

# Allocutive agreement in depth

Clause-Peripheral Agreements: Allocutivity,  
Complementizer Agreement and the Theory of Agree, Meeting 2  
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## 1 Introduction

Here's our plan for today:

- We'll start with a closer look at what allocutive agreement is, reviewing basic data on the phenomenon from Basque and Japanese, with comparative points.
- Then we'll investigate how it works in Tamil in some detail, making the case that what we have really in AllAgr in the sense we're defining it here.
- And then we'll get a look at some interesting oddities of the patterns in Tamil that will play a role going forward.

## 2 Comparative Background

AllAgr has been identified in a handful of languages and is characterized by the following properties (see [Antonov, 2015](#), for an initial typological overview):

- It marks properties (number, gender, politeness...) of the addressee of the current speech context.
- It is crucially not limited to cases where the addressee is a thematic argument of the local predicate.
- It involves the use of grammaticalized morphological markers in the verbal or clausal inflectional system, thus is distinct from special vocative forms like English *ma'am* or *sir*.

The most extensively discussed example of AllAgr comes from Basque ([Bonaparte, 1862](#); [Oyharçabal, 1993](#); [Alcázar and Saltarelli, 2014](#)).

- Here, the use of AllAgr depends, in dialect-specific ways, on politeness and the number of the addressee, with the specific form reflecting the gender of the addressee.
- In Standard Basque, the agreement only crops up when the speaker and addressee would use the highly familiar form of address, and then only when the addressee is singular.

The Souletin Basque examples in (1) from [Antonov \(2015\)](#) illustrate the phenomenon:

- (1) a. etʃe-a      banu  
           house-ALL 1.SG.go  
           ‘I am going to the house.’  
 b. etʃe-a      banu-k  
           house-ALL 1.SG.go-ALLOC:M  
           ‘I am going to the house.’ (fam. male addr.)  
 c. etʃe-a      banu-n  
           house-ALL 1.SG.go-ALLOC:F  
           ‘I am going to the house.’ (fam. fem. addr.)  
 d. etʃe-a      banu-sy  
           house-ALL 1.SG.go-ALLOC:RSP  
           ‘I am going to the house.’ (resp. addr.)

- (1a) gives the baseline, where the verb only shows 1.SG agreement with the subject.
- The remaining examples add allocutive suffixes to this verb form cross-referencing the addressee.
- These suffixes indicate information about the addressee independent of it being an argument.
- Furthermore, they are fully grammaticalized verbal inflection forms, appearing in the normal position for agreement in the language.
- Indeed they involve (nearly) the same forms as those used to agree with a 2nd person ergative argument (see [Antonov, 2015](#), p. 66f. for discussion of the forms).

There are some additional interesting properties of Basque AllAgr that should be noted here.

- ☞ AllAgr is banned when there is a second person argument, which will be coindexed with the appropriate 2nd person ArgAgr.
- ☞ When the conditions for it are met, AllAgr is obligatory.
- ☞ AllAgr is restricted to *root* declaratives, i.e. no embedded clauses, no questions, imperatives.

[Miyagawa \(2017\)](#) has argued that the kind of politeness marking found in Japanese examples like (2) should also be analyzed as a type of AllAgr.

- (2) a. Watasi-wa piza-o      tabe-mas-u.  
           I-TOP      pizza-ACC eat-ALLOC-PRS  
           ‘I will eat pizza.’ (formal)

- b. Watasi-wa pizza-o tabe-ru.  
 I-TOP pizza-ACC eat-PRS  
 ‘I will eat pizza.’ (colloquial)

- Here again, the marker gives information about the addressee, and it is a clearly grammaticalized part of the verbal inflectional system.
- What makes the case here a bit less obvious is that Japanese doesn’t have straightforward argument agreement for more familiar  $\phi$  features like person, number and gender.
- However, [Miyagawa \(2017\)](#) makes a virtue of this, proposing that if  $\phi$  features are universal they should show up **somewhere** in every language.
- Japanese just deploys them in a somewhat different position than languages with ArgAgr.

AllAgr patterns have also been reported for:

- Pumé (isolate; Venezuela), Nambikware (isolate; Brazil), Mandan (Siouan; North America) and Beja (Cushitic; Northeast Africa) (see [Antonov, 2015](#)).
- Magahi (Indo-Aryan; India, [Baker and Alok, 2017](#)), Jingpo (Tibeto-Burman; Myanmar, [Zu, 2015](#)), Korean (isolate; Korea, [Portner, Pak, and Zanuttini, to appear](#))

There are several additional interesting comparative and typological points about AllAgr, many of which again were noted in [Antonov \(2015\)](#)’s survey:

- Languages differ in what information about the addressee they encode, choosing mostly among gender, varying types of familiarity or politeness and number.
- They also differ in how AllAgr interacts with addressee arguments. It’s ruled out in Basque when one of the arguments is 2nd person, but not in other languages.
- The core environment, where AllAgr is found in all of the languages considered, is root declarative clauses.
- There is variation across languages in whether it is also found in other types of root clauses, i.e. interrogatives, exclamatives and imperatives.
- Basque, for example, excludes it in all of these while Beja allows it in all of them.
- Japanese allows it in interrogatives like (3) and exclamatives, but not imperatives.

- (3) Dare-ga ki-mas-u ka?  
 who-NOM come-ALLOC-PRS Q  
 ‘Who will come?’ (Miyagawa, 2012)

In all of these languages, AllAgr is heavily restricted or entirely ruled out in embedded clauses.

- Again, it’s impossible in Basque and at best marginal in the other languages surveyed by Antonov (2015).
- But in Japanese it **is** possible in a subset of embedded clauses in a way that has led Miyagawa (2012) to argue that it is an (embedded) root phenomenon.

- (4) Taroo-wa [Hanako-ga ki-mas-i-ta to] it-ta.  
 T.-TOP [H.-NOM come-ALLOC-PST C] say-PST  
 ‘Taroo said that Hanako came.’
- (5) Taroo-wa [Hanako-ga kita/\*ki-mas-u koto]-o hitei-sita  
 T.-TOP [H.-NOM came/\*come-ALLOC-PST C]-ACC deny-PST  
 ‘Taroo denied that Hanako will come.’

- Magahi appears to allow AllAgr in a far wider range of embedding types (Baker and Alok, 2017).

In what follows we’ll go through the Tamil facts in detail.

- I’ll essentially be making the case, at length, that what we see in the language is indeed correctly analyzed as AllAgr.
- And I’ll point out some ways in which AllAgr is special or particularly interesting in the language.

### 3 Background on Tamil

#### Background on Tamil

First some basic descriptive and sociolinguistic information that matters for AllAgr:

- Tamil is a Southern Dravidian language, spoken by approximately 70 million people, primarily in southern India and Sri Lanka, as well as a significant diaspora.
- Its written tradition goes back over two thousand years, and the (written) standard is extremely conservative, leading to marked diglossia (Schiffman, 1999).
- AllAgr is a phenomenon of the colloquial language and is also dependent on dialect.

- I will primarily be reporting data the dialect spoken in Pollachi that makes heavy and systematic use of AllAgr, but will mention some others where interesting.

Now a brief primer on relevant aspects of Tamil morphosyntax:

- Tamil is highly inflected and strongly agglutinative, strictly head-final and almost exclusively suffixing.
- Finite verbs can be marked for transitivity, aspect, voice, mood, negation, tense and agreement.
- But mood, negation and agreement are essentially in complementary distribution (see [Amritavalli and Jayaseelan, 2005](#); [Sundaresan and McFadden, 2017](#)).
- ArgAgr targets the highest nominative argument and reflects person and number, plus gender in the 3rd person and politeness in the 2nd and 3rd persons.
- Plural forms of pronouns and agreement are used in the 2nd person to indicate politeness.

Table 1 shows the regular ArgAgr paradigm with an example of the simple present tense and imperative forms of *ooḍṻ* ‘run’ (the *-r-* before agreement marking present tense).

Table 1: ArgAgr in Tamil

	SG	PL
1	ooḍṻ-r- <i>een</i>	ooḍṻ-r- <i>oom</i>
2	ooḍṻ-r- <i>æ</i>	ooḍṻ-r- <i>iingæ</i>
3F	ooḍṻ-r- <i>aa(l)</i>	ooḍṻ-r- <i>aangæ(l)</i>
3M	ooḍṻ-r- <i>aan</i>	ooḍṻ-r- <i>aangæ(l)</i>
3POL	ooḍṻ-r- <i>aarṻ</i>	ooḍṻ-r- <i>aangæ(l)</i>
3N	ooḍṻ- <i>dṻ</i>	ooḍṻ- <i>dṻ</i>
IMP	ooḍṻ	ooḍṻ- <i>ngæ(l)</i>

☞ The *(l)* at the end of the bunch of forms surfaces when a vowel-initial suffix follows (we’ll see examples) and is deleted otherwise.

☞ Note that ArgAgr follows all aspect, tense and voice markers, as we can see in (6), an example with a moderately complex, fully inflected finite verb.

- (6) Kausalya paḍi-ččṻ-kiṭṭṻ-ru-nd-aa  
 Kausalya study-ASP-PROG-BE-PST-3F.SG  
 ‘Kausalya was studying.’

☞ The finite verb, terminated by ArgAgr, is typically the final element in a root declarative clause. . .

☞ But it can be followed by further suffixes in the C domain, e.g. the complementizer *-nnũ* in (7) or the polar question particle *-aa* in (8):

(7) Venkaṭ [Kausalya paḍi-ččũ-kiṭṭũ-ru-nd-aa]-nnũ      so-nn-aan  
 Venkaṭ [Kausalya study-ASP-PROG-BE-PST-3F.SG]-C say-PST-3M.SG

‘Venkaṭ said that Kausalya was studying.’

(8) Kausalya paḍi-ččũ-kiṭṭũ-ru-nd-aa]-aa?  
 Kausalya study-ASP-PROG-BE-PST-3F.SG-Q

‘Was Kausalya studying?’

☞ Note the underlying (l) at the end of the agreement suffix surfacing here before the vowel-initial question particle.

## 4 The form and position of Tamil AllAgr

### The form and position of Tamil AllAgr

Let’s work out the basic morphophonology of Tamil AllAgr:

(9) Naan ḍḅaangiri vaang-in-een-ḡḡæ.  
 I Jangri buy-PST-1SG.SBJ-ALLOC  
 ‘I bought Jangri.’

The allocutive suffix is *-ḡḡæ*, a fairly general **plural** marker:

- It is the final component of all 2nd and 3rd person (non-neuter) plural agreement markers, and it attaches to the verb root to form (2nd) plural imperatives.
- It’s also used as the plural marker on many nominals, both nouns (*maram* ‘tree’, *mara-ḡḡæ* ‘trees’) and pronouns (*nii* ‘you.SG’, *nii-ḡḡæ* ‘you.PL’).

Allocutive *-ḡḡæ* attaches to the clause-final verb, after all of the other inflectional suffixes.

- (9) showed that it comes immediately after ArgAgr, with tense before that.
- When the verb has a modal or negative suffix rather than ArgAgr, *-ḡḡæ* still comes at the very end of it, as in (10) (based on data from [Amritavalli, 1991](#)).

(10) a. koḷandæ ippaḍi sejjæ-kkuuḍaadũ-ḡḡæ  
 child like this do-must not-ALLOC  
 ‘The child should not act in such a way.’

- b. Venkaṭ varæ-læ-ṅgæ  
 Venkat come-NEG-ALLOC  
 ‘Venkat isn’t coming.’

The marker can also appear in clauses with no verb, like (11), and even in fragmentary or elliptical utterances that are smaller than clauses, as in (12) and (13):

- (11) naan aatṭookkaaran-ṅgæ  
 I automan-ALLOC  
 ‘I am an auto rickshaw driver.’
- (12) indæ pajjan-ṅgæ  
 this boy-ALLOC  
 ‘this boy’ (e.g. as answer to ‘Who’s next?’)
- (13) illi-ṅgæ  
 no-ALLOC  
 ‘No’ (as answer to polar question)

- The AllAgr marker can also co-occur with unambiguous vocatives.
- But it must strictly adjacent to the verb, with the vocative obligatorily coming outside (typically extraposed):

- (14) naan va-r-een-ṅgæ saar  
 I come-PRS-1SG-ALLOC sir  
 ‘I’ll take my leave, sir.’
- (15) \*naan va-r-een saar ṅgæ  
 I come-PRS-1SG sir ALLOC

⇒ This confirms that *-ṅgæ* itself cannot be a vocative.

☞ The basic generalization is that the marker attaches to whatever is final in the clause or sub-clausal utterance (excluding extraposed material).

☞ It is clearly a bound form. It never appears alone or after a pause, always being attached to a preceding word. Indeed, *ṅg-* is not licit word-initially in Tamil.

⇒ We can thus conclude that *-ṅgæ* is a grammaticalized bit of morphosyntax in the clausal functional sequence.

## 5 The distribution of Tamil AllAgr

### The distribution of Tamil AllAgr

Now for the conditions under which AllAgr does and does not appear. The central determining factor is the identity of the addressee and their relationship with the speaker.

- Simply put, allocutive *-ngæ* is found whenever *niingæ* would be the appropriate 2nd person pronoun, i.e. when the addressee is plural or polite singular.
- Thus an utterance like (16) would be appropriate when addressed to a group of friends or to an adult stranger, but not to an individual friend.

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- (16) enæ-kkũ teri-læ-ngæ  
 me-DAT know-NEG-ALLOC  
 ‘I don’t know’

What happens with AllAgr when the 2nd person *is* an argument of the main predicate?

- ☞ Recall that in Basque, AllAgr is blocked here.
- ☞ Tamil shows a somewhat mixed behavior. When a 2nd person subject triggers regular argument agreement on the verb, AllAgr is strongly degraded:

- (17) \*? eppađi iru-kk-iingæ-ngæ?  
 how be-PRS-2PL-ALLOC  
 ‘How are you?’
- (18) \*? niingæ rombaa smart-aa iru-kk-iingæ-ngæ  
 you.PL very smar-PRED be-PRS-2PL-ALLOC  
 ‘You’re very smart.’

- ☞ But when a 2nd person argument doesn’t trigger ArgAgr, AllAgr is just fine.
- ☞ (19) shows this with a 2nd person accusative direct object, and (20) shows the same with a quirky dative subject, neither of which can trigger ArgAgr.
- ☞ (21) has a 2nd person nominative subject, but the main predicate is in a participial form which doesn’t host ArgAgr. In all of these examples, AllAgr is possible.

- (19) naan onga[-æ] pađatt-læ paa-tt-een-ngæ  
 I you.PL-ACC film-LOC see-PST-1SG-ALLOC  
 ‘I saw you in a film.’
- (20) onga[-ũkkũ] coffee veenũm-aa-ngæ?  
 you.PL-DAT coffee want-Q-ALLOC  
 ‘Do you want coffee?’
- (21) niingæ saapt-aačč-aa-ngæ?  
 you.PL eat-RES-Q-ALLOC  
 ‘Have you eaten?’

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<sup>1</sup>This is subject to dialectal variation. For most of my speakers from outside the Pollachi area, the allocutive suffix is only used to reflect politeness, not plural, i.e. for them (16) could not be used with a group of friends.

Now let us consider the further conditions on the appearance of AllAgr, once we've restricted our attention to speech contexts with the right kind of addressee.

- We've seen that it *can* appear in root declaratives and various fragmentary utterances.
- Furthermore, unlike in Basque, it can appear in root interrogatives. (20) and (21) above show polar questions, and (22) a *wh*-question use:

(22) ev[avũ    aag-um-ŋgæ?  
       how much become-MOD-ALLOC  
       ‘How much will it come to?’

- And it turns out that it can also appear in certain embedded environments, as we'll see in detail later.

A final, quite crucial point is that, when there is no (overtly expressed) 2nd person argument, AllAgr is obligatory for my Pollachi informants.

- ☞ When one would use *niŋgæ*, only (23) is possible. Leaving off the *-ŋgæ* signals non-politeness, thus (24) is ill-formed in such a discourse context.

(23)      rombaa thanks-ŋgæ  
           very    thanks-ALLOC  
           ‘Thanks a lot’

(24)    \* rombaa thanks (to a polite or plural addressee)  
           very    thanks

- ☞ This is strong evidence that the use of *-ŋgæ* as AllAgr is fully grammaticalized.
- ⇨ From all of this we can securely conclude that the *-ŋgæ* suffix in (relevant dialects of) Tamil is indeed an instance of fully grammaticalized allocutive agreement.

## 6 Ordering and doubling

### Ordering and doubling

Now that we're convinced that what we're looking at in Tamil really is AllAgr, let's look at some of the details that are of special interest.

As we have seen, Tamil is perfectly happy to have *-ŋgæ* on a root *wh*- or polar-interrogative.

- ☞ Indeed, it is extremely common on tags and other short interrogative utterances marked by the polar question particle *-aa*.

☞ What is odd is how *-ɲgæ* is ordered relative to the particle.

Consider two examples that involve this combination:

- (25)    *niɲgæ saapt-aačč-aa-ɲgæ?*  
           you.PL eat-RES-Q-ALLOC  
           ‘Have you eaten?’
- (26)    *niɲgæ saapt-aaččŭ-ɲgæ]-aa?*  
           you.PL eat-RES-ALLOC-Q  
           ‘Have you eaten?’

- ☞ They represent a minimal pair, differing only in the order of the AllAgr marker and the question particle.
- ☞ In (25), the AllAgr suffix comes outside of the question particle, while in (26) it comes inside of it.
- ☞ In other words, *both* orderings of the two suffixes are possible.

This ordering alternation is fairly general:

- (27) *illij-aa-ɲgæ?* / *illi-ɲgæ]-aa?*  
       no-Q-ALLOC / no-ALLOC-Q  
       various uses, e.g. ‘Isn’t it?’, ‘No?’, tag question
- (28) *appadij-aa-ɲgæ?* / *appadi-ɲgæ]-aa?*  
       like.that-Q-ALLOC / like.that-ALLOC-Q  
       ‘Oh really?’, ‘Is that so?’
- (29) *koɟandæ ippadi sejji-laam-aa-ɲgæ?* /        *koɟandæ ippadi*  
       child    like.this do-SBJV-Q-ALLOC /        child    like.this  
       *sejji-laam-ɲgæ]-aa?*  
       do-SBJV-ALLOC-Q  
       ‘Is it right for the child to do this?’

- Especially with the fragment utterances, the order with the AllAgr preceding the question particle is the preferred one.
- But both are entirely possible under the right circumstances.
- This variation in the order of the affixes is surprising, and is not generally found elsewhere in the inflectional morphology of the language.
- And note that we find big-time dialectal variation here.

But it gets even more interesting. In the cases where both orders are available, it is actually possible to find the the allocutive suffix *doubled* on either side of the Q particle:

- (30) appaɖi-ŋgæ[-aa-ŋgæ?  
like.that-ALLOC-Q-ALLOC  
‘Oh really?’
- (31) niŋgæ saapt-aaččü-ŋgæ[-aa-ŋgæ?  
you.PL eat-RES-ALLOC-Q-ALLOC  
‘Have you eaten?’
- (32) onga[-ükkü coffee veŋum-ŋgæ[-aa-ŋgæ?  
you.PL-DAT coffee want-ALLOC-Q-ALLOC  
‘Would you like coffee?’

- ☞ Again, there is big dialectal variation on this point.
- ☞ At least for my Pollachi informants, doubling is not particularly marked, nor does it correspond to elevated or exaggerated politeness.
- ☞ Such doubling is quite unexpected. Again, I am aware of no other bit of grammaticalized morphology in the language that behaves this way.

## 7 Embedded AllAgr

### Embedded AllAgr

What about embedded environments?

- ☞ Again, AllAgr has been reported to be blocked or at least heavily restricted under embedding in other languages. Tamil is quite interesting on this point.
- ☞ Not surprisingly, AllAgr is possible in direct speech, where the *-ŋgæ* is understood as part of what is quoted:

- (33) Raman avar-ttæ            “saap-t-aaččü-ŋgæ[-aa?” so-nn-aan.  
Raman him.POLITE-LOC eat-ASP-RES-ALLOC-Q    say-PST-3SG.M  
‘Raman said to him “Have you eaten?”’

- ☞ What is more interesting is that it can also be found in indirect speech, embedded under at least some attitude predicates:

- (34) Maya [avæ pootti-le    čejkkæ-poo-r-aa[-ŋgæ-nnŭ]    so-nn-aa  
Maya [she contest-LOC win-go-PRS-3SF-ALLOC-COMP] say-PST-3SF  
‘Maya said that she would win the contest.’

- ☞ My data on exactly which predicates allow AllAgr in their complements are still preliminary, but the outlines are reminiscent of the classic bridge verbs.

- ⇨ This suggests that AllAgr in Tamil, as in Japanese, is an embedded root phenomenon.

We'll see tomorrow that embedded AllAgr in Tamil provides some of the coolest patterns, which give really striking evidence for the syntactic representation of speech act participants.

Tom reports to Kausalya:

- (35) Maya<sub>i</sub> Lila-ttæ [taan<sub>i,\*j</sub> poott<sub>i</sub>-le    ɕejkkæ-poo-r-ee-n-ŋæ-nnũ]  
 Maya Lila-LOC [ANAPH contest-LOC win-go-PRS-1S-ALLOC-COMP]  
 so-nn-aa.  
 say-PST-3SF  
 ‘Maya<sub>i</sub> told Lila that she<sub>i</sub> would win the contest.’ (Maya being polite to Lila)
- (36) Maya<sub>i</sub> Lila-ttæ [avæ<sub>i,j</sub> poott<sub>i</sub>-le    ɕejkkæ-poo-r-aa[-ŋæ-nnũ]  
 Maya Lila-LOC [she contest-LOC win-go-PRS-3SF-ALLOC-COMP]  
 so-nn-aa.  
 say-PST-3SF  
 ‘Maya told Lila that she would win the contest.’ (Tom being polite to Kausalya)

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