Malayalam *taan*: Investigating a fake indexical

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**Introduction** Jayaseelan (1997) a.o. has described the Malayalam anti-local form *taan* ‘self’ as a subject oriented, bound variable that requires a 3rd person antecedent. In this talk, we provide new data from the first
systematic exploration of a second reading *taan* can have, namely an addressee (ADR) reading. We provide a
detailed description of the syntactic and semantic conditions under which 3rd person and ADR readings occur,
and argue for a unified account of these readings (contra Asher & Kumari 1997). We argue that *taan* is a
variety of a fake indexical (Kratzer 2009). In addition, we provide novel data that suggest the Blocking Effects
described in the literature are more intricate than previously noticed. Building on recent revisions of binding
theory (Rooryck & Vanden Wyngaerd 2011, Reuland 2011), we propose a system in which binding always
involves local Agreement. However, contra such accounts we argue that the local form involved in agreement
cannot be its antecedent.

**The Puzzle** Following the description of *taan* given in Jayaseelan (1997), (1) is predicted to be ungrammatical,
as there is no potential antecedent that is 3rd person, anti-local, a subject and utterance internal. However, the
sentences in (1) are grammatical on one reading, namely when *taan* refers to the ADR of the utterance context.

\[(1)\]

a. Naan\(_i\) [parannu Raman\(_j\)-indu Aditi\(_k\) tan-\(v^j/\)k\(\rightarrow m/\)ADR-ne nulli ennu.] I said Raman-soc Aditi self-acc pinched comp

‘I said to Raman that Aditi pinched [*me, *him, *herself, you].’

b. Aditi\(_i\) tan\(v^j/\)ADR-ne nulli.

Aditi self-acc pinched

‘Aditi pinched [*herself, you].’

In (2), *Aditi* is predicted to be the only possible antecedent for *taan*, as it is the only potential antecedent that is
utterance internal, a subject and non-local. However, while *Aditi* is a possible antecedent, it is not the only one.
We observe that *taan* can receive an ADR reading when it has constrastive prosody.

\[(2)\]

Aditi\(_i\) [parannu Raman\(_j\)-indu Suman\(_k\) tan-\(v^j/\)k\(\rightarrow m/\)ADR-ne nulli ennu.] Aditi said Raman-soc Suman self-acc pinched comp

‘Aditi\(_i\) said to Raman\(_j\) that Suman\(_k\) pinched [her, him, *me, *you]’

When a 1st/2nd person pronoun intervenes between a potential 3rd person antecedent and *taan*, the sentence
has been reported to be ungrammatical (the so-called Blocking Effects). However, while the potential 3rd
person antecedent is no longer available in such sentences, those with 1st person interveners are not in fact
ungrammatical. Again, there is one grammatical reading for *taan*: ADR, (3-a). As expected, the ADR reading
is not available with 2nd person interveners. An ADR reading in (3-b) would result in local binding and *taan*
does allow local binding.

\[(3)\]

a. Aditi\(_i\) [parannu Raman\(_j\)-indu naan\(_k\) tan-\(v^j/\)k\(\rightarrow m/\)ADR-ne nulli ennu.] Aditi said Raman-soc I self-acc pinched comp

‘Aditi\(_i\) said to Raman\(_j\) that I pinched [*her, *him, *me, *you]’

b. Aditi\(_i\) [parannu Raman\(_j\)-indu ni\(_k\) tan-\(v^j/\)k\(\rightarrow m/\)ADR-ne nulli ennu.] Aditi said Raman-soc you self-acc pinched comp

‘Aditi\(_i\) said to Raman\(_j\) that you pinched [*her, *him, *me, *you]’

Example (4) shows a tri-clausal sentence with a 1st person interveners. In parallel with (3-a), this 1st person
intervener is expected to block the matrix subject from being an antecedent for *taan* and leave the ADR reading
as the only possibility. However, we see in (4) that both the matrix subject and the ADR reading are available.
Again, the ADR reading has constrastive prosody.

\[(4)\]

Aditi\(_i\) [wicariccu naan\(_k\) parannu Raman\(_j\)-indu Suman\(_m\) tan-\(v^j/\)k\(\rightarrow m/\)ADR-ne nulli ennu.] Aditi thought I said Raman-soc Suman self-acc pinched comp

‘Aditi\(_i\) thought that I said to Raman\(_j\) that Suman\(_m\) pinched [her, *me, *him, *you]’

**Proposal** Our proposal is built upon two basic assumptions. First, we assume that *taan* starts out with an
optional [logophor]-feature and a [person]-feature that is [+participant, -author] (following Nevins (2007), we
assume that the [person]-feature is made up of a participant (part) feature, and an author (auth) feature). The presence of 2nd person readings and the impossibility of 1st person readings in (1-4) supports the idea that *taan* is lexically [+part, -auth]. If *taan* carries a [log] features, then we assume that an abstraction operator, OP-LOG, must bind *taan* (cf. Chierchia 1989 and Anand 2006) and delete *taan*’s features (cf von Stechow 2003). Secondly, whether *taan* has a 3rd person or ADR reading is determined by a local agreement process between OP-LOG and the nearest subject nominal.

Binding process Following Chierchia (1989) and Anand (2006), we assume that elements with a [log] feature must be bound by an abstraction operator, OP-LOG, located at the CP-level. Since *taan* can never have a 1st person reading, we assume the OP-LOG enters the derivation with the features [α participant, -auth]. In order for *taan* to be bound, the specified features of OP-LOG and *taan* must agree. Since both are [-auth], agreement takes place and the OP-LOG semantically binds *taan*. As such *taan*’s features are deleted via Feature Deletion Under Binding (von Stechow 2003). Crucially, deletion of *taan*’s features happens before the OP-LOG’s [part] feature is valued.

Agreement process Once the OP-LOG has bound *taan* and deletion of *taan*’s features has occurred, OP-LOG’s [part] feature must be valued. Under our account, the OP-LOG will inherit its [part] feature via local agreement with the nearest subject nominal. Then, the final antecedent will be decided via the perspectival CENTER component located just above OP-LOG in the tree. The CENTER contains all salient antecedents which hold a perspective towards the events reported. Any such event can be the antecedent of *taan* as long as its features match the features of the fully specified OP-LOG.

Example derivations First, consider the 3rd person readings available in cases like (2) or (4). The OP-LOG will bind *taan* since both are [-auth]. Then *taan*’s features will be deleted. Then the OP-LOG will have its [part] feature valued by the nearest subject, the 3rd person, *Suman*. As a result, the OP-LOG will have the following feature matrix: [-part, -auth]. Then, any entity in the CENTER that has 3rd person features can be the antecedent of *taan*. This explains why the matrix subject is available in both cases. Since the local subject, *Suman*, and the indirect object, *Raman*, do not hold a perspective towards the situation, they are not in the CENTER and cannot be possible antecedents of *taan*. In the case of (3), the OP-LOG will be valued as [+part] by nearest subject nominal, the 1st person pronoun in (3-a) and the 2nd person pronoun in (3-b). This will result in the OP-LOG being valued as [+part, -auth]. Thus, the only expected reading is the ADR one. This is the result in (3-a). In (3-b), this reading is eliminated based on the independent fact that *taan* cannot be bound locally, resulting in an ungrammatical sentence. Thus the Blocking Effects data falls out as a natural result of our analysis. In the cases of default ADR readings, as in (1), the OP-LOG will be valued as [-part] by the nearest subject nominal, *Aditi*. The resulting OP-LOG will be [-part, -auth]. However, since there is no 3rd person entity in the CENTER, the OP-LOG/CENTER will simply be deleted and *taan* will be interpreted as a regular 2nd person indexical. In the case of the additional ADR reading in (2) and (4), the contrastive prosody signals the deletion of the OP-LOG/CENTER and the purely indexical interpretation of *taan*.

Implications Under our analysis, uses of *taan* are instances of fake-indexicals (Kratzer 2009). Our system is novel in that the form that values OP-LOG’s [part]-feature is not *taan*’s antecedent. Using this system, we show that the Blocking Effects are not uniformly caused by 1st/2nd person subjects; rather, they only occur when they are the nearest subject nominal to the OP-LOG. With minor modifications, our proposal can account for long-distance forms like *taan* across languages. For example, Mandarin *ziji* parallels *taan* in also being an obligatory bound variable (Cole et al. 2006) and allowing a default discourse reading (Anand 2006, Pollard & Xue 2001).