

A Cross-linguistic Analysis of Implicative Verbs

Implicative verbs is a category of presupposition triggers that entail the truth of their complement while carrying presuppositions regarding conditions on the context of utterance (Karttunen 1971). While this has been mostly studied in English, there is insufficient work on such inferences in other languages (Holvoet, Sprauiniené, & Laugaliené, 2019). Moreover, there is no consensus on the implicative behaviour of verbs like *remember* and *manage* even in English (Bagalini & Francez, 2016; White, 2019; Nadathur, 2023). In this study, we will examine implicative verbs and their inferential profile in Tamil, English, starting with the verbs *remember*, *manage*, *forget* and *fail* as case studies to determine whether their lexical semantics generate parallel inferences and contextual constraints (cf. Levinson & Annamalai, 1992). For example, we have observed that affirmative assertions involving *remember* in English generally commit the speaker to the truth of the complement. (1) entails (1a), whereas in Tamil (2) this is not the case, there is no implication of the truth of complement. On the other hand, (1) presupposes that the subject of the main clause was under some obligation or constraint to lock the door which also holds in Tamil (see example sentences). Additionally, as shown by de Marneffe et al (2019) among others, the processing of such verbs and the commitments they engender are highly dependent on the conversational context. For this reason, such dependencies might vary cross-linguistically.

In this ongoing study we use a judgement task to test the inferential profile of the verbs *remember*, *manage*, *forget* and *fail* in English and Tamil. We will recruit 50 native English speakers and 50 native Tamil speakers between the ages of 18 to 60 as participants. The native speakers of each language are presented with biclausal sentences involving the verb which is followed by a polar question (e.g., 'Did she lock the door?' in reference to example (1)) and they are asked to select an appropriate response with 'yes', 'maybe', and 'no' as the options. We use two non-implicative verbs (*hope* and *want*) in the filler trials. The collected responses and response times are statistically analyzed in relation to the verbs and the language group (English, Tamil). A preliminary analysis of existing data shows that native Tamil speakers do not infer the truth of the complement of the verb *remember* as in English. The data will be analyzed further to investigate any variation in responses in relation to proficiency and bilingual experience. The resulting analysis will contribute to a cross-linguistic account of implicative entailment.

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Example sentences:

(1) She remembered to lock the door

(1a) She locked the door

(2) Aval-ukku kadhav-ai poot-a ninavu-vandha-dhu
she-DAT door-ACC lock-INF memory-come-3.SG.PST.N
She remembered to lock the door