
- c. Uṭanē avan-ukk-um aṭiccu- atu- kk- appuram aṭiccu..
 immediately he- DAT-and beatAvP that-DAT-afterwards beatAvP
 pōyi rājā-ṭta pōyi itu panni-t- t-āka.
 goAvP king-LOC goAvP this doAvP-PFV-P-3pl.
- a. "Excuse me, you said you'd give me half (of your prize); where (is it)?"
 b. Right away **it seems he said**, "Boy, give him the other half".
 c. Right away (the soldier) beat him too, and after he'd beaten him.. (the guards)
 went to the king and did this (i.e. complained)'.

The act of 'saying' in clause (b) is clearly a sequential event; no interpretation of either current relevance or resultant state is possible here. At the same time there is no reason to believe that both perfects are evidential, i.e. that the clause is doubly marked as indirect knowledge. What is most likely is that the evidential perfect alone was felt to be insufficient as a marker of evidentiality, perhaps as a result of overuse; consequently, the speaker created a new, "stronger" evidential form. Examples of this type are found in the speech of all four narrators who systematically encode evidentiality.

Aside from cases of double perfects, it is difficult to demonstrate conclusively that an evidential perfect has bleached to a simple preterit, since one can always add "it seems" to the English translation, and there appears to be no Tamil clause type to which an evidential marker cannot be appended. It is likely, however, that bleaching, if it occurs, is not restricted to those clauses which are double-marked, but rather that

a number of superficially evidential clauses are in fact neutral with respect to evidentiality. One might predict that if this trend continues, the perfect could grammaticalize in a new function -- that of preterit -- in those speech communities which commonly employ the evidential perfect in narration. Already there is evidence that the present perfect form has a markedly different status for speakers from different social groups; if the current trend continues, the disparity in usage could grow even greater.

7.3.4 Summary

All of the functions that have been identified here for the Tamil perfect can be seen to relate, either directly or indirectly, to a 'perfect' prototype in which a past, completed action is evoked simultaneously with the continuing relevance of that action for the current moment. This prototype is semantically rich, in that it includes both previous and current temporal reference, and completive and ongoing aspectual perspectives. It is not surprising, therefore, that the concept should have extended in various directions. The extended functions of the Tamil perfect are related in figure 6 below:

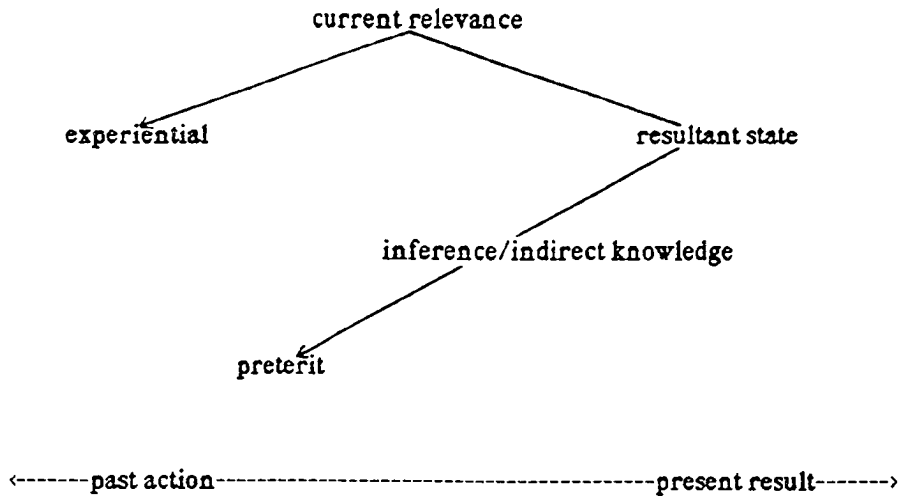


Figure 6: Functions of perfect aspect

With the possible exception of the preterit, none of these functions is exclusive to narrative. Rather each must be assigned a narrative interpretation in context, on the basis of its aspectual and temporal properties. Thus the preterit function of the perfect is associated with sequential events, the resultant state perfect with orientation and restricted clauses, and the perfect of current relevance with events off the narrative time-line. The one function of the Tamil perfect which appears to be unique to narrative is the encoding of indirect reports; this function is restricted, however, to the speech of a subset of the narrators included in the sample. We may conclude that the perfect, like the future tense, occupies a peripheral position in the verbal system of narration.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

The analysis presented in the preceding chapters reveals a complex set of interrelations between forms and functions. In this chapter, I summarize these relationships, pointing out regular and productive contrasts which characterize the Tamil verbal system more generally. The first section takes a synchronic perspective, identifying sub-systems within the larger structural system, as represented by the different narrative genres. The second section looks at the history of the Tamil verbal system and its functions in narration, and traces an evolutionary path which sheds light on the complexity of the modern system. In the final section, the functional regularities identified for Tamil are assigned a role in the grammatical description of the language as a whole.

8.1 The role of Tamil verbal categories within a functional system.

The Tamil verbal system, as employed in narrative discourse, is characterized by a number of binary functional oppositions. On the surface, this may appear surprising, given that the present study -- and indeed, the verbal system itself -- is structured in terms of three-way contrasts: there are three verbal categories (predication type, tense, and aspect) and three formal exponents of each (N-N, ØV, and verbal predication; past, present, and future tense; and perfective, continuative, and perfect aspect). The fact that these forms express binary functional contrasts is a reflection, not of their formal properties, but rather of the functional requirements of the act of narration -- that is, of the discourse contexts in which they occur.

Although there are three types of **predication** in Tamil, these may be divided along more general lines into two types: **verbal**, and **non-verbal**. These correlate

with the basic narrative structural components of **events** and **participants**. The findings presented here reveal that when the focus is on the event structure, verbal predications are overwhelmingly favored, whereas verbless predications are used to create nominal, participant focus. The two verbless predication types thus group together functionally; they also contrast with one another, in that the nominal type (N-N) expresses **attribution**, and the zero ($\emptyset$ V) type, identification or **existence**.

Binary oppositions can be discerned within the event structure as well. The event structure is composed of three situation types: **events** proper (actions, including achievements as well as accomplishments), **activities**, and **states**, all of which serve important functions in narrative discourse. Indeed, there is some evidence that Tamil employs the three-way formal distinctions available in the categories of tense and aspect to express the three situation types: past tense correlates strongly with events, future tense -- at least in one of its senses, that of static description -- correlates with states, and present tense, although used with all situation types, correlates most strongly with activities, at least in real-life accounts, where its functions are most clearly delimited. The pattern is also evident with regard to aspect: perfective is virtually restricted to the encoding of events, and continuative to the encoding of ongoing activities, while at least one sense of the perfect -- the perfect of resultant state -- is (by definition) confined to the encoding of static situations. A problem for this analysis, however, is the fact that the stative functions of the future and the perfect are limited to only one of the uses of each; considered in their entirety, these forms do not exclusively or even predominantly encode states. The majority of states in the narrative corpus, in fact, are expressed not by the future tense or perfect aspect, but by the simple present tense. The simple present thus neutralizes to a significant extent the distinction between 'activities' and 'states',

suggesting a more basic opposition between **sequential events** (plot-line) and **supporting non-events**.

This functional opposition, which recalls the work of Hopper and others on 'grounding', is not the exclusive domain of either tense or aspect in Tamil, but rather is expressed to varying degrees by both. We may note a functional contrast between past and present tense forms, whereby the former convey the event sequence, and the latter, the ongoing activities and states which serve as the backdrop for the event sequence; this is the prototypical grounding function expressed in numerous languages. That tense indicates grounding in Tamil should not surprise us, given the overlap in the semantic notions expressed by the Tamil tenses and aspects; the use of tense as a grounding device has also been observed in other languages.

In Tamil, this device is most evident in real-life accounts. In the other Tamil narrative genres, the functions of both past and present tenses are rather broader, however, such that it is not uncommon to find e.g. past used for background states, and present for sequential events, that is, in situations not predicted by the grounding analysis. In these genres, the two tense forms enter into a different functional opposition, one in which present tense signals episode or event **openings**, and past tense, resolution or **closure**.¹⁴⁶

Despite the variability of tense functions, distinctions of 'grounding' are still maintained via the more explicit device of aspect marking. Perfective aspect functions to highlight, or 'foreground', those events in the basic sequence which are crucial to the advancement of the narrative plot, as determined by the narrator's

¹⁴⁶ Note that future tense plays no role in this opposition, save in sung portions of performed epics where it replaces present tense in the 'opening' function. Rather than being an innovation, this appears to be a relic of an older use of the future tense; see also 8.2 below.

evaluative purpose. With very few exceptions (see 7.1.2), perfective-marked clauses in Tamil are unambiguously eventive and sequential. Similarly, clauses marked by means of the imperfective continuative aspect are explicitly active and ongoing, although the form itself is typically reserved for ongoing activities which are also of extended duration, with the result that only a portion of non-eventive 'background' clauses are explicitly marked by means of this device. Thus Tamil does not lack formal means for expressing grounding relations; grounding functions, however, cannot be attributed simply to tense or aspect alone.

From the preceding discussion it should be evident that there is considerable overlap between the functions of tense and aspect in Tamil, specifically, between past and perfective, and present and imperfective. This is illustrated graphically in table 23 on the following page. Comparing the functional distribution of past tense and perfective aspect, we see that although both encode events expressed in narrative (sequential) clauses, and signal event closure, the perfective is an explicit foregrounding device while the past is not. In parallel fashion, both present tense and continuative aspect encode activities in restricted clauses, but continuative is positively marked for duration while present is not, and present is positively marked for event opening while continuative is not; in short, although they cover much the same territory functionally and semantically, they differ in the explicit features of meaning that each encodes. In general, we may also note that the tenses have a broader range of functions than the aspects, with either past or present capable of functioning as the base tense of narration for all situation and clause types.

	situation type			displacement clause type				narrative functions			semantic features	
	event	activity	state	narr.	restr.	free	off time-line	event open	event close	core events	durative	habitual
form												
P	X	(X)	(X)	X	(X)	(X)			X	(X)		
Pr	(X)	X	X	(X)	X	X		X			(X)	(X)
F hab.	X	X			X	X	X					X
descr.			X			X						
PFV	X			X					X	X		
CONT		X			X			(X)			X	
PERF c.r.	X						X					
r.s.			X		X	X						

Table 23: Comparison of Tamil verbal forms in oral narrative

Note: c.r. = current relevance

r.s. = resultant state

parentheses indicate secondary functions

Functional similarities may also be noted between future tense and perfect aspect, as table 23 shows. Both forms are polysemous; that is, they have multiple senses which, although derivable from a single (or dual, in the case of the future) meaning diachronically, behave as though they were synchronically distinct. Of these various functions, none are exclusive to narrative, and some do not interact with the structure of narrative in any systematic way (e.g. the 'hypothetical' future and the 'experiential' perfect, not included in table 23). Of those uses with narrative functions, the habitual future and the perfect of current relevance function similarly in marking events off the narrative time-line. In other respects they diverge in meaning, however, the former expressing 'habituality' and the latter 'current relevance'. Similarly, the descriptive future, like the perfect of resultant state, expresses states in clauses which are freely displaceable within the narrative. The functions of these forms are also quite distinct in other respects; the descriptive future tends to be used with states which are peripheral to the concerns of the narrative proper, and the resultant state perfect with a limited set of lexical verbs, most notably *uṭkār* 'to sit', *paṭu* 'to lie', and *vai* 'to place'. Indeed, the only area in which a future form and a perfect form enter into direct functional contrast is with respect to inference and indirect evidentiality, as discussed in 7.3; these functions are, however, orthogonal to the organization of narrative, in which modality plays a relatively limited role. Thus although perfect and future forms have extended their meanings in parallel directions, they do not enter into systematic contrasts with one another in the narrative context.

Having considered the similarities and differences in the functional values of verbal forms, we now turn to the question of how these forms work together to structure narrative texts. It should be immediately evident that a model based exclusively on the binary principle of grounding is inadequate to represent the complex sets of interrelationships among the eight verbal forms considered here, especially given the overlapping of function between tense and aspect. A spectrum model (of the type proposed by Longacre (1981)) would appear to be more useful, in that it accounts for a greater diversity of formal and functional distinctions.

Whatever model is adopted, different representations would seem to be required for different genres, since genre differences -- particularly with regard to the role of tense -- have emerged as significant in this study. A possible 'spectrum' of form-function correlations for e.g. real-life accounts in Tamil might read as follows: primary events (PFV), secondary events (P), activities (CONT), temporary states (Pr), permanent states (F), identification (ØV), and attribution (N-N). Spectra for other genres would vary in their particulars; in performed epics, for example, primary events would correlate with past, and in elicited epics, with present tense. The question naturally arises, however, whether these different spectra can be related; it is not clear that the spectrum model can indicate the important fact that the genre-specific systems are members of a larger functional system. There is a further problem for the spectrum model as well: it lacks a ready means of representing functions as overlapping, as opposed to linear and discrete. As we have seen, functional overlap is an important property of Tamil verbal categories.

While I feel that no static, two-dimensional model is entirely adequate to represent a complex functional system of the sort described here, I propose a model which I believe has explanatory utility, i.e. in representing the functional

organization of the Tamil verbal system as a consequence of its diachronic development. The sub-systems attested in particular genres are diagrammed separately, but can be related visually by imagining them as successive expansions of an earlier system (diagrammed in figure 11). The history of the Tamil verbal system is considered in the following section; for the purposes of synchronic analysis, however, we may identify three current "states" of the Tamil verbal system, as represented by the real-life account genre, the performed epic genre, and the elicited epic genre.¹⁴⁷ These are illustrated in figures 7-9 below.

In these diagrams, a large elliptical shape represents the domain of narrative functions, with dynamic, eventive, 'foreground' functions situated at the upper end of the ellipsis, and static, descriptive, 'background' functions at the lower end; activities fall in the lower portion of the center. By bisecting the diagram with a line along its tilted lengthwise axis, and labeling the upper left-most extreme 'dynamic' and the lower right-most extreme 'static', a spectrum of the sort employed by Longacre may be discerned (compare figure 7, for example, with figure 1 in chapter 2). Verbal forms are distributed across functional space, however, rather than arranged along a line. The relative size of the circles which enclose the forms indicates their frequency within the genre, and the relative location of the forms within the narrative ellipse indicates their narrative functions, as well as whether they are central or peripheral. Consider figure 7 below. (Note: only explicitly narrative functions of future tense and perfect aspect are included in these diagrams.)¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ The folk tale genre is not treated as a separate state of the language here in that it can be seen to fall between the performed epics and the elicited epics in the patterns that it exhibits; that is, it has no uniquely distinguishing characteristics.

¹⁴⁸ Specifically, habitual uses of future tense are excluded, along with the modal/evidential functions of both future and perfect.

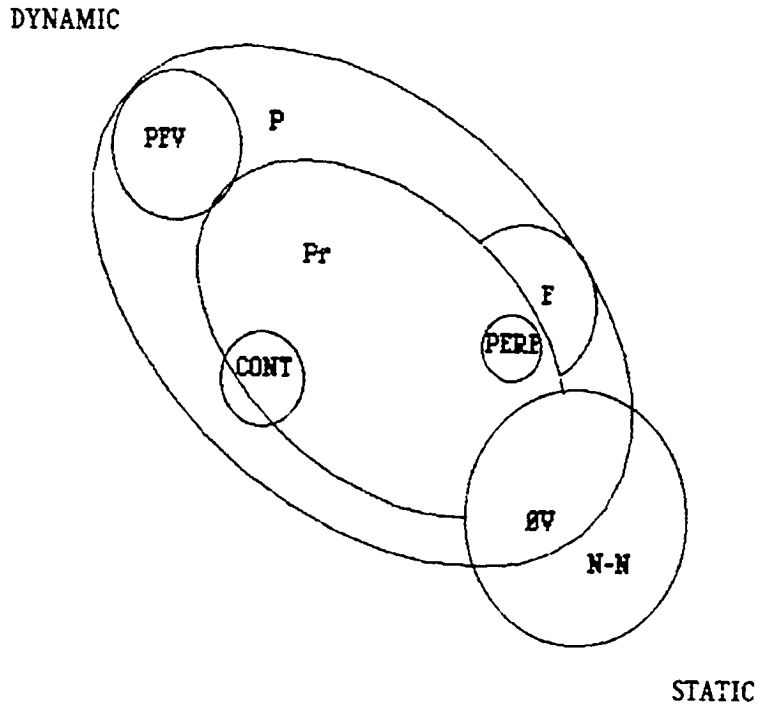


Figure 7: The verbal system of performed epics

Figure 7 shows the patterns of usage of verbal forms in performed epics. It has been suggested at various points throughout this work that performed epics attest an older functional system; this view is elaborated in 8.2 below. In examining figure 7, we note that the majority of narrative propositions are encoded in the simple past and the simple present tenses, with verbless predication types playing a significant role as well. The three aspects are used relatively infrequently, and are located apart from one another in functional space; this is intended to suggest that the narrative functions they express are optimally distinct. The three tenses follow a rough progression from P (most dynamic) to F (most static), although there is considerable overlap in the functions of past and present. This system for performed epics may be contrasted with the system represented in figure 8 below:

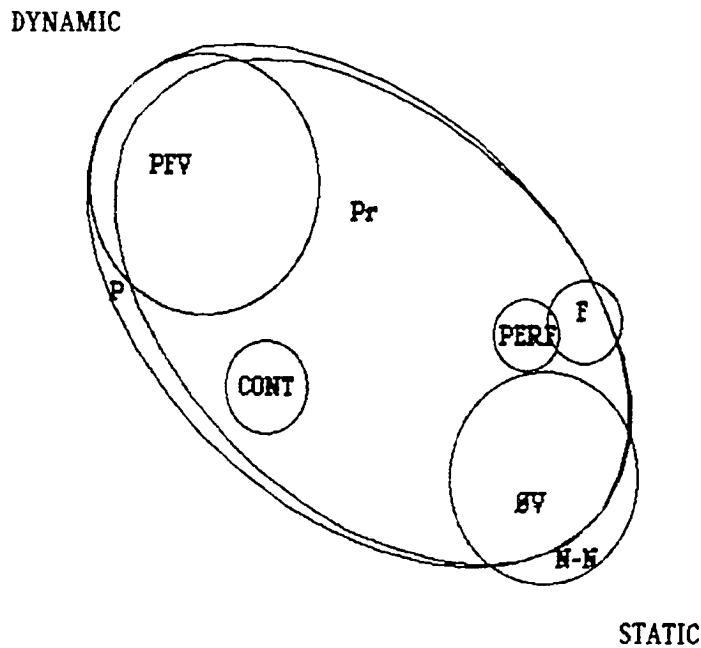


Figure 8: The verbal system of elicited epics

Figure 8 illustrates the verbal system employed in the telling of elicited epics. This is a present-tense based genre; present is used for all (except some verbless) functions, including (in conjunction with perfective aspectual forms) 'foreground' events. Those past tense forms which occur are restricted primarily to clearly eventive, foreground contexts. Leaving aside the expanded use of the present tense, the system bears a close resemblance to the system used in the performed epics, with the exception of an increase in frequency of the use of perfective forms, and a decrease in nominal attribution. Some of these differences -- the decrease in N-N clauses, and the extension of present as base-tense -- reflect the requirements of the genre. As elicited texts, their principal goal is not entertainment but rather the accurate transmission of a narrative sequence; thus descriptions of the attributes of participants are not elaborated upon. The use of present tense is also appropriate to the genre, i.e. to signal

the "timeless" status of the texts as oft-repeated, culturally-accessible objects (Herring 1985). The notable increase in perfective aspect, on the other hand, appears not to be genre conditioned, but rather a reflection of an historical trend.

This trend is most clearly illustrated by comparing figure 6 with the system diagrammed in figure 9 below, that of real-life accounts.

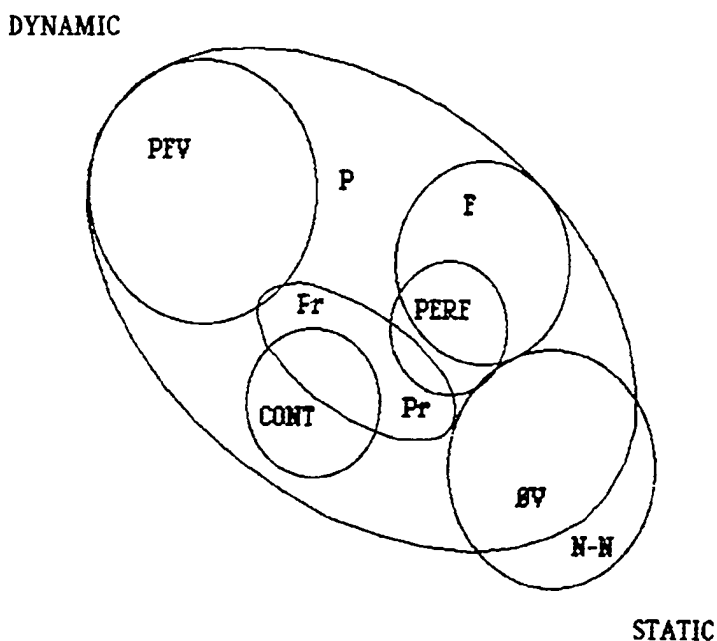


Figure 9: The verbal system of real-life accounts

As figure 9 shows, all three aspects in real-life accounts have increased in frequency and range relative to the previous diagrams, and the importance of the simple past and (especially) the simple present tenses has diminished. Past tenses play a major role in the genre overall, however; this too reflects the requirements of the genre, since past is the favored tense for reports of one-time, actual experience, in Tamil as in many other languages. If we compare the three diagrams above, the overall picture which

emerges is one in which relative use of the tenses (in particular, the frequency of the present tense) varies as a consequence of genre-related factors, while the frequency of the three aspects is low in the traditional performed epic genre, and greatest in the informally-related real-life account genre; I submit that this distribution reflects a pattern of historical development according to which the use of aspectual auxiliaries in Tamil is increasing over time.

8.2 Historical trends.

The history of the Tamil verbal system, as indeed the history of Dravidian morpho-syntax as a whole, is a fertile area of investigation which has received relatively little serious attention to date. It is generally agreed that Old Tamil had only two morphological tenses, a past and a non-past, both of which can be traced back to Proto-Dravidian (Subrahmanyam 1971).¹⁴⁹ The Old Tamil past-tense markers (*-t-*, *-tt-*, *-at-*, *-ia-*), along with their meaning of 'past tense', have been retained in the modern language, while the 'non-past' tense has preserved its original forms (*-v-*, *-(p)p-*, or *-um*), but narrowed in meaning to become the Modern Tamil future/habitual tense.

The semantic narrowing of the non-past tense was a consequence of the innovation of a new tense marker, the present, which first appeared in written texts between the 4th and 6th centuries A.D.¹⁵⁰ While the exact lexical source of the Tamil present tense is controversial, it appears that the form (*-(k)kinr-*) was originally a

¹⁴⁹ The statement of the Tamil grammarian Tolkappiar, ca. 100 B.C., that Tamil had "three times" (*kalam*) appears to have been influenced by Sanskrit grammars of the period; Sanskrit had three tenses. Despite his assertion, Tolkappiar in fact identifies only two morphological tenses for Tamil, although he points out that these could be used with a variety of temporal reference points.

¹⁵⁰ Zvelebil (1975).

verbal auxiliary (Rajam 1985; Steever 1989) which encoded the meaning of extended duration (Herring 1985). A plausible path of semantic development is that the durative auxiliary developed progressive meaning (as with the modern continuative); from the notion of 'situation simultaneous with another situation', it then took on the meaning 'situation simultaneous with the present moment', or present tense, thereby effectively restricting the domain of the non-past to future time and the expression of temporally non-specific propositions. Modern Tamil consequently has three tenses, as described in the present study.

The genesis of aspectual auxiliaries in Tamil has received even less attention, and there is controversy in this area as well. It seems likely that the three auxiliaries investigated synchronically in the present study -- *viṭu*, *koṇṭiru*, and *iru* -- are a relatively recent innovation in Tamil (Herring, to appear b), although the lexical main verbs from which they derive are more ancient. At the same time, one may point to the existence in Old Tamil texts of verb-verb compounds in which the second element appears to be bleached of lexical content; *iṭu*, *iṭā*, and *ī* are "auxiliaries" of this type. Unfortunately, it has thus far proven impossible to identify any nuance of systematic meaning, either aspectual or otherwise, contributed by the presence of any of these elements in the early texts. Nor has any of them gone on to develop aspectual functions, but rather their use has declined as the modern aspectual auxiliaries have increased in frequency. This is represented schematically in figure 10 below:¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Some scholars have argued for a relationship between *viṭu* and *iṭu*, on the grounds that the initial glide in the former is typically deleted in modern spoken Tamil. This is probably a matter of accidental homophony, however, since both *iṭu* 'to put, place' and *viṭu* 'to leave, let' are attested as main verbs in the ancient texts, and there is no evidence that the initial -v- is ever deleted in the latter.

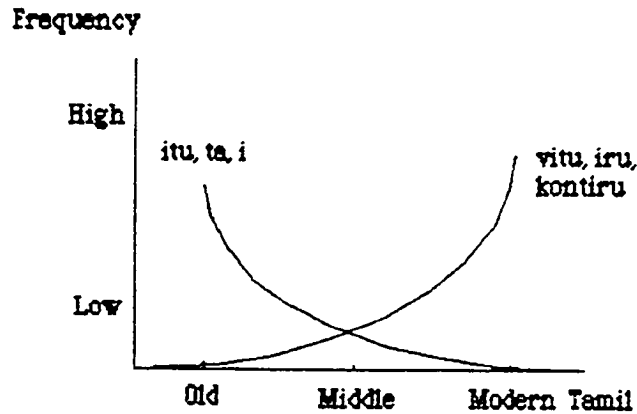


Figure 10: Historical development of Tamil auxiliaries

In a controversial article, Steever (1984) attributes aspectual auxiliaries to Proto Dravidian. While Steever's primary concern is to trace the origins of the perfect auxiliary element *man* (as attested in a number of modern Central Dravidian languages), he also proposes that auxiliaries were a feature of the proto-language more generally, and that elements such as *itu*, *ta*, and *i* in Old Tamil were once productive auxiliaries whose meanings had already weakened by the Old Tamil period. This view is intriguing, suggesting a repeating pattern of auxiliary development and loss in Tamil. Unfortunately, Steever's data are insufficient to demonstrate the claim conclusively, and the actual functions of the older forms remain largely inaccessible.

The categories of both tense and aspect have thus undergone significant reorganization since the time of the earliest written Tamil texts. One might reasonably hypothesize that these developments did not occur in isolation from one another. I would like to suggest here that the introduction of the present tense, along with the resultant creation of a three-way tense system, led to the innovation of auxiliary verbs which were explicitly aspectual in function. My account hinges on the observations of Zvelebil (1962) that "the opposition of tenses in the system of E[arly] O[ld] T[amil]

seems to have been 'perfective past versus imperfective future' which indicates perhaps a primary aspectual (and not temporal) dichotomy" (1962:15).

Discourse evidence for the aspectual functions of the so-called past and non-past (future) tenses can be found in the earliest written Tamil narratives. Although finite tensed forms are rare in Old Tamil overall, the distribution of those tensed forms which do appear is suggestive of binary grounding functions, with the past used with 'foreground' sequential events of the plot-line, and non-past with descriptive and supportive 'background' information. In the 5th century verse epic **Cilappatikāram** (the original written version of the story summarized in texts #18 and #19 of the judgment sample), the heroine, Kannaki, is described in the non-past:

- (127) *Mātar- āṛ toḷutu ētta vayaṅk- iya peruṇ kuṇattuk*
 woman-pl. worship praiseINF shining-AvP great qualities
kātal-āḷ peyar maṇṇ- uṇ kannaki eṇ- p- āḷ maṇṇō.
 love-PN3sg.f name establish-FAjP Kannaki be.called-NP-3sg.f Ø
 'She, who loves illustrious qualities, such that women praise her, is called by the name Kannaki'.

The tensed form here indicates a background state which functions as a free orientation clause within the text. Such contexts, both in modern Tamil and in other languages, typically require an imperfective verbal form. In contrast, the plot-line event in which Kannaki's husband, Kovalan, succumbs to the charms of a dancing girl (and abandons his wife) is related with past tense verbs:

- (128) *Kūṇi taṇṇōtu maṇamaṇai pukku*
 hunchback with house enterAvP
māṭavi taṇṇōtu aṇai- uru vaikalin aya- nt-aṇaṇ mayaṅki
 Matavi with embrace-experience day weaken-P-3sg.masc be.charmedAvP
viṭṭal aṇiy- ā virupp-inan āy- in-aṇ,
 leaving know-NEGAjP desire-PN3sg.masc become-P- 3sg.masc
vatu nīṇku ciraṇṇin taṇ maṇaiy-akam maṇant- eṇ.
 blemish remove excellent his house-interior forgetAvP- Ø

"(Kovalan) entered the house with the hunchback (servant), and when he embraced Matavi, he **weakened** and became charmed. He **became** possessed with the desire never to leave her, forgetting his own excellent untarnished household'.

This example is atypical of the text in that it contains two tensed verbal forms in succession. In all probability, both forms refer to the same event, and thus sequence is not necessarily implied between them; however, the event itself is a crucial one in the unfolding of the narrative sequence, and it is perhaps for this reason that it is stated twice, both times in the 'foregrounding' past tense.¹⁵² The pattern identified here in the use of the two "tense" forms is repeated systematically throughout the epic.

While a complete analysis of the discourse functions of verbal forms in Old Tamil clearly calls for the analysis of non-finite as well as finite forms, the narrative examples presented above lend support to Zvelebil's claim that the Old Tamil past and non-past forms expressed perfective and imperfective functions, respectively. With the introduction of a third form, however -- the present tense --, the earlier system, based as it was on a functionally binary distinction, was disrupted. By the time of the Middle Tamil period, the three-way tense system was effectively in place.

The changes in the tense system led to changes in narrative usage as well. In the 12th century epic **Kamparamāyanam** (of which the story related in text *17 of the judgment sample constitutes one episode), the systematic grounding functions of the tenses are no longer evident; rather the simple past has generalized as the base tense of narration. As a consequence, nearly all finite verbal forms are in the simple

¹⁵² For an example of a comparable use involving the perfective in Modern Tamil, see (87), 7.1.2.

past tense, including those which relate ongoing background activities and states.¹⁵³
 This is illustrated in the passage below, which describes the departure of the boy Rama with the sage Vishvamitra to kill demons in the forest:

(129)a. 'Mēl aṭutta vēḷvi pōy muti- tt-um nām' eṇā,
 on proceedPAjP sacrifice goAvP finish-F-1pl. we sayAvP
 naṭattal mēy-in-āṇ. navaikkaṇ nīṅk- in- āṇ.
 walk-PVN start-P- 3sg.masc misery remove-PPN-3sg.masc

b. Venri vāl putai vicittu, meymmai pōl
 victory sword side bindAvP truth like
 eṇrum tēyv- urāt tūni yāttu, iru
 thusFAjP diminuation-experienceNEGAjP quiver bindAvP two
 kuṇṇam pōṇru uyar tōl- il, koṇṇa vil
 mountain resembleAvP high shoulder-LOC victory bow
 oṇru tāṅk-in-āṇ -- ulakam tāṅk-in-āṇ.
 one bear- P-3sg.masc world bear- P- 3sg.masc

c. (...) conṇa mā tavaṇ toṭarntu, cāyai pōl,
 say-PAjP great ascetic followAvP shadow like
 poṇṇin mā nakarp puricai nīṅk-in-āṇ.
 goldOBL great town surrounding.wall leave- P- 3sg.masc.

- a. 'Saying "We'll go and finish up the ongoing sacrifice", he **began** the walk, he who was removed from misery (=Vishvamitra).
 b. Having fastened his victorious sword at his waist, and having tied on his quiver which, like truth, never empties, (Rama) **carried** a victorious bow on his high shoulders which were like two mountains -- he **carried** the world.
 c. (...) Following the (above-)mentioned great ascetic like a shadow, he **left** the outer wall of the great golden city (behind)'.

In this example, the past tense verbs in lines (a) and (c) encode discrete sequential events. The verb 'carried', however, repeated twice in line (b), expresses a situation which is logically contemporaneous with the events in (a) and (c) -- that is, Rama is understood as having been carrying the bow throughout. In the Old Tamil system, we

¹⁵³ A systematic exception is verbs of saying which introduce (i.e. occur in front of) quoted material; these are expressed in future (formerly non-past) tense.

would predict that a restricted clause of this type would be encoded in the non-past tense, i.e. to contrast it with the event sequence. In Middle Tamil, the same simple past form is used, and the functional distinction between events and non-events is thus largely neutralized.

There is evidence, then, that the weakening of the perfective/imperfective distinction in the tenses left a gap in the Tamil verbal system. This gap, I submit, motivated the rise of the 'new' aspectual auxiliaries, *viṭu*, *iru*, and *koṇṭiru*. In the modern language, *viṭu* has effectively replaced the simple past in its foregrounding function, leaving past tense as the unmarked, base tense of narration. *Iru* functions as a stativizer (i.e. as a means to distinguish states from events), and also as a formative element in the continuative *koṇṭiru*. Finally, *koṇṭiru* has become specialized in the expression of activities, particularly those viewed as having extended duration, recreating a distinction that (in keeping with my proposal above) was lost when the originally durative/progressive *-kiṇr-* form grammaticalized as the simple present tense.

A concurrent development within the tense system may be noted as well. Since its early appearances in Old Tamil texts, the present tense form has been steadily extending into the semantic and functional territory of the erstwhile non-past (future) form. This trend has led Paramasivam (1983a, b) to speculate that the future form is on its way out in the modern language. The narrative data examined here affirm that the future plays a less important role in modern narration than does the present tense, or indeed than did the morphological ancestor of the future, the non-past tense, in Old Tamil. Thus although the future tense retained the form of the old non-past tense, the present tense took over most of its functions, including, as we have seen, its grounding function in narrative.

This brief historical survey is intended to identify diachronic trends within the Tamil verbal system, as a means of explicating some of the variation found in contemporary usage. In particular, the weakening of the grounding functions of the original "tenses", in conjunction with the rise of explicit aspectual auxiliaries, lends support to the view that the system of usage diagrammed in figure 7 for performed epic narration represents an older usage, or at least preserves features of an earlier system. It also accounts for the sometimes confusing overlap between tense and aspect functions: the two categories are in competition for similar functional territory, yet the aspectual grounding strategy has not (yet?) entirely replaced the tense-based one.

In the discussion thus far, I have omitted mention of the historical development of verbal and verbless predication types. This is an area which is relatively stable within the modern functional system -- all four genres employ $\emptyset V$ predications with roughly equal frequency, and the variability in the frequency of N-N predications appears to be a consequence of the attention devoted to participant description in the various genres. There have, however, been significant changes within the category of predication type since the time of the earliest written texts.

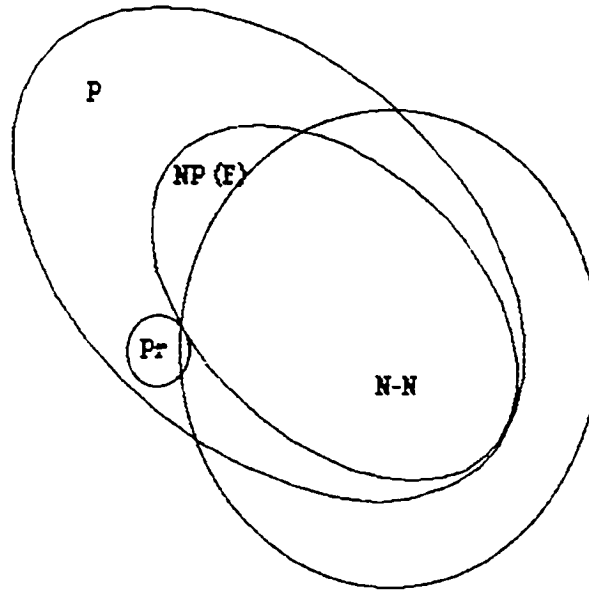
Nominal predication is perhaps the most ancient of the three types, as suggested by Zvelebil (1962); indeed, (deverbal) nominal forms are more frequent than tensed, finite forms in the 5th century epic *Cilappatikāram*.¹⁵⁴ $\emptyset V$ constructions of the type analyzed in the present study, however, are not found in the Old Tamil epics. According to the analysis developed in Herring (1990), the rise of the zero predicate construction reflects the weakening of the meaning of the Old Tamil verb of

¹⁵⁴ It is noteworthy that this construction, even in earliest times, was always 'verbless', that is, it lacked a copula verb. This observation further undermines the claims of Kothandaraman (1981; see discussion in 5.1.3) that N-N sentences are derived from sentences with overt copulas.

existence *u/*, and the loss of the previously available semantic distinction between the 'be' verbs *u/* and *iru*, which encoded (atemporal) existence and (temporary) existence in a location, respectively. Generally speaking, $\emptyset V$ has taken on the former meaning, although 'atemporal existence' must be understood metaphorically in narrative presentation. There is some evidence of older usage with regard to these forms in the more traditional contemporary epic performances: *u/* is found only in performed epics, albeit infrequently. Overall, however, we must conclude that the $\emptyset V$ construction -- like the usurpation of non-past (future) tense functions by the present tense -- has established itself as a consistent feature of the modern language.

While a full account of the narrative functions of the Old Tamil verbal system must await a complete, systematic analysis of a number of early narrative texts, the diagram in figure 11 represents an approximation based on the observations outlined above .

DYNAMIC



STATIC

Figure 11: The verbal system of 5th century epics (Cilappatikāram)

The overlap between the N-N construction and the verbal predication types is intended to represent the development of the latter out of the former (cf. Zvelebil 1962), since most N-N sentences in 5th century texts involve nominalized verbs which are ambiguous between a verbal and a nominal interpretation.¹⁵⁵ Comparing this diagram with the diagram in figure 7 above, it is possible to note the major changes in the Tamil verbal system at a glance: since the 5th century, some categories have expanded (present tense) while others have constricted (future tense, N-N); moreover, new aspectual categories have been introduced to specify functional distinctions.

¹⁵⁵ The strategy for nominalizing verbs referred to here is one in which a personal pronoun is suffixed to the verbal stem, with a tense marker optionally appearing between the two. It is Zvelebil's assertion that finite verbal predication developed as a consequence of the resulting nominal forms being reinterpreted as (person-number-gender) inflected verbs.

These same aspectual forms continue to expand their influence in the modern language, as indicated by the greater frequency of their use in real-life accounts, the language of which is presumably the least constrained by traditional conventions of narration. In general, forms within this system tend to expand in function over time, unless constrained by the successful expansion of another form competing for the same functional territory. The expanding wave metaphor thus rather aptly characterizes important descriptive properties of the Tamil verbal system, both synchronically and diachronically.

8.3 Implications for a theory of discourse grammar.

Having described the Tamil system, I return to the issue raised at the outset of this study, namely, the relevance of narrative discourse-based findings to grammatical theory. We have seen that there exist systematic functional patterns which must be taken into account in order to understand and use verbal categories in narration. The majority of these patterns do not fall out in any direct, recognizable way from sentence-level descriptive accounts, nor is their systematicity accounted for by enlarging the sentence-level description to include lists of possible functions in various contexts. The findings thus argue for the inclusion of a separate discourse level in grammatical description, a level on which structural regularities are described in discourse terms.

The legitimacy of a discourse level in grammatical structure continues to be denied, however, by theoretical linguists who consider the production of discourse to be sullied by 'performance' variables, or who attribute the regularities in its structure to 'non-linguistic' factors such as societal norms or human cognition. 'Grammar' as defined by such linguists is effectively restricted to only those aspects of linguistic

'competence' -- phonology, morphology, syntax -- which are presumed to be autonomous and innate. According to this view, there is thus a qualitative difference between the two sets of phenomena, with only the latter constituting a proper object of linguistic description. Without entering into the issues of autonomy or innateness, I wish to challenge the view that discourse and sentence-level phenomena are essentially different. I suggest, rather, that discourse regularities, at least on the level of the oral narrative text, are the product of the same pattern-producing capacity in the minds of speakers as are sentence-level grammatical phenomena; the manifestations of this capacity vary, however, as a consequence of the structural unit considered.

The two principal objections that have been raised to the notion of discourse regularities as grammar can be summarized as follows: first, regularities in discourse are optional, rather than categorical, hence their occurrence cannot be reliably predicted, even by discourse-based accounts; second, discourse is not rule-governed in such a way that the violation of a discourse "rule" results in an ungrammatical discourse. These objections presuppose that grammar is by definition predictable and rule-governed, and moreover that sentence-level grammatical structures satisfy both conditions. The assumptions regarding sentence-level grammar have been challenged by Halliday (1978) and others; in what follows, I consider the objections to discourse as grammar in light of the evidence from oral narrative.

Predictability

Behind much (if not all) of the work on the structure of narrative lurks a fundamental question: what determines the linguistic choices that a speaker makes in the act of narration? Put more precisely, given a language X in which a set of

grammatical forms is mapped onto a set of narrative functions, what leads a speaker of X to make certain linguistic choices, out of a range of other possible choices, in relating a sequence of events? Underlying this question is another, more practical concern: given precise knowledge of all major determinants (whatever these might turn out to be: language, culture, genre, setting, content, experience, motivation, etc.), would we be able to then predict in any principled way the structure of the telling? Prediction is highly valued in linguistic inquiry, since it enables an analysis to be evaluated independent of the data on which it was based. It is often argued, however, that discourse involves strategies which are stylistically and/or contextually conditioned, that is to say, not predictable in familiar sentence-level terms. The use of rhetorical questions is presumably an example of this type; it is an optional strategy which is determined not so much by the structure or content of the discourse itself, as by stylistic considerations and the evaluative choices of the speaker. What, then, of the verbal categories analyzed in the present study?

The categories of tense, aspect, and predication type enjoy a privileged relationship to the structural requirements of narration, for reasons identified in the previous chapters. As a consequence, narrative uses of verbal forms are indeed more predictable, given a knowledge of narrative content and context, than many of the purely 'stylistic' devices alluded to above. Having carried out a functional analysis of the Tamil verbal system, one could easily go on to predict how individual situation types would be expressed verbally, and I fully expect that a substantial percentage of such predictions would be validated by subsequent research.

At the same time, not all contexts in which a particular device can be used actually employ the device. Thus, there are new referents in Tamil which are not presented in ØV constructions, important plot-line events which are not marked with

ritu, individual episodes not bracketted by tense shifts, and so on. The devices are indeed optional, and our predictions can thus never approach 100% accuracy.

Of course, the use of particular grammatical devices on the sentence level is not predictable in this sense, either. A speaker may always choose among devices for expressing a sentence-level concept, and does not violate any grammatical rule by e.g. not using a passive in a context where it would have been appropriate to do so.¹⁵⁶ 'Predictability' is thus an untenable notion on any level, if what is predicted is that a form will occur in all contexts or meanings for which it is specialized.

Alternatively, predictability may refer to constraints specifying the non-occurrence or ungrammaticality of forms in particular contexts. An example (albeit with somewhat prescriptive overtones) on the sentence level is the prediction that a verb inflected for the 3rd person singular present tense will not have as its subject a first person pronoun. Constraints of this nature do indeed appear to be much weaker on the discourse level. To begin with, none of the discourse strategies analyzed in this study are exceptionless. Thus while one might be tempted to predict that *ritu* would not appear in static, non-sequential clauses, or that non-verbal predications would never be used with dynamic narrative events, such uses do occur, even in successful texts related by fully competent speakers. Indeed, such deviations often appear to be employed deliberately for expressive effect.

A further distinction between a regularity such as the subject-verb agreement rule invoked above and discourse regularities is that the former crucially involves a structured dependency between two elements, while dependencies between discourse elements, when such can be claimed to exist, seldom impose inviolable constraints.

¹⁵⁶ The notion of appropriateness, even on the sentence-level, is inextricably tied to a larger context, whether that of the immediate text, the social setting, or the intentions of speaker and hearer.

There are of course dependent cohesive devices, e.g. anaphoric reference and linking expressions of the type 'On the one hand... On the other...', but narrative uses of verbal forms are not similarly constrained. A $\emptyset V$ construction in Tamil tends to be followed by a clause in which the presented referent is resumed, but there are also cases where it is not. Similarly, not all episodes 'opened' in the present tense are officially 'closed' with a past tense form, nor does the use of present tense to open an episode in one part of a story commit the narrator to opening subsequent episodes in a similar fashion. It is true, however, that deviations from the statistically dominant tendencies may be interpreted by listeners, consciously or unconsciously, as having a slightly different functional value -- a $\emptyset V$ construction which is not resumed may be felt not to be 'presentational', but rather simply a focused assertion of existence, and an episode opened but not closed by tense shifts is not an 'episode' in the same sense, at least not in the narrator's evaluative perspective. Such considerations lead into the question of grammaticality, since violations of sentence-level 'rules' are typically held to result, not in reinterpretation of the speaker's intent, but in judgments of grammatical ill-formedness.

Grammaticality

The practice of relying on speakers' intuitions as evidence of grammatical well- or ill-formedness has been criticized from a number of methodological perspectives (see for example Labov 1975). At the same time, speakers often do make grammaticality judgments regarding individual sentences, irrespective of the reliability of such judgments. Judgments of well- or ill-formedness on the discourse level, however, are more difficult to obtain. The reason for this is not simply that sentences have 'rules' and discourses mere 'tendencies', as some have suggested; it may

be, at least in part, the result of practice and conditioning. In the following quote, Stubbs (1983) articulates this view:

As regards the use of intuitive data, if intuitions are dubious in syntax, they may seem even more dubious in discourse. However, this may be because our grammatical intuitions have been developed by two thousand years or more of detailed grammatical study. This is itself an objection to the use of intuitive data in syntax, since the data may have been created or at least modified by the process of studying them. It takes some considerable effort, for example, to mould the intuitions of beginning linguistics students until they can make distinctions between grammatical, meaningful, and acceptable in context (Stubbs 1983:91).

On the other hand, discourse analysts and professionals such as composition instructors practiced in making judgments of discourse well-formedness may have more readily-accessible intuitions in this area.

Despite the problems in accessing discourse grammaticality judgments, Stubbs concludes that the notion of discourse grammaticality is itself valid. Ill-formed discourses do exist, and moreover are recognized as such, e.g. when a point is not made clearly and the listener is obliged to indicate that she does not understand (and/or to request clarification). According to this view, any discourse which does not communicate effectively is ill-formed. Discourse grammaticality would thus appear to differ from sentence-level grammaticality, in that an ill-formed sentence may be perfectly understandable, yet still judged to be grammatically flawed.

In support of this distinction, we may note that deviations in the use of discourse strategies in the Tamil narratives do not result in judgments of ungrammaticality on the part of listeners; rather, an evaluative significance is often attributed to marked deviations, while others are simply overlooked, provided that they do not interfere with understanding the text. At the same time, the texts in the

judgment sample were selected in part on the basis of their adherence to the narrative prototype; texts that were rhetorically unsuccessful were excluded. It is not the case that there is no such thing as an ill-formed Tamil narrative. Other, less successful texts in the corpus contain instances of violations of the structural principles discussed here, including events related out of sequence, $\emptyset V$ utterances where the deleted predicate is not contextually retrievable, ambiguous tense references, and the like. Moreover, it is likely that contrived examples in which the order of clauses is reversed or scrambled, or all clauses are encoded e.g. as background activities or states, would be judged as grossly ill-formed.¹⁵⁷ It appears that in general, local deviations from discourse patterns are overlooked or accorded evaluative significance by listeners, while global deviations or deviations which impair understanding result in judgments of ill-formedness; in either case, the existence of structural norms is indirectly confirmed thereby. There is thus evidence that oral narrative is a rule-governed activity, both as it is produced and as it is interpreted by listeners.

A unified definition of grammar

On the basis of the above comparison, it would appear that both sentence and discourse structures are 'predictable' and 'grammatical'; at the same time, there are notable differences. The clearest differences are the relative absence of strong dependency relations between discourse elements, and the greater tolerance in speaker grammaticality judgments when discourse regularities are violated. Sentence grammar, in contrast, is characterized by more rigid structural interdependencies,

¹⁵⁷ Radical manipulations of narrative structure of this sort might succeed as experimental written narrative, but are unlikely to either be produced or succeed in oral contexts.

and by judgments of ill-formedness when these (or other structural properties) are violated.

Given these observations, the question then becomes: to what should the differences be attributed, and do they of necessity exclude discourse phenomena from the domain of grammatical inquiry? The Stubbs passage quoted above suggests the answer that I wish to propose to these closely-related questions. As Stubbs notes, historical factors account in part for the attention which has been accorded sentence-level (and smaller) structures. One may however go further to question the source of this practice. I would argue that the traditional focus on the sentence as the largest unit of grammatical analysis is not culturally, but rather cognitively determined, i.e. by constraints on the length of sequences which can easily be held in memory and processed. According to this view, the human intellectual capacities which seek to impose systematic regularities on linguistic structures on the sentence level operate on the discourse level as well; however, such regularities rarely if ever attain the status of rigidly constrained "rules" in discourse, due to the cognitive problem inherent in the enforcement of such rules, i.e. since larger segments of text must be retained in memory verbatim in order to determine whether or not a violation has in fact occurred.

In support of this view, it may be observed that grammaticality judgments break down rather rapidly as a function of the increased length and complexity of utterances. The subject-verb agreement rule invoked above is a case in point; the probability of this rule being violated rises sharply when another grammatical element or elements are introduced between the subject noun and the verb. The following example, which appears in a contemporary college-level textbook,

apparently sounds grammatical enough to have escaped editing in two successive editions:

"His contention was that it is not particularly relevant what the actual distance is between cultures, since it is what learners perceive that form their own reality" (H.D. Brown, Principles of Language Learning, 1983:1234)

Here the verb 'form' appears to agree in number with the plural noun 'learners', rather than with its actual, singular subject, 'what'. I submit, however, that no author or editor would allow to escape a clause of the type, "since it is what form their own reality", where the subject and verb appear in immediate juxtaposition.

This breakdown in judgments is even more evident in oral discourse, where a word or expression is readily superseded in memory by one more recently uttered. The following sentence was spoken several years ago by an invited lecturer at a Cognitive Science Seminar at UC Berkeley:

"I'm going to tell you something about the methods that I as a psycholinguist uses".

In this example, the finite verb agrees not with its actual first person subject, but with a 3rd person singular noun which was uttered immediately prior to the verb, thus creating interference. While the utterance sounded sufficiently ill-formed to attract my notice at the time, the speaker did not self-correct as he might have if he had obviously mis-spoken himself, or as he almost assuredly would have done had he said the following instead:

"I'm going to tell you something about the methods that I uses".

Violating the subject-verb agreement rule in this manner, i.e. when the two elements are in immediate juxtaposition, is clearly less acceptable than what the speaker actually did say. Conversely, it would appear that the longer the interpolated material,

the more acceptable (or less noticeable) subject-verb agreement violations become. The following sentence, although unlikely to pass muster in writing, is felt by most speakers to be the most acceptable of the three variants when uttered aloud:

"I'm going to tell you something about the methods that I as a developmental, and yet a still somewhat traditional psycholinguist uses."

On the one hand, these examples clearly represent performance errors; at the same time, the fact that such errors are more likely to occur when co-dependent elements are separated lends support to the view that the *existence* of structural regularities and the *categorical degree* to which they are observed are distinct and essentially unrelated issues. The differences between sentence and discourse patterns identified above -- the relative lack of strict discourse dependencies, and the tolerance for deviations in discourse patterns -- appear to be the consequence of cognitive differences in the on-line task of processing sentences as opposed to processing complex stretches of connected discourse. The nature of the regularities observed in both, however, suggests a common structure-producing faculty, the logical goal of which is to produce exceptionless patterns.¹⁵⁸

The decision to label the resulting structural phenomena 'grammar' as opposed to some other term depends entirely on the definitional criteria imposed. Even by existing definitions, however, discourse regularities would seem not to be irrevocably excluded. Returning to the dictionary definition given in chapter 1, we see that it can easily be adapted to include the sorts of phenomena under consideration here by

¹⁵⁸ This is not, of course, the only important principle at work in determining linguistic systems. It must be contrasted, in particular, with the principle of violating existing norms and patterns for markedness effect.

simply adding "or discourses" after the word "sentences". The definition would then read as follows:

grammar is the study of language as a body of words that exhibit regularity of structure and arrangement into sentences or discourses.

This definition accomodates sentence-level phenomena such as subject-verb agreement in English, as well as discourse-level phenomena such as foregrounding by means of *vitu*, *ØV* presentation, and the like. It is in this sense that I employ the term 'discourse grammar', and in this sense as well that discourse analysis must be viewed as constituting a level of grammatical analysis as legitimate as the study of sound patterns or sentence-level syntax.

The Tamil verbal categories analyzed in the present study prove that there is a need for discourse-level descriptions in grammatical study. This need is perhaps felt more acutely in some areas of language than in others; if this is so, then the verbal system -- and in particular, the categories of tense and aspect -- is clearly one such area. As Stubbs observes,

[t]ense has long been an embarrassment within sentence grammars of English. There is a striking lack of correspondence between tense and reference to time; time references are made by many devices other than tense; and there are problems over the distinction between tense and aspect. Within sentence grammars little more can be done than to point to these complications and to suggest an ad hoc list of functions which tense-selection may have: such as, marking an utterance for politeness or formality, suggesting that an event is unlikely or unreal, expressing tentativeness or certainty, or expressing the present relevance of past events (e.g. see Sinclair, 1972: 182ff; Palmer, 1974: ch. 3). If it can be shown that tense selection has specific discourse functions, then some of the problems may be solved (Stubbs 1983:25-6).

I hope, as a result of the discourse-based analysis conducted here, to have solved some of the problems with existing sentence-level descriptions of Tamil verbal categories, or at the very least, to have demonstrated their limitations.

8.4 Directions for further research.

A study of this scope necessarily raises and brings into focus new questions, while answering others. In closing, I note several different directions in which future investigation might profitably expand on the research findings analyzed here.

Within the area of Tamil narrative analysis, the discourse functions of non-finite verbal forms must ultimately be taken into account, and their role in the functional system determined. This is especially true for Old Tamil narrative, given that finite forms were relatively rare in the early history of the language. A particular hypothesis which might be tested in this regard is the expectation that finite clauses encode important or 'foreground' material, while the situations encoded in non-finite constructions are of a secondary or supporting nature. My prediction is that such a view would be proven false in the ancient texts, but essentially supported in Modern Tamil, thus raising the question of how the expression of grounding relationships shifts over time.

The second area in which further research is clearly required is in reference to the goal of producing a broad-based discourse grammatical account of the Tamil language. Although I have analyzed in detail the behavior of verbal categories in oral narration, these observations are specific to narrative in many respects. Ultimately, a complete grammatical account of the behavior of the Tamil present tense or of an auxiliary element such as *viṭu* must take into consideration the uses of such forms in other discourse contexts as well, most notably in conversation, since this is

the language activity in which speakers most commonly engage. Indeed, many of the discrepancies which might be noted between the analyses of auxiliaries presented here and those developed in Annamalai (1985) can be attributed to the simple methodological fact that Annamalai situates his examples in the context of conversation, rather than narration. In comparing his findings to mine, it appears that some significant functional differences may exist, particularly in regard to the uses of *viṭu* and *iru*; these must be accounted for before one can claim to have described the 'discourse grammar' of the forms.

Finally, the utility of any language-specific analysis is limited if it cannot be applied to broader areas of inquiry, be they cross-linguistic or theoretical. Tamil is not unique in possessing forms which fulfill systematic narrative functions; indeed, it seems quite likely that we are dealing here with a general feature of language. It is a question of some typological interest what kinds of forms are used to express narrative functions cross-linguistically. Categories of the verb are clearly important candidates, but work by Longacre, Grimes, and others on discourse in South American languages suggests that other devices -- "mystery" particles, overlay structure, etc. -- may be used as well. Conversely, parallel formal categories may express different functions in different languages -- the Tamil present tense appears to function in ways that could not have been predicted, for example, on the basis of functional analyses of present tense forms in Indo-European languages (Herring 1985). Further research is required to determine what principles, if any, constrain discourse grammatical phenomena in human language, both in particular languages and in general.

Last but not least, the definition of discourse grammar, and of grammar more generally, raises theoretical issues which are at the heart of much current debate

within the field of linguistics. It is one thing to argue, on the basis of abstract reflection, that discourse regularities are 'grammar-like'; it is quite another, however, to articulate in precise terms what the nature of those regularities is, and how they compare with the kinds of regularities observed in smaller linguistic units. One consequence of characterizing principles and constraints at the discourse level is that they might then provide fresh insights into sentence-level phenomena -- the tolerance demonstrated in discourse-level grammaticality judgments, for example, would appear to have correlates in syntax, thereby effectively blurring the distinction between 'grammaticality' and 'acceptability', even at the level at which this distinction has traditionally been maintained to exist. All of this carries us well beyond the goal of accounting for the discourse uses of verbal forms in Tamil, but to good end.

Appendix A: Tamil Phonology and System of Transcription

The Tamil phonological system presents a number of interesting problems for analysis which are not, however, directly relevant to the narrative discourse analysis carried out here. The brief description which follows should suffice for the purposes of the present study; those wishing to explore phonological issues in greater depth are referred to more specialized works on the subject.¹

Consonants

Traditional Tamil grammarians classify consonants as belonging to one of three categories: *vallinam* 'strong', *mellinam* 'soft', and *iṭaiyinam* 'middle', which correspond, roughly speaking, to the modern categories 'stops', 'nasals', and 'resonants' (=liquids + glides). This classification excludes the fricatives /s/, /ʃ/, and /h/, which although not native to Dravidian, have entered the sound system of Modern Tamil via borrowings such as *siṇimā* 'cinema' (< Eng.), *puruṣa* 'husband', and *hare* 'hail' (< Skt.). Also a consequence of borrowing is the voiced palatal stop [ɟ], as in *jaṇṇal* 'window' (< Portuguese) and *ṛaṭi* 'caste' (< Skt.).

Stop consonants are distinguished at six points of articulation: bilabial, dental, alveolar, palatal, retroflex, and velar, although the alveolar "stop" /t/ is realized as a voiced alveolar trill in all environments except when geminated intervocalically, in which context it is pronounced [tr] (or, in Spoken Tamil, [tt]; for a discussion of sound changes in Spoken Tamil, see below). Voicing is not phonemic in Tamil; rather, stops are predictably voiced when they occur intervocalically or immediately following a nasal consonant, for example, *aṭaṅku* 'be submissive' is pronounced [aṭaŋ gu]

¹ See, for example, Christdas (1988).

Several exceptions to the voicing rule should be noted. The first is that the intervocalic variant of the palatal stop /c/ is not the voiced stop [ɟ], as predicted by the rule, but rather the voiceless fricative [s]. Second, intervocalic /k/ may be realized as either a voiced velar fricative [ɣ] or a voiceless glottal fricative [h]. Bilabial and dental stops also undergo lenition intervocalically, but preserve the voicing change, i.e. /p/ → [β] and /t/ → [ð] / V __ V.

There are four nasal phonemes: /m/, /n/, /ṇ/, and /ɳ/. A velar nasal [ŋ] appears as an allophonic variant of /n/ or /m/ preceding /k/. The Tamil writing system also distinguishes between dental and alveolar nasals, but this distinction is non-contrastive.² Nasals tend to assimilate to the point of articulation of the immediately following stop consonant.

Included in the traditional category of 'middle' consonants are the alveolar and retroflex laterals /l/ and /ɭ/, as well as a flapped /r/ (in phonemic contrast with the trilled alveolar /r̄/, although the distinction is often neutralized phonetically), and a voiced retroflex continuant /ɭ/. This latter sound, situated perceptually between the 'dark l' sound in 'bull' and the 'r' in the Standard American English pronunciation of 'car', is thought to be unique to Dravidian. Also included in the 'middle' category are the glides /y/ and /v/ ([ɥ]). Tamil thus has a total of 20 consonant phonemes, as shown in table A on the following page:

² The distribution of the two graphemes is predictable: *n* appears word-initially and before *t*, and *ṇ* appears elsewhere.

		labial	dental	alveolar	palatal	retroflex	velar	glottal
'strong'	stops	p	t	r	c ɟ	ʈ	k	
'soft'	nasals	m	n		ɲ	ɳ		
'middle'	liquids		l	r		ɭ ɮ		
	glides	v			y			
	fricatives			s		ʂ		h

Table A: Tamil consonant phonemes

Vowels

The Tamil vowel system is quite straightforward. There are ten simple vowels: /i/, /e/, /a/, /o/, /u/, and /ī/, /ē/, /ā/, /ō/, /ū/, the first set contrasting with the latter with respect to length. Two diphthongs, /ai/ and /au/ (this last infrequent, found mainly in Sanskrit borrowings), complete the vowel inventory.

	front	back
high	i/ī	u/ū
mid	e/ē	o/ō
low	a/ā	

diphthongs: ai, au

Tamil vowel phonemes

Other phonemes

In addition to the phonemes listed above, some sounds introduced through more recent borrowings (especially from English) can be said to occupy a "semi-phonemic" status; that is, they may function contrastively in the speech of educated speakers. Such sounds include [f] (as in *fōn* 'phone'), word-initial voiced stops (e.g. *draivar* 'driver'), and the low front vowel [æ] (*bæṇk* 'bank').

Syllable structure, stress, and morphophonemics

The basic structure of the Tamil syllable is (C)V(Csonorant). Consonant clusters are only permitted word-medially, and are restricted to combinations of sonorant plus stop. (Sanskrit borrowings containing sequences of (voiceless) stop plus fricative, stop plus stop, or fricative plus stop are also found; e.g. *pustakam* 'book', *veṭkam* 'shame', *āṭci* 'eye'.) Stress is non-contrastive, with each syllable receiving roughly equal emphasis. However, long vowels may constitute peaks of sonority within a phrase or word, giving rise to the impression of intonational stress. Two morphophonemic processes are especially productive: glide insertion, or the obligatory insertion of a glide (/v/ or /y/) whenever two vowels come in contact, and final consonant strengthening, or the conversion of the final sound of nouns ending in /m/ to [tt] before case endings (*pustakam* 'book', *pustakatt-ukku* (book-DAT) 'to the book'). A related process occurs with nouns ending in /ṭ/; the retroflex stop is geminated before case suffixes or in nominal compounds (*vīṭu* 'house', *vīṭṭu amma* lit. 'house-lady'; 'the lady of the house'). For further discussion of morphophonemic processes in Tamil, see Schiffman (1979).

Spoken and written Tamil

Tamil is a highly diglossic language, in which the differences between spoken and written (or Literary) varieties primarily involve phonology and the lexicon (Britto 1986). Spoken forms of Tamil words can be derived by applying 'conversion' rules to the written forms; some of these rules are relatively automatic, while others are optional and may be applied inconsistently even by the same speaker in the course of a single utterance.

Among the more automatic rules are several mentioned above: voicing of stop consonants intervocalically and before a nasal, fricativization of stops intervocalically, and the assimilation of place of articulation of a nasal to that of an immediately following stop. Also automatic is the shortening of long vowels, the unrounding of the vowel /u/ to [u] at the end of a word, and the tendency for final nasal consonants to be dropped after nasalizing the previous vowel. Examples of these processes are given below:

<u>Process</u>	<u>Written</u>	<u>Spoken</u>	
1) voicing and vowel unrounding	/vitu/	[vidu]	'to leave, let; perfective aspect'
2) fricativization and vowel unrounding	/atu/	[aɖu]	'that; it'
3) assimilation, voicing, final nasal deletion, and vowel shortening	/tinpān/	[timbā]	'he will eat'
4) vowel shortening, voicing, and final nasal deletion	/pallikkūtam/	[pallikkudā]	'school'

As these rules of conversion are assumed to apply automatically in native, informal Tamil speech, I do not indicate their output in the system of transcription used in this study, but rather employ the written (phonemic) forms.

The optional conversion rules are numerous, and it would not be appropriate to list them all here.³ The most important to the present study are processes which affect the pronunciation of verbal endings. These include the palatalization of the past tense morpheme variants /-tt/ and /-nt/ (to [-cc] and [-ñj], respectively), the deletion of /v(i)/ in the perfective auxiliary and /ki/ in the present tense morpheme, the simplification of /koṇṭ/ to [kitt] or [itt] in standard spoken Madurai Tamil, and to [iṇḍ] in Brahmin dialects, and the replacement of the retroflex in /(v)itu/ with a flapped [r] in the speech of some speakers. Examples are given below:

<u>Process</u>	<u>Written</u>	<u>Spoken</u>	
5) palatalization	/paṭittēn/	[paḍiccē]	'(I) studied'
6) deletion	/collivittā/	[collittā]	'(she) said-PFV'
	/pōkirōm/	[pōrō]	'(we) go'
7) simplification	/pēcikoṇṭiruntān/	[pēcittirundā]	'(he) was talking'
Brahmin dialect		[pēcīṇḍirundā]	'(he) was talking'
8) flapping	/vantituvēn/	[vandıruvē]	'(I) will come-PFV'

It is to be noted that 'flapping', as in (8), produces a form which resembles the perfect auxiliary *iru*. However, it is possible to distinguish between the flapped variant of the perfective, and the normal perfect, in that each takes a different set of inflectional

³ For a partial list, see Schiffman (1979: 4-8).

endings (see appendix B). The future morpheme for *iru* is not *-v-* but rather *-pp-*; thus '(I) will have come' is pronounced [vantiruppē]

In addition to these processes, speakers frequently replace sequences of non-identical stop + stop with a geminate stop (/vetkam/ --> [vekkā] 'shame'), delete /r/ when it is the first in a sequence of three consonants, as in /pārkka/ --> [pākka] 'to see', and pronounce the neuter past tense forms /pōyirru/ '(it) went' and /āyirru/ '(it) became' as [pōccu] and [āccu], respectively. These changes, although common, are variable in their distribution; they are indicated directly in the transcription in those instances where they occur.

A further note on transcription

The oral narratives analyzed in the present work are transcribed phonemically, with the exception of the optional spoken Tamil features mentioned above, which constitute phonetic variants. A further, minor exception, must be noted as well: I have followed Tamil orthography in distinguishing between dental *n*, alveolar *ṇ*, and velar *ṅ*, despite the fact that the first two sounds are not phonemically contrastive, and the latter is a predictable allophonic variant of [n] or [m] occurring before /k/. All written words and examples cited are transliterated from the Tamil syllabary according to the system used in the Tamil Lexicon (University of Madras, 1982) and in other modern references. These symbols are the same as those which appear in the phonological charts given in this appendix.

Appendix B: Tamil Morphology

Tamil is a relatively rigid SOV language (Herring and Paolillo 1991); its morphology is agglutinative (Lindholm 1975), with elements suffixed serially onto a root form.

B1. Noun morphology

Tamil nouns are inflected for number (singular vs. plural) and case (nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, instrumental, sociative, locative, ablative, and vocative). A sample case paradigm is given for the noun *mannan* 'king' in table C below:

NOM	<i>mannan-<u>ō</u></i>	'The king (is old)'
ACC	<i>mannan-<u>ai</u></i>	'(I saw) the king'
DAT	<i>mannan-<u>ukku</u></i>	'(I brought gifts) for the king'
GEN	<i>mannan-<u>in</u></i> <i>mannan(<u>in</u>)-<u>utaiya</u></i>	'The king's (scepter is unbending)'
INST	<i>mannan-<u>āl</u></i>	'(It shall be accomplished) by the king'
SOC	<i>mannan-<u>ōtu</u></i>	'(The queen attended the festival) along with the king'
LOC	<i>mannan-<u>il</u></i> <i>mannan-<u>itam</u></i>	'(The jewels are) in the king' (i.e. he swallowed them) '(The jewels are) on the king' (i.e. he is carrying them)
ABL	<i>mannan-<u>iliruntu</u></i>	'(A strange sound issued) from the king'
VOC	<i>mannā</i> <i>mannan-<u>ē</u></i>	'O king!'

Table C: The Tamil case system

The plural marker is /-kal/. When both plural number and case are marked, the order is noun + pl. + case; e.g. *maṇṇāṇ-kal-ukku* 'for the kings'

Tamil possesses neither definite nor indefinite **articles** as such. However the numeral 'one' (e.g. *oru paiaṇ* 'a boy') frequently fulfills the function of the latter, and the demonstratives 'this' (*inta paiaṇ* 'this/the boy') and 'that' (*anta paiaṇ* 'that/the boy') indicate definite reference as well as proximal vs. distal deixis.

Adjectives fall into three categories; these characteristically (with only a few exceptions) end in -a. There is a small class of 'true' adjectives which includes *nalla* 'good', *putu* (or *putiya*) 'new', *paiaiya* 'old', and *pacca* i 'green, fresh'. The second type of adjectives derives from nouns, i.e. by the addition of the suffix -āṇa. Thus: *alakāṇa* 'beautiful' from *alaku* 'beauty'; *mōcamāṇa* 'bad' from *mōcam* 'bad thing'; *potuvāṇa* 'common, usual' from *pōtu* 'that which is public, usual'. The third type, which is the most productive, derives adjectives -- or adjectival participles (AjP's) -- from verbs. Some examples: *keṭṭa* 'bad' from *keṭu* 'to spoil, be bad'; *uyarata* 'tall' from *uyar* 'to be high'; *cettup pōṇa* 'dead' from *cettup pō* 'to die'. Relative clauses are also constructed in this way, by converting the verb of the attributive clause to an adjectival participle and placing it in front of the nominal head. Thus: *maturaikku pōṇa paiaṇ* (lit. 'Madurai-to went boy') 'the boy who went to Madurai' from *avaṇ maturaikku pōṇāṇ* '(he) went to Madurai'.

When a noun phrase contains both a demonstrative and an adjective, the order of elements is typically: demonstrative + adjective + noun; e.g. *oru nalla paiaṇ* 'a good boy'.

Tamil **personal pronouns** distinguish person, gender (in the 3rd person), and number. There is a contrast in the 1st person plural between exclusive (addressee

excluded) and inclusive (addressee included) 'we'. The forms in common use in modern Madurai Tamil are given in table D.

	Singular	Plural
1st	<u>nān</u>	<u>nāṅkal</u> (excl.)/ <u>nām</u> (incl.)
2nd	<u>nī</u>	<u>nīṅkal</u>
3rd	<u>avan</u> (masc.) <u>avaḷ</u> (fem.) <u>avar</u> (polite) <u>atu</u> (neuter) <u>tān</u> (reflexive)	<u>avarkal</u> (polite sg. & ordinary pl.) <u>[avail]</u> <u>tāṅkal</u> (also super-polite 2sg.)

Table D: Personal pronouns

(The 3rd person neuter plural pronoun *avai* is rare outside of formal written discourse; the singular *atu* is used instead.) All pronominal forms may be inflected for case, although some change form when case endings are added. For example, the oblique form of nān is eṇ (eṇ-ṇ-utaiya 'my'), the oblique forms of nī and nīṅkal are uṇ and uṅkal, respectively, and tān is realized as taṇ before case endings.

Suffixes deriving from personal pronouns may be added to adjectives and adjectival participles to form **participial nouns** (PN's). Examples: *nalla-vaṇ* 'good man'; *alakāṇa-vaḷ* 'beautiful woman'; *ketta-tu* 'bad thing'; *cettup pōṇa-v-arkal* 'dead people'. Since adjectives cannot stand alone as predicates, participial nouns are normally required in expressions such as 'That's good', 'She's beautiful', 'They're dead', etc.; e.g. *avarkal cettup pōṇavarkal* 'they (are) dead (persons)'. (Note that in this

example, two nouns form a complete grammatical utterance without the benefit of a copula verb, that is, it is a construction of the N-N type. For an analysis of nominal predication, see 5.1.)

B2. Verb morphology

Tamil verbal morphology has been described in a number of excellent studies; those interested in exploring the subject are referred especially to Arden (1942), Lehmann (1988), and Paramasivam (1979, 1983a). In this section, I briefly sketch those features of verbal morphology which are relevant to the analysis in the present study.

Verb classification

Tamil verbs are classified as 'strong' or 'weak' on the basis of their phonological structure and the types of inflections they take. 'Strong' verbs are those which contain a geminated stop in the verb stem, and/or which take geminate ('strong') forms of inflectional morphemes. 'Weak' verbs contain a single stop (or a nasal plus stop) in the stem, and/or take inflections containing a single stop. The same verbal root often gives rise to verbs of both types, e.g. *nata* 'happen' (weak) and *natattu* 'make happen' (strong).⁴

In the formation of infinitives, a third category -- 'middle' verbs -- is distinguished as well. The Tamil infinitive is formed by the addition of the suffix *-a*. Strong verbs take a geminate stop augment *-kk-* between the stem and the suffix,

⁴ The distinction in meaning between such pairs has been shown to be systematic by Paramasivam (1979), who characterizes the weak variety as 'affective' (subject affected) and the strong variety as 'effective' (other affected).

middle verbs take a single stop augment *-k-*, while weak verbs take no augment. The stem and infinitive forms of a weak, middle, and strong verb are given in table E:

	Stem	Infinitive
weak	tūnku 'sleep'	tūnka (tūnku + Ø + a)
middle	kēl 'hear'	kēṭka (kēl + k + a)
strong	paṭi 'study'	paṭikka (paṭi + kk + a)

Table E: Infinitive forms of a representative weak, middle, and strong verb

Tense

The weak-middle-strong pattern is evident in tense inflection as well. Weak verbs take the past tense allomorphs *-t-*, *-nt-*, *-in-*, or *-i-*, the present tense *-kir-*, and the future *-v-*. Middle verbs form the past with *-t-*, the present with *-kir-*, and the future with *-p-*. Strong verbs take the past tense allomorphs *-tt-* or *-nt-*, the present allomorph *-kkir-*, and the future *-pp-*. Strong, middle, and weak verb classes are thus clearly distinguished in the future inflectional paradigm.

There is considerable allomorphic variation in the tense paradigm, however, especially in the past tense. This variation led missionary grammarians such as Graul (given in Arden 1942) to develop a more detailed classification scheme involving seven morphological verb classes. This scheme, which is still widely-used in teaching Tamil to non-native speakers, is shown in table F (from Lehmann 1988:58):

Verb class	Present tense	Past tense	Future tense
I	-kir-	-t-	-v-
II	-kir-	-nt-	-v-
III	-kir-	-in- -i-	-v-
IV	-kir-	doubling	-v-
V	-kir-	-t-	-p-
VI	-kkir-	-tt-	-pp-
VII	-kkir-	-nt-	-pp-

Table F: Verb classes and tense endings

As indicated in table F, the past tense of class IV verbs is not formed by the addition of a suffix, but rather by doubling the consonant of the final syllable, which is always *tu*, *ru*, or *ku*; thus the past stem of the class IV verb *cāppitu* 'to eat' is *cāppitt-*.

In the formation of the simple tenses, the tense morpheme is followed by a pronominal ending which shows person, number, and gender (PNG). These endings, which are related historically to the personal pronouns in table D above, are as follows:

	Singular	Plural
1st	-ēn	-ōm (inclusive and exclusive)
2nd	-āy	-īrkal (Spoken Tamil -īnka)
3rd	-ān (masc.) -āl (fem.) -ār (polite) -atu, -tu, -um (n.)	-ārkal (Spoken Tamil -ānka) [a]

Table G: Pronominal endings

There are no separate endings for the reflexive and 'super-polite' pronouns *tān* and *tānkal*; rather the verb takes the personal ending which agrees with the semantic subject in person, number, and gender.

Table H on the following page shows the first person singular conjugation of *tūnku* 'sleep' (class III), *kēl* 'hear' (class IV), and *paṭi* 'study' (class VI) in the three simple tenses:

Verb class	Present tense	Past tense	Future tense
III (weak)	tūnku- kir - ēn	tūnk- in -ēn	tūnku- v - ēn
V (middle)	kēṭ- kir - ēn	kēṭ- t - ēn	kēṭ- p - ēn
VI (strong)	paṭi- kkir -ēn	paṭi- tt - ēn	paṭi- pp -ēn

Table H: Simple tense 1st person singular conjugation of three verbs

(For rules which convert written forms to spoken Tamil, see appendix A.)

Aspect

Aspectual constructions are a type of compound verb formation which involves following a non-finite form of the main verb with a finite, tensed form of an auxiliary. The three auxiliary verbs discussed in this study -- *viṭu*, *koṇṭiru*, and *iru*-- are conjugated according to one of two inflectional paradigms (*koṇṭiru* and *iru* are inflected the same). *Viṭu* is a class IV, and *iru* a class VII verb; the first person singular conjugation in the three simple tenses is given for each in table J below:

Verb class	Present tense	Past tense	Future tense
IV (weak)	viṭu- kir - ēn	viṭ- t - ēn	viṭu- v - ēn ⁵
VII (strong)	iru- kkir -ēn	iru- nt - ēn	iru- pp-ēn

Table J: Simple tense 1st person singular conjugation of auxiliary verbs

As stated above, the main verb in such constructions appears in a non-finite form. This form, the past **adverbial participle** (AvP), is created for all but class III verbs by adding *-u* to the past stem. For class III verbs, the *-i* past stem alone (see table F) is used:

⁵ Note that although the V class conjugation of *kē!* and the IV class conjugation of *viṭu* are similar, they differ in the future tense.

Verb class	verb	AvP ending	AvP form
I	cey 'do'	-tu	ceytu
II	naṭa 'happen'	-ntu	naṭantu
III	tūṇku 'sleep'	-i	tūṇki
IV	viṭu 'leave; PFV'	doubling + u	vittu
V	kēl 'hear'	-tu	kēttu
VI	paṭi 'study'	-ttu	paṭittu
VII	iru 'be, PERF'	-ntu	iruntu

Table K: Formation of adverbial participle

To form the past perfective of the verb *tūṇku* 'sleep', therefore, the AvP *tūṇki* is followed by a past finite form of *viṭu*, for example *vittāl* (3rd person singular feminine), to produce:

$tūṇki + viṭ + \ddot{t} + \ddot{a}l = tūṇkivittāl$ '(she) slept-PFV'

(In converting to spoken Tamil, the final *-l* of the pronominal ending and the *vi-* of the perfective auxiliary are typically deleted; thus: *tūṇkittā*.) Similarly, the future continuative of *paṭi* 'study' in the 3rd person plural would be formed as follows:

$paṭittu + kontirū + pp + \ddot{a}rkāl = paṭittukkontiruppārkāl$ '(they) will be studying'

(Spoken Tamil palatalizes the past marker *-tt-* to *-cc-*, simplifies the morpheme *-kont-* to *-(k)itt-*, and replaces the pronominal ending *-ārkāl* with its spoken variant *-āṇka*; thus: *paṭiccittiruppāṇka*.)

The 'verb-AvP + verb' strategy is responsible for numerous compound verb formations in the language, aspectual and otherwise, as well as for verb sequences in which a series of actions is presented as occurring in chronological sequence, e.g.:

Inta kōli-y- ai **aru-ttu** piriyaṇi **cey- tu** eṅkaḷammā-v-ukku
 this chicken-ACC cut- AvP biryani make-AvP our mother- DAT
koṇṭupōy koṭu.
 bring-AvP give-IMP

'**Having cut** this chicken, **having made** biryani, **having brought** it to our (=my) mother, give (it to her)' (i.e. 'Cut this chicken, make biryani, bring it to my mother, and give it to her').

This strategy is extremely productive in Tamil, as indeed it is in the languages of South Asia in general. For further discussion of compound verbs and verb sequences in Tamil, see Fedson (1981), Lindholm (1975), Schiffman (1969), and Steever (1983).

Negatives and modals

As the focus of the present study is on the expression of indicative, finite, affirmative clauses ('basic narrative syntax', in Labov's (1972) terminology), I devote relatively little attention to negatives or modals; for a brief sketch of the morphology of these categories in Tamil, see chapter 4.1.

Other verbal categories

Interested readers are referred to the sources mentioned in this appendix for discussions of voice, mood, nominalization and other features of Tamil verbal morphology not included here.

Appendix C: Synopses of Narratives in Judgment Sample

1) "The Auspicious Book"

When the narrator is fifteen or sixteen years old, he conceives a strong desire to own a copy of the Bhagavad Gita. One day when he is out on his front porch, a boy happens along carrying a valuable copy of the book, which he sells to the narrator for practically nothing.

2) "Falling in the Well"

When the narrator is twelve years old, he works in the fields because his family is very poor. One day he falls into a dry well and breaks his arm and cuts his forehead. The people nearby come and pull him out. They locate a village doctor who agrees to attend to his injuries for very little money. The doctor sets the broken arm and sends someone out for a needle and thread to stitch up the cut. The narrator is terrified of getting the stitches and argues with the doctor. Finally, the doctor and his assistants hold him down and stitch him up without anesthesia. Then send him home, and after one painful month, he recovers.

3) "The Japanese Girl"

Rajamani is a rough but personable young man from the narrator's village. Through his involvement with local politics, he attends an agricultural society meeting at a posh hotel in Madurai (the nearest big city). There he meets a girl from Japan who is visiting India as a tourist. Although neither of them speaks much English, she invites him to have a drink with her group, and they

exchange addresses. When she returns to Japan, she begins corresponding with him.

Meanwhile, Rajamani doesn't get along with his parents, and comes to live with the narrator's family, who take him in as their own son. One day he smokes marijuana and goes out driving with a borrowed cart and horse. The horse gets out of hand and upsets the cart, which breaks, killing Rajamani on the spot. They bring his body back and bury it.

A few days later a letter arrives from the Japanese girl saying that she is in love with Rajamani, and is prepared to leave everything to marry him. Eventually the narrator (who has been writing on Rajamani's behalf all along), writes to the girl and tells her what has happened. They never hear from her again.

4) "The American Students' Swimming Pool"

A group of American college students comes to India to study for a year. The narrator works with the students and socializes with them as well. The students visit a local village, and decide to remodel their house to resemble a village hut. They bring in thatch and hammocks and attach them to the walls and ceilings. Later, they decide that they aren't getting enough exercise, and conceive the idea of converting their main room into a swimming pool. They buy materials and hire laborers. By the time the landlord hears of their activity, the inside wall is several feet high. He protests to the professor in charge, who sits down in front of the house and vows to fast unto death unless the students abandon their project. They are persuaded to abandon it.

5) "Snakebite"

A mother who has just given birth to a child lays down in her hospital bed to sleep. Feeling something nursing at her breast, she wakes up and sees a cobra there. When she strikes at it, it bites her and she dies. Later, the other patients, hearing her baby cry, call the doctor. The snake is gone, but they examine the dead woman and determine that she has died of snakebite.

6) "Hm!"

Vellaittol and Kunjan Nambiyar have been close friends since childhood, and always extend the warmest hospitality to each other in their homes. One day Vellaittol expresses the view that the sound "hm!" has a definite meaning. Kunjan Nambiyar disagrees, and Vellaittol vows to prove it to him. The next time they meet on the street, Vellaittol says that he has just come from Kunjan Nambiyar's house. Kunjan Nambiyar asks "Did you eat?", to which Vellaittol snorts "hm!", and walks off. Kunjan Nambiyar then returns home and fights with his wife for not having fed his friend. Just as he's about to strike her, Vellaitto! steps in and says "See, I told you that "hm!" has meaning. Look at all the trouble it's caused!". Kunjan Nambiyar concedes, and they remain fast friends for the rest of their lives.

7) "The Lion and the Rabbit"

In a forest, a lazy but ferocious lion intimidates the other animals into sending him one of their number each day for him to eat. On the first day, they send a goat. The lion kills and eats it. On the second day, a cow is sacrificed. On the third day, it's a rabbit's turn. Instead of going to the lion, the rabbit calls to

him that he is unable to come because another lion forbids it. The lion flies into a jealous rage and asks to be taken to the other lion. The rabbit leads him to a well, and when the lion looks in, he sees his own reflection. He leaps into the well to fight the "other" lion, and drowns. The other animals praise the clever rabbit.

8) "Tenaliraman's Cat"

In a kingdom, there is a terrible rat problem. The king gives to each household a cat, and in order to feed the cat, a cow, for milk. Tenaliraman (the court jester) asks for a cat and a cow, but the king refuses. Tenaliraman persuades the king that he will take good care of the animals. The king gives him a cat and a cow and he goes home.

At home, Tenaliraman heats some milk until it is boiling hot. When he sets it down, the cat tries to drink it, but burns its mouth and runs away. Tenaliraman and his family then drink the milk themselves. Tenaliraman repeats this procedure the next day and the day after until the cat runs away at the very sight of milk.

One day the king calls all the cats in to see how they're doing, and discovers that Tenaliraman's cat is starving. Tenaliraman explains that the cat refuses to drink milk. The king has milk brought, and sure enough, when the cat sees it, it runs away. When the amazed king asks for an explanation, Tenaliraman tells him the truth, pointing out that it is a waste to provide milk for cats, when people are going hungry. The king recognizes his mistake and thanks Tenaliraman.

9) "Tenaliraman and the Palace Guards"

One day Tenaliraman goes to see the king, but finds his path barred by palace guards. As he has no money with which to bribe them, he offers the first guard half of the reward which the king is certain to give him when he conveys to him the good news with which he has been entrusted. The guard agrees and lets him pass. The same thing happens with the second guard.

Tenaliraman enters and sees the king watching a show put on by a magician. Tenaliraman outwits the magician by issuing a challenge: "You can't do with your eyes open what I can do with my eyes closed!" He then scoops up some dirt and places it on his closed eyelids. The king is pleased and offers Tenaliraman a reward for his cleverness.

Tenaliraman requests 16 lashes with a whip. Accordingly, the king sends one of his soldiers with a whip after Tenaliraman. Tenaliraman leads him to the first guard and gives him half of his "reward". He gives the second guard the other half. The guards run complaining to the king, and the jester is summoned. Tenaliraman tells the king about their corruption. The king recognizes his own ignorance and thanks Tenaliraman.

10) "The Tale of the Unlucky Bride"

A prince hears of a beautiful girl named Samudra Valli who lives beyond the seven oceans. He sets out to find her, encountering difficulties but aided by the advice of a holy man he meets along the way. He reaches the kingdom beyond the seven oceans and is given three tests which he must pass, or else be killed. He passes the tests and marries Samudra Valli, bringing away with her her tremendous wealth in jewels. On the way home, the prince and Samudra Valli

lay down to rest. Some thieves come by and kill Samudra Valli for her jewelry, tossing her body into a nearby well. The prince wakes up and, unable to find his bride, returns to the palace in despair.

In an attempt to cheer him up, his father marries him off to another girl. One day when the prince and his friend are out hunting, they stop to drink water at the same well where Samudra Valli was killed. Samudra Valli, in the form of a lemon, floats into the prince's hand. Sensing something special about the lemon, he takes it home with him. But his second wife, suspecting some connection with the first wife, cuts the lemon into pieces and throws it out the window. In the places where it falls, pumpkin plants sprout up. Pumpkins grow on the plants, and are sold to the neighbors. One of the pumpkins is able to speak, and it tells its story. The neighbor breaks it open and a girl steps out, and is raised by the family as their own child. But the second wife hears of this and orders that the girl be taken into the forest and killed. Samudra Valli requests a favor of her executioners -- that after killing her, they scatter her body parts in various places. This they do, and in time each body part becomes a tree, a flower, a bird, or the like; the whole making a beautiful flower garden.

One day when the prince is out hunting he stops at the flower garden to rest. Two birds, who were Samudra Valli's eyes, start talking to each other, and relate the entire story of her misfortunes. The prince, hearing for the first time what his second wife has been up to, is seized with grief and rage. Returning home, he kills his wife by immersing her in a vat of boiling lime, and then kills himself.

11) "Krishna, Arjuna, and the Prince"

The god Krishna and the archer hero of the Mahābhārata, Arjuna, are leading a sacred horse to a ritual gathering. They stop in a kingdom where the king happens to be away, and the rule of the land has been left in the hands of a young prince. Hearing of their arrival, the prince orders his soldiers to confiscate the horse. When they attempt to do so, Krishna and Arjuna become angry, and a battle breaks out. The prince, who is a skilled warrior, joins in the battle and shoots both Arjuna and Krishna. He then takes the horse and returns to the palace. When his father returns, he proudly tells of his adventure. But the king, who is a great devotee of Krishna, angrily disowns the boy, driving him away into the forest.

Meanwhile Krishna and Arjuna pick themselves up off the battlefield and plan their revenge. Krishna disguises himself as an old man, and Arjuna as his young son. The old man then runs to the palace shouting that a lion has captured his only son, and begging for the king's help. When the king offers to kill the lion, the old man explains that it is a genie in the shape of a lion; that it cannot be killed, but that it has agreed to release the boy on the condition that the left side of the king's body be brought to it as a sacrifice. The king immediately agrees to sacrifice himself, and calls for his sword. The old man explains that he must be held down by his wife, and that his son must be the one to cut him in half. The king protests that he has no son. The old man persuades him to send his advisors to the forest to bring back the prince. The prince returns, and prepares to cut his father in half. However the old man interrupts and tells them the final condition: no one must shed a single tear. They agree, but as the son raises the sword over his head and is about to let it

fall, a teardrop appears in the king's right eye. Disgusted, the old man calls off the proceedings. But a voice comes out of the sky, explaining that the king's right side is sad, not because the king is going to die, but because only the left side gets to participate in the noble sacrifice. Moved by this evidence of the king's selfless nature, Krishna forgets himself and calls to Arjuna to come and see. Their disguises vanish, and they stand before the king and his family as Krishna and Arjuna.

Immediately the king falls at Krishna's feet and begs his forgiveness for his son's disrespectful deed. But Krishna says that he is not angry with the son. Rather, he arranged the events to show Arjuna, who had become vain and self-satisfied as of late, that there were people in the world both braver in battle (i.e. the prince), and purer in devotion (the king), than he. Krishna compliments the prince on his courage, and Krishna and Arjuna continue on their way.

12) "Two Pious Men"

In a town live a farmer and a merchant. Both are very pious men, who go daily to the shrine of the goddess Amman to worship. One day the goddess decides to reward the two devotees. When the farmer comes, she appears before him and says that she will grant him a wish. There is only one condition: whatever he asks for, the other devotee will receive twice as much. She gives him until 10:00 that night to decide. When the merchant comes, the identical offer is repeated.

The two men go off to ruminate on what to ask for. Neither wants the other to benefit more than he. At the last minute, both run to the shrine. Each

man asks for the same thing: to lose one eye. The goddess grants their wishes and blinds them both.

13) "The Dice Game" (excerpt)

The Pandavars and the Kauravars are cousins. Darma, the eldest of the Pandavars, is the king. Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravars, is jealous of the wealth and good fortune of the Pandavars. In addition, he is resentful because the last time he visited them, he had too much to drink and slipped and fell, causing Draupadi (Darma's wife) to laugh at him.

While he is brooding over these ill-feelings, his uncle Cakuni comes in and proposes a plan by means of which the Kauravars might ruin the Pandavars. The plan is to engage Darma in a game of crooked dice. They construct a pretext and invite the Pandavars to their city. Duryodhana proposes a game of dice. At first Darma refuses, but then he weakens and gives in. Cakuni, a master of cheating, substitutes for Duryodhana in the game. Darma wagers jewels, gold, courtesans, horses and chariots, and his entire elephant army, and loses each time. Finally Cakuni suggests that he wager his kingdom, double or nothing. A heated debate arises among the assembled company [end of excerpt].

Darman is unable to stop himself. He wagers his kingdom and loses. Then he loses his younger brothers. Finally he loses his wife, Draupadi. The Kauravars attempt to rape Draupadi, but miraculously, Lord Krishna comes to her aid, providing her with endless saris, such that she cannot be undressed. Draupadi's honor is saved, but the Pandavars are turned out, penniless.

14) "The Seven Maidens"

In the heavenly abode of the Lord Shiva and his wife, Parvati, a new pleasure garden has been created. Shiva creates an attendant for the garden by fashioning a boy out of the wind (Kāttavarāya Swāmi). When Kāttavarāya Swāmi is in the garden, seven maidens arrive. They admire the beauty of the garden, but speak disparagingly of the lazy attendant, whom they do not see. Kāttavarāya Swāmi hears their slander and decides to get revenge. When the seven sisters undress to bathe in the river, he comes and steals the sari of the youngest maiden, who was the one who spoke most disrespectfully. The maidens emerge and get dressed, all except for the youngest sister, who searches for her sari in vain. She enjoins the others to go on without her to worship Shiva, as they do every day at this time. As soon as they leave, she reenters the water and drowns herself.

Meanwhile, Shiva notices that one of the sisters is missing, and inquires after her. The others relate what happened in the garden. Shiva immediately suspects Kāttavarāya Swāmi, and leaves for the garden in a rage. Parvati, fearing for her "son"'s life, follows after him. Shiva finds Kāttavarāya Swāmi and curses him to burn to ashes at the cremation ground and perish. Parvati issues a counter-curse, that he will burn, but not die. [Thus Kāttavarāya Swāmi survives, and comes to earth to have further adventures in the remainder of the epic].

15) "Rama in the Forest of the Demons"

[Some holy men are conducting ritual worship in the forest, but their activities are constantly interrupted by the demons Tātakai and Marīcan. The leader of

the holy men, Vishvamisra, has enlisted the aid of Rama and his brother Lakshmana, and returns with them now to the forest.] Rama, Lakshmana, and Vishvamisra arrive in Tāṭakai's forest. Tāṭakai approaches, and Rama shoots an arrow at her. The arrow pierces the demoness and flies on, liberating her soul. Vishvamisra sees this and is amazed.

The other holy men approach and lead Rama and Lakshmana to the center of worship. Vishvamisra takes up the worship again, with Rama and Lakshmana standing guard. But Marīcaṇ and other demons arrive and start defiling the ritual altar with garbage and blood. Rama shoots an arrow which splits in two: one half kills one demon, the other half chases Marīcaṇ across the seven oceans, but does not harm him. Vishvamisra, who is omniscient, sees this, and understands that Rama does not kill Marīcaṇ because the demon is to play an important role in later events. Once again, Vishvamisra is amazed, but Rama laughs at his amazement, saying, "This is just play for me".

16) "Bhima's Devotion"

The five Pandavars -- Darma, Arjuna, Nakula, Cakudeva, and Bhima -- live together with their common wife, Draupadi. Darman, the eldest, is the king, and the others serve him. One day while conducting the morning worship, Darma is taken with the idea that the Lord Krishna should come have breakfast with them. Cakudeva volunteers to go and invite him, confident that Krishna will not refuse him anything. Krishna politely refuses, however, saying that he is waiting for an important call. Nakula, and then Arjuna, also go, but with similar results. Draupadi attempts to summon Krishna through prayer, but still

he doesn't come. King Darma will not get up and begin his day unless Krishna agrees to come.

Finally Bhima, who always sleeps late, gets up and is amazed to see Darma still sitting at his prayers. He too offers to call Krishna, but immediately becomes discouraged, convinced that he cannot succeed where his betters have failed. He throws his heavy mace up into the air, praying to Krishna that he might die and be reborn a more pious man. Krishna appears and catches the mace just before it lands on Bhima's head, having been summoned by his humility. They go in to breakfast. Darma is pleased, but the others are jealous.

17) "The Marriage of Rama and Sita"

King Dasaratha is sad because he has no sons. He prays, and a genie appears holding a sweet custard. The genie instructs the king to give the custard to each of his three wives. The wives eat the custard, and give birth to four sons.

The boys receive the best possible education. The eldest son, Rama, excels in everything. One day Vishvamisra, a holy man, comes to the palace and asks Dasaratha for Rama's help in killing some demons. Rama and his brother Lakshmana set off with Vishvamisra, and kill the demons.

Afterwards, Vishvamisra takes them to the kingdom of King Janaka. Janaka is holding a contest: whoever is able to bend and string the great bow in the palace, will receive the hand of his beautiful young daughter Sita in marriage. Kings and princes come from miles around, but none are even able to lift the bow. Rama, however, goes to the bow and lifts it easily. So great is his force, that when he tries to string it, it breaks in his hands. Janaka and the

others in the court are amazed, and arrangements are made for the marriage of Rama and Sita.

18, 19) "The Song of the Ankle Bracelet"

In the town of Pūmpukār, a wedding is arranged between Kovalan, the son of a wealthy merchant, and Kannaki, the daughter of another merchant. The couple lives happily for several years. Then Kovalan falls in love with a court dancer named Madavi, moving in with her and abandoning his wife.

One day, Kovalan and Madavi quarrel, and Kovalan returns to Kannaki, in the meantime having spent their entire fortune. She forgives him, however, and they determine to start a new life. With only Kannaki's two bejeweled ankle bracelets for collateral, they start out for the city of Madurai. They are accompanied on the road by a female ascetic, Kavundi Adikal.

Upon reaching Madurai, Kavundi Adikal entrusts Kannaki into the care of an honest cowherd woman. Kovalan then takes one of the anklets and goes off to try to sell it in town. He locates the royal goldsmith and shows him the anklet. The devious goldsmith sees that Kannaki's anklet is exactly like one he recently stole from the queen. He tells Kovalan to wait, and taking the anklet, goes to the king claiming to have caught the thief who stole the queen's anklet. On orders from the king, Kovalan is killed.

The news reaches Kannaki, who, in a rage, goes to see the king. She proves that the anklet was not the queen's by breaking it open. It contains rubies, whereas the queen's anklet contained pearls. When he sees the rubies, the king realizes that he has committed an injustice, and falls to the ground,

dead. The queen dies beside him. Kannaki rages through the streets of Madurai, calling upon the fire god (Agni). Agni burns the city to the ground.

For fourteen days, Kannaki wanders, senseless with grief, coming finally to a hill near the (present-day) Kerala border. A celestial chariot in which some gods and her husband are seated comes to earth, and carries her up to heaven. Some villagers witness this, and report it to their king. The king's younger brother, who is a poet, is present at the time, and he immortalizes the story as "Cilappatikāram" ("The Song of the Ankle Bracelet").

Appendix D.1. Sample Text (Tamil)

Kiṇarril Viḷunta Katai

1. Nān ciṇṇa vayacā irukkum pōtu,
I small age-Adv be-FAjP time
kittatatta..oru..paṇṇireṇṭu..vayacu **irukkum**,⁶
approx. one 12 age be-F3sg.n
paṇṇireṇṭu vayacu, avvaḷavu tān.
12 age that.much EMPH
2. Anta vayacu irukkum pōtē, eṅka ūr pakkam..rompa varaṭcci **θ**.
that age be-FAjP time-EMPH our town side much drought
3. Varaṭcci nā paṇcam **θ**.
drought say-COND famine
4. Atāvatu makkaḷukku kuṭikkaraṭukku taṇṇi kūṭa ille.
that.is people-DAT drinking-DAT water even NEG
5. Taṇṇiyille, anta mātiri.. oru itu **θ**.
water-NEG that manner one it
6. Appō enna **āyituccu**,
then what happen-PFV-P3sg.n
7. ellā..ellā..ellā ūrle irukkiraṇka,
all all all town-LOC be-PN-Pr3pl.
ellārumē.. aṇka aṇka veliyūrkkū **pōyirraṇka**.
everyone-EMPH they they outside.town-DAT go-PFV-Pr3pl.
8. Atē mātiri nāṇkaḷum veliyūrkkū **pōyittōm**.
that-EMPH manner we-too outside.town-DAT go-PFV-P1pl.

⁶ In this text (and in the English translation which follows), finite predicates are bolded. Underlined sentence numbers indicate finite predicates in the past perfective. Note that the past perfective clauses in this text effectively highlight the core narrative events.

9. Anta veļiyūrle pōyi, koñca nāl añka tañki iruntu
 that outside.town-LOC go-AvP few day there stay-AvP be-AvP
 añke vēle..yārukkāvatu vēle pāttu,
 there work someone-DAT-indef. work do-AvP
vēle pāttukkittē iruntōm.
 work do-CONT-ē-P1pl.
10. Anta ap- avvalavu kaṣṭamā vēle pāttukkittē irukkum pōtu
 that the(n)- that.much difficult work do-CONT-ē-FAjP time
 enna āyiruccu,
 what happen-PFV-P3sg.n
11. kēniyile pōy, tañni etukka pōyiruntēn.
 well-LOC go-AvP water take-INF go-PERF-P1sg.
12. Mēleyiruntu ulle viluntittēn, tavari.
 above-ABL inside fall-PFV-P1sg. slip-AvP
13. Viluntu inta itattile atipattu inta kai oṭiñcu pōccu.
 fall-AvP this place-LOC hit-AvP this arm break-AvP go-P3sg.n
14. Oṭiñcu pōccu,
 break-AvP go-P3sg.n
15. appuram ellārum.. anta ūrle irukkirañka ellārum..
 afterwards everyone that town-LOC be-PN-Pr3pl. everyone
 makkaḷ pūrām vantuttāñka.
 people completely come-PFV-P3pl.
16. Vantuttu nānum kēnikku ullē irukkireñ.
 come-PFV-AvP I-and well-DAT inside be-Pr1sg.
17. Ullē iruntā uṭaṇē appuram reṇtu mūṇu pēru ulle irañki
 inside be-COND immediately afterwards two three people inside descend-AvP
 vantū, enṇe tūkki,
 come-AvP I-ACC lift-AvP
vaccurukkāñka.
 place-PERF-Pr3pl.

18. Rattam ippatiyē **vantukkittē irukkutu**
blood like.this-EMPH come-CONT-ē-Pr3sg.n
19. Ekkacakkamāṇa rattam.
profuse blood
20. Mēle irukkiraṇka ellām collittāṇka,
above be-PN-Pr3pl. all say-PFV-P3pl.
21. "Ivanukku oru kaṇ pōccu," appaṭi **ntāṇka**.
he-DAT one eye go-P3sg.n thus say-PFV-P3pl.
22. Enakku kaṇ nallā **irukkutu**.
I-DAT eye good-Adv be-Pr3sg.n
23. Inka tāṇ **aṭippaṭṭatu**,
here EMPH hit-P3sg.n
24. rattam tāṇ ippaṭi **vantukkittu irukku**.
blood EMPH like.this come-CONT-Pr3sg.n
25. Appa enakku oru payam **vanturuccu**,
then I-DAT one fear come-PFV-P3sg.n
26. "Ayyō namakku oru kaṇ pōccu, ini kaṇ illāma enṇa paṇṇa muṭiyum"
alas we-DAT one eye go-P3sg.n now eye without what do-INF be.ableNP3sg.n
appaṭi nṇu collikittu, enakku āṇā kaṇ teriyutu,
thus QUOT say-SIM-AvP I-DAT but eye see-Pr3sg.n
27. atu ellām onṇum **teriyale**.
that all nothing be.known-NF-NEG
28. Appuram mēl inta mātiri oru kattulle tūkki pōṭṭu katti,
then above this manner one cot-LOC lift-AvP put-AvP tie-AvP
mēle **tūkkittāṇka**.
above lift-PFV-P3pl.
29. Tūkki, appuram enṇā ēṇkaṇavē rompa kaṣṭam **θ**.
lift-AvP then what already much difficulty
30. Enṇā, pōy āṇke pōy vēlai pāttukkittu tāṇ **cāppittukittu irukkirōm**.
because go-AvP there go-AvP work do-CONT-AvP EMPH eat-CONT-Pr1pl.

31. Appaṭi irukkiratule enakku **vaittiyaṁ paṇṇaṇuṁ**.
like.that being-LOC I-DAT treatment do-be.necessary
32. Inta vaittiyaṁ paṇṇaratukku eṅka paṇam **pōratu?**
this treatment doing-DAT where money go-Pr-3sg.n
33. Atanāle rompa rompa kaṣṭam **āyiruccu**.
therefore much much difficulty become-PFV-P3sg.n
34. Appuraṁ oru..nāṭtu vaittiyaṁ paṇṇa /.../ ppla.
then one country treatment do-PrAjP /.../ like
35. Atanāl rompa vele koraccu.
therefore much price reduce-AvP
36. Neraiyā paṇam ellām **ille**.
alot money all NEG
37. Cummā koṇcam-- pattu rūpā..
just a.little 10 rupee
38. Pattu rūpā kūṭa avaṅkalukku pattu rūpā **kitaiyātu**.
10 rupee even they-DAT 10 rupee be.available-NP-NEG
39. Inta eṇṇey vāṅkaratukku.
this oil buying-DAT
itukku maṭṭum oru pattu rūpā celav- **ākuṁ**.
this-DAT only one 10 rupee expense-become-F3s.n
40. Appuraṁ nāṅka pōratukku varratukku celavukku..
then we going-DAT coming-DAT expense-DAT
oru pattu irupatu rūpā celav- **āyiruntuccu**, appō.
one 10 20 rupee expense-become-PERF-P3sg.n then
41. Avvaḷavu tāṇ, inta kai oṭiṇcatukku.
that.much EMPH this arm breaking-DAT
42. In- inta itukku ellāttukkum cēttu mottamē.
th- this it-DAT everything-DAT join-AvP sum-EMPH
43. Ānā atu rompa kaṣṭamāṇa vaittiyaṁ.
but that very difficult treatment

44. Taiyal **pōttānka** itukku..
stitching put-P3pl. this-DAT
45. Taiyal **pōttānka nṇā** inke āspitiriyile taiyal **pōturānka nṇā**.
stitching put-P3pl say-COND here hospital-LOC stitching put-Pr3pl. say-COND
oru incekṣan pōttu.
one injection put-AvP
avaṇkaḷukku itu āna pinṇāti **pōtuvānka**.
they-DAT this but later put-F3pl.
46. Avaṇka appaṭi **kiṭaiyātu**. taiyal pōtaratu.
they like.that be.available-NP-NEG stitching putting
47. Avaru taiyal pōtaravaru ittanai **periya uruvam**.
he-resp. stitching put-PN-Pr3resp this.much big form
48. Ippaṭi mīṣai **θ**.
like.this moustache
49. **Kammāvaru nāyakkaru** avaru.
Kammavar Nayar he-resp
50. Jātiyile.
caste-LOC
51. Mīṣai muṭiyellām kuṭumi ellām **vaccuruppāru**.
moustache hair-all topknot all keep-PERF-F3resp
52. **Appaṭi paṭṭavaru** avaru.
like.that experience-PN-P3resp. he-resp
53. Avare pāttāle **payamā irukkum**.
he-ACC see-COND-EMPH fear-Adv be-F3sg.n
54. Pūtam mātiri **irukkum**.
genie manner be-F3sg.n
(S.H.: (laugh))
55. Appa enṇa vantū, enakku mutalle inta kaiya. ippaṭi nallā itu paṇṇi,
then what TOP I-DAT first this arm like.this good-Adv this do-AvP
ippaṭi oru kucci, ippaṭi oru kucci, nālu kucci vaccu **kattittānka**.

- like.this one stick like.this one stick four stick place-AvP tie-PFV-P3pl.
56. Ippaṭi katti, itule iruntu ippaṭi.ippaṭi pōṭṭu ippaṭi ippaṭi vittuttāṅka.
like.this tie-AvP this-ABL thus thus put-AvP thus thus leave-PFV-P3pl.
57. Vittutta utaṇē.. appa enakku oru mayakkam mātiri vanturuccu.
leave-PFV-PAjP as.soon.as then I-DAT one dizziness like come-PFV-P3sg.n
58. "Appaṭiyē koṇca nēram paṭuttirukkalām" appaṭi nṇu colli.
like.that-EMPH a.little time lie.down-PERF-POSS thus QUOT say-AvP
paṭuttiruntē.
lie.down-PERF-P1sg.
59. Appō anta..anta..vaṭṭiyaru colrāru.
Then that that doctor say-Pr3resp.
60. En kūṭa vantavaṅka kitta, "Paiyaṇ ippa nalla tūṅkuṛāṇ.
I-OBL with come-PN-P3pl. LOC boy now good sleep-Pr3sg.masc.
Ataṇale, oru ūciyum, oru nūlum, kṭaiyile pōy vāṅkiṭṭu vāṅka.
therefore one needle-and one thread-and store-LOC go-AvP buy-AvP come-IMP
Mūṭṭuvōm, tūṅkum pōtē" appaṭi nṇāpla.
stitch-PFV-F1pl. sleep-FAjP time-EMPH thus say-P-like
61. Nāṇ ṭapāl nu entiruccittē.
I 'sproing' QUOT sit.up-PFV-P1sg.
(V.R. and S.H.: (laugh))
62. Entiruccatum, "Enṇatā entiruccitte" appaṭi nṇāpla.
sit.up-PAjP-and what.boy sit.up-PFV-P2sg. thus say-P-like
63. "Ille cummā onṇumille. Cummā entiruccittē" appaṭi nṇē.
no just one.NEG just sit.up-PFV-P1sg. thus say-PFV-P1sg.
64. "Cari" nṇu atukkulle ūci nūl ellām vāṅkiṭṭu vantuttāṅka.
ok QUOT that-DAT-inside needle thread all buy-AvP come-PFV-P3pl.
65. Vāṅkiṭṭu vantu nāṇ ippaṭi utkārntirukkireṇ.
buy-AvP come-AvP I like.this sit-PERF-Pr1sg.
66. Anta periyavar pakkattile..inta ūciya koṇṭukittu
that big.man side-LOC this needle-ACC hold-SIM-AvP

- ippaṭiyē **vantāru**.. pakkattile nēre.
like.this come-P3resp side-LOC straight
67. "Enṇaṅka ūci" **nnēn**.
what-POL needle say-P1sg.
68. "Itu..taikkaṇum" appaṭi **nnāpla**.
this stitch-be.necessary thus say-P-like
69. "Ayyayyō vēṇām.
oh.no be.wanted-NEG
Inta periya ūcile vaccu ippaṭi taccāṅka **nnā** eppaṭi.."
this big needle-LOC place-AvP like.this stitch-P3pl say-COND how
70. "Atellām valikkātu, onnum paṇṇātu,
that-all hurt-NP-NEG nothing do-NP-NEG
nāṇ mantiram pōṭurēṇ" appaṭi **nnāpla**.
I magic.spell cast-Pr1sg. thus say-P-like
(S.H.: (laugh))
71. "Ille man- enakku taikkavē vēṇām" appaṭi **nnēn**.
no spel- I-DAT stitch-EMPH be.wanted-NEG thus say-P1sg.
72. "Tēy unakku taikkale **nnā** nī cettu pōyiruve" appaṭi **nnāpla**.
hey you-DAT stitch-NEG say-COND you die-AvP go-PFV-F2sg. thus say-PFV-P-like
73. "Cettu pōṇālum paravāyille,
die-AvP go-COND-and doesn't.matter
nāṇ uyirōṭa itu enakku vēṇām" appaṭi **ntēn**.
I life-with this I-DAT be.wanted.NEG thus say-PFV-P1sg.
74. Erkaṇavē enakku vali **ō**.
already I-DAT pain
75. Kālaiyile **tān** **viluntirukkireṇ**.
morning-LOC EMPH fall-PERF-Pr1sg.
76. Matiyāṇam inta vēlai ivvaḷavu vaittiyam **paṇṇāṅka**.
afternoon this work this.much treatment do-Pr3pl.

77. *Inta kaiyellām eṭuttu vaccu kaṭṭum pōtu*
 this arm-all take-AvP place-AvP tie-PAjP time
oṭuccu kituccu payaṅkara..vēṭaṇaiyile tuṭikkirēn.
 break-AvP (redup) terrible pain-LOC throb-Pr1sg.
78. *Attōṭa inta vēṭaṇai vēra 0.*
 that-with this pain else
79. *Inni itule ūci vaccu kuttuṇāṅka nṇā,*
 now this-LOC needle place-AvP stick-P3pl. say-COND
evvaḷavu vēṭaṇai irukkum.
 how.much suffering be-F3sg.n
80. *En- "Nā paravā- cettu pōṇālum paravāyillaṅka,*
 wha- I doesn't.ma- die-AvP go-COND-and doesn't.matter-POL
eṇakku vēṇām" appaṭi nṭēn.
 I-DAT be.wanted-NEG thus say-PFV-P1sg.
81. *"Atellām mutiyātuppā,*
 that-all be.able-NP-NEG-son
nī iru, uṇakku mantiram pōṭurēn" nu colli,
 you be-IMP you-DAT magic.spell cast-Pr1sg QUOT say-AvP
inta vēppa kiḷai ate vaccu,
 this neem branch that-ACC place-AvP
ippaṭi ippaṭi nṇu mantiram pōṭṭāṅka.
 thus thus QUOT magic.spell cast-P3pl.
82. *Mantiram pōṭṭālum eṅka mantiram valiya.. ippa tāṅkaḷe.*
 magic.spell cast-COND-and where spell pain-ACC now bear-NF-NEG
83. *Appuṇam..enna nṭāṅka "Cari ivane.. conṇā kēṭka māṭṭān."*
 then what say-PFV-P3pl. ok he-ACC say-COND listen-F-NEG-3sg.masc.
84. *Appaṭinatum.. "Reṇṭu pēru putiṅka" appaṭinatum,*
 thus say-as.soon.as two people grasp-IMP thus-say-as.soon.as
inta kaiya puticcu, ippaṭi tīruki... ippaṭi...ippaṭi...vaccu,
 this arm-ACC grasp-AvP like.this twist-AvP thus thus place-AvP

- itule oru āl ēri.. **ninnukkittāppla..** en kaiyile.
 this-LOC one man rise-AvP stand-AvP-hold-P-like my arm-LOC
85. **Ninnatum** ippaṭi alukki **puticcittāṅka.**
 stand-PAjP-and like this press-AvP grasp-PFV-P3pl.
86. Inta kai tān onnumē panna **mutiyātē.**
 this arm EMPH nothing-EMPH do-INF be.able-NP-NEG-EMPH
87. Ittu ippaṭi tonkittu oṭiṅca kai..itule iruntu **oṭiṅcu pōccu.**
 this like this hang-SIM-AvP break-PAjP arm this-ABL break-AvP go-P3sg.n
88. Ippaṭi **tonkinu irukkutu.**
 like.this hang-CONT-Pr3sg.n
89. Inkittu oru āl puticcu alukkittu
 here-LOC one man grasp-AvP press-AvP
 ippaṭi mutiyai **puticcukkittāṅka.**
 like.this hair-ACC grasp-AvP-hold-P3pl.
90. Ivar...inta periyavar pakkattile ippaṭi **munṇāti vantatum.**
 he this big.man side-LOC like.this in.front come-as soon as
 anta ūciya **koṇṭuvantatum.. appaṭi nṇā,**
 that needle-ACC bring-as soon as thus say-COND
 "Ayyayyō" **nṇu katti 0.**
 oh.no QUOT yell
91. Appuram **mūttittāru.**
 then stitch-PFV-P3resp.
92. **Nṇā** ippaṭi ippaṭi..
 say-COND thus thus
 inta **mūttirukkāṅka.**
 this stitch-PERF-Pr3pl.
93. Intā kōtu kōtā **irukkum.**
 here line line-Adv be-F3sg.n
94. **Mūtti** vittuttu. appuram **enna āyiruccu,**
 stitch-AvP let-PFV-AvP then what happen-PFV-P3sg n

95. "Cari in̄ni cariyāyirum.

ok now ok-become-PFV-F3sg.n

Nīnka in̄ni pōkalām." appaṭi n̄tāru.

you-pl. now go-PERM thus say-PFV-P3resp.

96. Appuram mēl.. oru oru mācam vāḷkkaiyile. tānka mutiyāta kaṣṭam θ.

then moreover one one month life-LOC bear-INF be.able-NEGAjP difficulty

97. Tānka mutiyāta vēṭanai θ.

bear-INF be.able-NEGAjP suffering

98. Āspīṭal n̄nā mātṭirai cāppiturōm, itu cāppiturōm.

hospital say-COND pill eat-Pr1pl. this eat-Pr1pl.

99. itukku mātṭiraiyē illai, oṇṇum ille.

this-DAT pill-EMPH NEG nothing NEG

100. Vēra. en̄namō muttai /.../ ūttaṇum, itukku.

also something-indef. egg /.../ pour-be.necessary this-DAT

101. Inta. pun̄ṇukku cātārana paccai ilai. mūlikai ilai. colliruppānka.

this wound-DAT ordinary green leaf medicinal.plant leaf say-PERF-F3pl.

102. anta ilaikalai tān vān̄ki vān̄ki vaikkaṇum.

that leaf-pl.-ACC EMPH buy-AvP buy-AvP place-be.necessary

103. Atukkullē oru mācattile cariyāyiruccu.

that-DAT-within one month-LOC ok-become-PFV-P3sg.n

105. Ate eppōtum marakkavē mutiyātu.

that-ACC never forget-INF-EMPH be.able-NP-NEG

106. Avvaḷavu kaṣṭappattatai anta vēṭanai tuṭippu.. atai.

that.much hardship-ACC that pain throbbing that-ACC

Appendix D.2. Sample Text (English Translation)

Falling in the Well⁷

1. When I was little,
I **must've been** about, oh, 12 years old,
only 12 years old.
2. When I was that age, around our town, (there was) a bad drought.
3. Drought means famine.
4. That is, people **didn't even have** water for drinking.
5. (There was) no water, that kind of thing.
6. So what **happened** was,
7. all.. all the people in the town
everyone.. they all eventually **leave** for other towns.
8. In the same way, we **left** for another town, too.
9. We went to that other town, stayed there for a while,
and work- we worked for someone or the other,
we were working.
10. The(n)- when we were doing this really hard work,
what **happened** was,
11. Having gone to the well, I **went** to the well to get water.
12. I **fell** in from above; I slipped.
13. I fell and hit here and **broke** this arm.
14. It **broke**,
15. then everyone.. all the people in the town..
all the people **came**.
16. They came, and I'm inside the well.

⁷ The narrator of this story is a 31-year-old male who, until the age of 28, had lived his entire life in an isolated hilly region near the Tamil Nadu - Kerala border. The story was related at the apartment of some friends of mine, who were also friendly with the narrator.

17. When I'm inside, immediately two or three people came climbing down,
picked me up,
and **placed** me (on the ground?).
18. Blood's **coming down** like this.
19. Really profuse blood.
20. The ones up above all **said**,
21. "He lost an eye", they **said**.
22. My eye **is** fine.
23. It **hit** right here.
24. The blood's just **coming down** like this.
25. So then I **got scared**.
26. "Oh no, I lost an eye. What am I going to do without an eye from now on?"
I was thinking, but I **can see** with the eye.
27. I **didn't realize** that.
28. After that, they lifted down a cot, tied me on it, and **lifted me up**.
29. They lifted me up, and then.. I mean, already (things were) really hard.
30. Because we went there, and we're working and **just scraping by**.
31. In the midst of all that, they **have to** get treatment for me.
32. Where's the treatment money **going** to come from?
33. So it **was** really really hard.
34. Then it seems (they found someone) who practiced country medicine.
35. So the price (was) really low.
36. Not much money at all.
37. Just a little.. 10 rupees.
38. Even 10 rupees, they **don't have** 10 rupees.
39. To buy (cooking) oil,
just for that it **comes to** 10 rupees.
40. Then the expenses for all our comings and goings
came to around 10 or 20 rupees, at the time.
41. That's all, for the broken arm.

42. The- for everything added together.
43. But it (was) a really painful treatment.
44. They **stitched** this **up**.
45. When they stitched, here in a hospital if they stitch (someone) up,
they give (him) a shot,
and don't **put** (the stitches) in 'til afterwards.
46. They (the country doctors) don't have that, (for) putting in stitches.
47. The guy who's putting in the stitches (is) a really big guy.
48. (He has) a moustache like this.
49. He('s) a Kammavar Nayar.
50. In caste.
51. He **wears** a moustache and his hair all up in a topknot.
52. He('s) that kind of a person.
53. It's **scary** even to look at him.
54. He's like a genie.
- (S.H.: (laugh))
55. So um, first they did this to my arm,
they put one stick like this, one stick like this, they **bound** it **up** with four sticks.
56. They bound it, and then **let** it (hang) from here like this.
57. They let it hang, and then.. suddenly I **felt** kinda dizzy.
58. "I think I'll just lie down for a while" I said,
and **laid** down.
59. Then the doctor **said**.
60. To the people who'd come with me, "The boy's sleeping soundly now.
So go to the store and buy a needle and some thread.
We'll stitich him up, while he's sleeping", he **said**.
61. I **sat** bolt **upright**.
- (V.R. and S.H.: (laugh))
62. As soon as I sat up, the doctor **said**, "What is it, son, (why did) you sit up?"
63. "No, nothing. I just sat up" I **said**.

64. "Okay" he said, in the meantime they **came** back with the needle and thread.
65. They came back and I'm **sitting** there like this.
66. The doctor comes up nex- he comes up right next to me like this holding the needle.
67. "What's this needle?" I **said**.
68. "I have to stitich it" he **said**.
69. "O--h no, I don't want that.
If you put it (the thread) in that big needle and stitch with it like that, how on earth--"
70. "It won't hurt, it won't do anything.
I'll cast a magic spell" he **said**.
(S.H.: (laugh))
71. "No, spel- I don't want any stitches" I **said**
72. "Listen, if we don't stitch you up you'll die" he **said**.
73. "I don't care if I die,
I don't want this as long as I live" I **said**.
74. I (was) already in pain.
75. I **fell** in the morning.
76. In the afternoon, they're **doing** all this work all this treatment.
77. When they were binding up my arm,
setting it and everything I'm **suffering** this terrible throbbing pain.
78. Now this pain in addition.
79. If they stick the needle in there now it'll really **hurt**.
80. "Wh- if I die it's okay,
I don't want it", I **said**
81. "I can't do that, son;
you wait, I'll cast a magic spell for you" he said,
took a neem branch,
and **cast** a spell like this.
82. Even though he cast a spell, what, I couldn't even stand the pain of the spell.

83. Then what he **said** was, "Okay, he just won't listen."
84. As soon as he said that, "The two of you grab him" he said,
and a man grabbed my arm, twisted it and held it like this,
and climbed up and **stood** on it, on my arm.
85. He stood on it and **held** me down.
86. This (other) arm **can't** do anything.
87. It's **hanging** like this the broken arm... it **broke** from here.
88. It's **hanging** like this.
89. A man **held** me down here and **held** onto my hair like this.
90. As soon as the doctor came up close in front of me,
when he brought over the needle,
I yelled "O--h no!" (lit. "O--h no!" a yell.)
91. Then he **stitched** me up.
92. Like this..
it's **stitched** here.
93. See, there's all these lines here.
94. He stitched me and let me go, and then what **happened** was,
95. "Okay, it'll be fine now.
You can go home," he **said**.
96. Even after that, for a month (I had) unbearable pain in my life.
97. Unbearable suffering.
98. In the hospital we **take** pills, we **take** stuff,
99. there's no pills for this, nothing.
100. We also **have to pour** egg or something /.../ on it.
101. For the wound, they tell us (to use) ordinary green leaves... medicinal leaves,
102. we **have to** keep buying those leaves and **put** them on it.
103. In the meantime, in a month it **healed up**.
105. I'll **never** forget that.
106. So much suffering, the pain, the throbbing.. all that.

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