
Malayalam Epistemic Indefinites

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Malayalam has two classes of epistemic indefinites (EIs). One is formed with the particle \bar{o} . These have both specific unknown (**SU**) and epistemic unknown (**epiU**) functions as defined by Aloni and Port (2015). The other class is formed using the particle **eñkilum**. These are non-specific indefinites that behave as EIs when under epistemic modals; i.e. they have an **epiU** function. \bar{o} -indefinites are infelicitous when definite description is available, and context-dependent if only other methods of identification are available. Malayalam has no definite article, with definiteness arising "from the context" (Asher and Kumari, 1997, p.253). **-eñkilum--**indefinites are mostly restricted to scenarios where no method of identification is available.

The felicity conditions of \bar{o} -indefinites can be analysed as a conceptual cover shift under Aloni and Port (2015). However, **-eñkilum-**indefinites are more difficult. Tentatively, using Aloni and Port (2015), this could be a case of so-called Modal Variation under epistemic modals and Deontic Free Choice elsewhere, but this is problematic. Neither class seems to fit perfectly into the EI typology proposed by Slade (2015)

With respect to specificity, surprising readings can arise. The expected interpretation of (1) would have the general form $\exists x...B_m....$. But there is another reading: Manoj does not believe that Sabina has married a doctor and does not believe that any contextually relevant doctor exists. This would look like $\neg B_m \exists x...$, unexpected for a specific EI.

- (1) *sabīna ēt-ō ḍōktar-ine keṭṭi ennu manōj viśvasikk-unn-illa.*
Sabina which-ō doctor.ACC wed.PAST QP Manoj believe-PRES-NEG.
'Manoj does not believe that Sabina married some doctor.'

References: • Aloni, M. and Port, A. (2015). Epistemic indefinites and methods of identification. In: L. Alonso-Ovalle and P. Menéndez-Benito, ed., *Epistemic Indefinites: Exploring Modality Beyond the Verbal Domain*. OUP. pp.117-140. • Asher and Kumari. (1997): *Malayalam*. Routledge • Slade, B. (2015) Sinhala epistemic indefinites with a certain je ne sais quoi. In: Alonso-Ovalle and and Menéndez-Benito, pp.82-99.