

# TWO FORMS OF "BE" IN MALAYALAM<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Malayalam has two verbs, *uNTE* and *aaNE*, recognized in the literature as copulas (Asher 1968, Variar 1979, Asher and Kumari 1997, among others). There is among speakers of Malayalam a clear, intuitively perceived meaning difference between the verbs. One strong intuition is that *uNTE* and *aaNE* correspond to the English verbs "have" and "be"; another is that they should be viewed as the "existential" and "equative" copulas respectively.<sup>2</sup> However, in a large number of contexts, these verbs appear to be interchangeable. This has thwarted the efforts of a clear characterization of the meanings of the two verbs.

In this paper, we will explore a variety of syntactic and semantic environments that shed light on the differences between the constructions with *aaNE* and *uNTE*. On the basis of the asymmetries we lay out, we will re-affirm the intuition that *aaNE* and *uNTE* are indeed equative and existential copulas respectively, with *aaNE* signaling the meaning of "x is an element/subset of y" and *uNTE* signaling the meaning of existence of an abstract or concrete entity in the fields of location or possession. We will show that when *aaNE* is interchangeable with *uNTE* in existential clauses, its function is that of a cleft marker, with the existential meaning expressed independently by the case markers on the nouns.

Central to our exploration of the two copulas is the discovery of four types of existential clauses in Malayalam, namely:

Neutral:	with the existential verb <i>uNTE</i> .
Full cleft:	with the existential verb <i>uNTE</i> and the cleft marker <i>aaNE</i> .
Reduced cleft:	with the cleft marker <i>aaNE</i> alone.
Doubly reduced cleft:	with no verb.

We will show that the behavior of the three types of clefts exhibits a unity in a variety of environments in contrast to that of the neutral one, and that these asymmetries of behavior correlate with the meanings of uniqueness and presupposition associated with standard cleft constructions. Our analysis and conclusions raise a host of interesting questions for the relation between meaning and form in linguistic theory.

The paper is organized as follows. We begin in section 2 by looking at a set of four puzzles of the distribution of the two copulas. Section 3 shows that a copula construction allows either *aaNE* or *uNTE* if one of the two arguments is in non-nominative (dative or

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<sup>2</sup> As pointed out by John Fry at LFG'99, this distinction is parallel to the thematic/categorical distinction in the philosophical tradition.

locative) case. Their meaning is that of possession or location. However, if both arguments are nominative, we get an equative construction, in which the copula can only be *aaNE*. In section 4, we show that the instances in which one of the arguments is non-nominative have a special uniqueness meaning whenever the copula is *aaNE*. This uniqueness meaning is characteristic of the cleft construction. Following this lead, we analyze *aaNE* sentences with non-nominative arguments as instances of the cleft construction. We then show how such an analysis provides an explanation for the puzzles discussed in section 2. Section 5 explores the behavior of verbless clauses in Malayalam, and relates them to the *aaNE* and *uNTE* constructions. We argue that verbless clauses involve the semantics of the corresponding *aaNE* construction. From this, it follows that verbless clauses with only nominative arguments are plain equatives, and those with a non-nominative argument are parallel to clefts.

## 2. THE PUZZLING PIECES

### 2.1. Interchangeability of the Copulas

The examples in (1)-(4) below illustrate the positive and negative forms of the verbs *uNTE* and *aaNE*.<sup>3</sup> Following traditional practice, we gloss both verbs as BE. What is interesting about (1)-(4) is that in these sentences, the two verbs *uNTE* and *aaNE* appear to be entirely interchangeable, and syntactically and semantically equivalent.

- (1) a. *aanakke pani uNTE illa.*  
 elephant-D fever-N BE-PR BE:NEG:PR  
 The elephant has/doesn't have a fever.

<sup>3</sup> We must make two observations about the verbs *aaNE* and *uNTE*, the roots of which are *aa* and *uL* respectively. Firstly, in traditional literature, these verbs belong to a closed class of "defective verbs", so called because they do not participate in the inflectional paradigms of verbs. As illustrated in (i) below, the past tense form of the copula requires the addition of certain "augments" before tense and other verbal affixes can be attached to it; (ia) and (ib) are the past tense counterparts of (1a) and (1b) respectively.

- (i) a. *aanakke pani aayirunnu.* (aa-i-ir-ikk-tu )  
 elephant-D fever-N BE-PA AA-PA-IR-VS-PA  
 The elephant had a fever.  
 b. *aanakke pani uNTaayirunnu.* (uL-aa-i-ir-ikk-tu )  
 elephant-D fever-N BE-PA UL-AA-PA-IR-VS-PA  
 The elephant had a fever.

Secondly, the "defective" verb *aaNE* has a historical antecedent, *aakunnu*, whose root *aa* is ambiguous between the meanings of BE and BECOME, as in (ii):

- (ii) *katha rasakaram aakunnu.*  
 story-N interesting BE/BECOME-PR  
 The story is interesting. / The story becomes interesting.

The ambiguity of (ii) becomes obvious when we compare it with the past tense versions, where the forms for BE and BECOME diverge, as illustrated in (iii):

- (iii) a. *katha rasakaram aayirunnu.* (aa-i-ir-ikk-tu)  
 story interesting BE-PA  
 The story was interesting.  
 b. *katha rasakaram aayi.* (aa-i)  
 story interesting BECOME-PA  
 The story became interesting.

In this paper, we will restrict our discussion to the defective forms *aaNE* and *uNTE*, which are both in present tense.

- b. *aanakkeE pani aaNE / alla.*  
 elephant-D fever-N BE-PR BE:NEG:PR  
 The elephant has/doesn't have a fever.
- (2) a. *anikkeE innE pariikSa uNTE / illa.*  
 Ani-D today exam-N BE-PR BE:NEG:PR  
 Ani has/doesn't have an exam today.
- b. *anikkeE innE pariikSa aaNE / alla.*  
 Ani-D today exam-N BE-PR BE:NEG:PR  
 Ani has/doesn't have an exam today.
- (3) a. *puucca tooTTattil uNTE / illa.*  
 cat-N garden-L BE-PR BE:NEG:PR  
 The cat is/isn't in the garden.
- b. *puucca tooTTattil aaNE / alla.*  
 cat-N garden-L BE-PR BE:NEG:PR  
 The cat is/isn't in the garden.
- (4) a. *ii mattanil niRaccE kuru uNTE / illa.*  
 this melon-L full seeds-N BE-PR BE:NEG:PR  
 This melon has/doesn't have a lot of seeds.
- b. *ii mattanil niRaccE kuru aaNE / alla.*  
 this melon-L full seeds-N BE-PR BE:NEG:PR  
 This melon has/doesn't have a lot of seeds.

Despite the apparent interchangeability of the two verbs in (1)-(4), they exhibit several classes of environments that reveal interesting semantic asymmetries between the two forms of *BE*, some of which have consequences for syntax. These involve (a) modification of possessed head noun, (b) specificity effects, (c) word order, (d) presupposition, and (e) the equative construction. We turn to these syntactico-semantic asymmetries in the following section.

## 2.2. Asymmetries

### 2.2.1 Possession

The first piece of surprise lies in the behavior of the two verbs when expressing the meaning of possession. Consider the asymmetries in (5) and (6):

- (5) a. *anikkeE kuTTi uNTE.*  
 Ani-D child-N BE-PR  
 Ani has a child.
- b. *anikkeE peNkuTTi uNTE.*

Ani-D girl-child-N BE-PR  
Ani has a daughter.

c. # *anikke* *kuTTi* *aaNE*.  
Ani-D child-N BE-PR (Intended: "Ani has a child.")

d. *anikke* *peNkuTTi* *aaNE*.  
Ani-D girl-child-N BE-PR  
Ani has a daughter. (The child that Ani has is a girl child.)

(6) a. *anikke* *kaaR* *uNTE*  
Ani-D car-N BE-PR  
Ani has a car.

b. *anikke* *weLutta* *kaaR* *uNTE*  
Ani-D white car-N BE-PR  
Ani has a white car.

c. # *anikke* *kaaR* *aaNE*  
Ani-D car-N BE-PR (Intended: "Ani has a car.")

d. *anikke* *weLutta* *kaaR* *aaNE*  
Ani-D white car-N BE-PR  
Ani has a white car. (The car that Ani has is a white one.)

Why is the use of *aaNE* unacceptable in (5c) and (6c), where the complement of "be" is a single noun? Why does it become acceptable when this noun is modified in some way in (5d) and (6d)? A telling clue to the answer to this question lies in the glosses in parentheses. We will return to these examples after having looked at some other related facts.

### 2.2.2. Specificity Effects

We saw in (1)-(4) that *uNTE* and *aaNE* appear to be interchangeable in certain contexts. Now consider the examples in (7)-(8):

(7) a. *tooTTattil* *puucca* *uNTE*.  
garden-L cat-N BE-PR  
There is a cat in the garden.

b. *tooTTattil* *aaaroo* *uNTE*.  
garden-L someone-N BE-PR  
There is someone in the garden.

c. *ewiTeyoo* *puucca* *uNTE*.  
somewhere cat-N BE-PR  
There is a cat somewhere.

- (8) a. *tooTTattil puucca aaNE*  
 garden-L cat-N BE-PR  
 It is a cat in the garden.
- b. \* *tooTTattil aaroo aaNE.*  
 garden-L someone-N BE-PR
- c. \* *ewiTeyoo puucca aaNE.*  
 somewhere cat-N BE-PR

In (8b, c), one of the NPs is nonspecific. The fact that this is the only difference between (8a) and (8b, c) suggests that nonspecificity is responsible for making (8b, c) unacceptable. Why is it that *aaNE* is incompatible with non-specific NPs? Once again, let us look at some more facts before answering this question.

### 2.2.3. Scrambling and the Copula

Even though Malayalam is a free word order language, word order differences in the copula constructions are accompanied by differences in meaning.<sup>4</sup> Consider some of the various possibilities:<sup>5</sup>

- (9) a. *kaappi friDjil uNTE*  
 coffee-N fridge-L BE-PR  
 There is coffee, in the fridge.
- b. *kaappi friDjil aaNE*  
 coffee-N fridge-L BE-PR  
 The coffee is in the fridge (and not somewhere else).
- (10) a. *friDjil kaappi uNTE*  
 fridge-L coffee-N BE-PR  
 There is coffee in the fridge.

<sup>4</sup> Word order differences are also accompanied by differences in linking between the arguments and grammatical functions in the copula construction. We will not address that issue here.

<sup>5</sup> Other word order possibilities are:

- (i) a. *friDjil uNTE kaappi*  
 fridge-L BE-PR coffee-N  
 There is coffee, in the fridge.
- b. *friDjil aaNE kaappi*  
 fridge-L BE-PR coffee-N  
 The coffee is in the fridge (and not somewhere else).
- (ii) a. *kaappi uNTE friDjil*  
 coffee-N BE-PR fridge-L  
 There is coffee in the fridge.
- b. *kaappi aaNE friDjil*  
 coffee-N BE-PR fridge-L  
 Coffee is what is in the fridge (and not something else).

Notice that semantically, (i) and (ii) are identical to (9) and (10) respectively. The only difference between them is discursal, and may not have a direct bearing on the issues dealt with in this paper.

- b. *friDjil kaappi aaNE*  
 fridge-L coffee-N BE-PR  
 Coffee is what is in the fridge (and not something else).

In (9), where the theme NP precedes the locative NP, the meaning is one of stating the location of the theme. The difference is that while (9a) is a simple statement about the location of the coffee, (9b) asserts this location to the exclusion of other locations. In (10), where the locative NP precedes the theme NP, (10a) is a simple statement of the existence of coffee in the fridge, while (10b) uniquely identifies what is in the fridge.

Let us go on to some further examples, before we zero in on the exact difference between *aaNE* and *uNTE*.

#### 2.2.4. Presuppositions

As the examples in (10) suggest, the key to the difference between the semantic representations of the two copulas may lie in the differences in the presuppositions they trigger. Following Strawson (1952), we take it that a statement S presupposes a statement S' if and only if the truth of S' is a precondition for the truth or falsity of S. If the presupposition of a declarative sentence is false, the sentence is neither true nor false. Let us take the pairs of sentences in (11)-(13) below, and unearth their presuppositions:

- (11) a. *aanakkE pani uNTE.* (= (1a))  
 elephant-D fever-N BE-PR  
 The elephant has a fever.
- b. *aanakkE pani aaNE.* (= (1b))  
 elephant -D fever-N BE-PR  
 The elephant has a fever. (What the elephant has is a fever.)
- (12) a. *anikke peNkuTTi uNTE.* (= (5b))  
 Ani-D girl-child-N BE-PR  
 Ani has a daughter.
- b. *anikke peNkuTTi aaNE.* (= (5d))  
 Ani-D girl-child-N BE-PR  
 Ani has a daughter. (What Ani has is a daughter.)
- (13) a. *friDjil kaappi uNTE.* (= (10a))  
 fridge-L coffee-N BE-PR  
 There is coffee in the fridge.
- b. *friDjil kaappi aaNE.* (= (10b))  
 fridge-L coffee-N BE-PR  
 Coffee is what is in the fridge.

(11b) has the implication that there is something wrong with the elephant, (12b) that Ani has a child, and (13b) that there is something in the fridge. Furthermore, these

implications are presuppositions: they are retained under negation, and in *yes-no* questions and conditionals, a classic test for presuppositions in the literature (Kiparsky and Kiparsky 1971; Karttunen 1973, 1974). Sentence (13b), for instance, would be uninterpretable in a situation where the fridge is empty. The negative, question, and conditional counterparts of (11b), (12b), and (13b) are given in (14)-(16):

- (14) a. *aanakkE pani alla.*  
 elephant-D fever-N BE:NEG:PR  
 The elephant doesn't have a fever (but something else).
- b. *aanakkE pani aaNoo?*  
 elephant -D fever-N BE-Q:PR  
 Does the elephant have a fever (or is it something else)?
- c. *aanakkE pani aaNEngil...*  
 elephant-D fever-N BE-PR-IF  
 If the elephant has a fever (as opposed to something else)...
- (15) a. *anikke peNkuTTi alla.*  
 Ani-D girl-child-N BE:NEG:PR  
 Ani doesn't have a daughter (but a son).
- b. *anikke peNkuTTi aanoo?*  
 Ani-D girl-child-N BE-Q:PR  
 Does Ani have a daughter (or is it a son)?
- c. *anikke peNkuTTi aaNEngil...*  
 Ani-D girl-child-N BE-PR-IF  
 If Ani has a daughter (as opposed to a son)...
- (16) a. *friDjil kaappi alla.*  
 Ani-D girl-child-N BE: BE:NEG:PR  
 Coffee is not what is in the fridge (but something else).
- b. *friDjil kaappi aanoo?*  
 Ani-D girl-child-N BE- Q:PR  
 Is it coffee in the fridge (or something else)?
- c. *friDjil kaappi aaNEngil...*  
 Ani-D girl-child-N BE-PR-IF  
 If it is coffee in the fridge (and not something else)...

In contrast, the presuppositions mentioned above are absent in (11a), (12a), and (13a). Consider, for illustration, the negation, question, and conditional of (13a):

- (17) a. *friDjil kaappi illa.*  
 Ani-D girl-child-N BE: BE:NEG:PR  
 There is no coffee in the fridge.

- b. *friDjil kaappi untoo?*  
 Ani-D girl-child-N BE- Q:PR  
 Is there any coffee in the fridge?
- c. *friDjil kaappi uNTEngil...*  
 Ani-D girl-child-N BE-PR-IF  
 If there is coffee in the fridge ...

(17a-c) do not have the implications that (16a-c) have. In other words, the difference between (13a) and (13b) lies in the presence of the presuppositions in the latter that are absent in the former. The same is true of (11) and (12) as well.

Given the facts in (11)-(17), then, the difference between *uNTE* and *aaNE* in the examples where there is an apparent overlap in meaning between the two verbs appears to lie in the presuppositions that *aaNE* induces.

### 3. THE EQUATIVE AND EXISTENTIAL CONSTRUCTIONS

The examples discussed in the previous section all involve two arguments, one of which is either dative or locative. These examples express the meaning of either possession or location, which may be abstract or concrete. The distribution of *uNTE*, we find so far, is more general than that of *aaNE*, since the latter is associated with the special conditions we have seen above. As a result, *aaNE* can be replaced with *uNTE*, although the reverse is not true.

We now turn to a different construction, in which both arguments are nominative. This construction permits the copula *aaNE*, but disallows *uNTE*. Consider the examples in (18):

- (18) a. *mini TiicaR aaNE* / \**uNTE*.  
 Mini-N teacher-N BE-PR  
 Mini is a teacher.
- b. *awan kaLLan aaNE.* / \**uNTE*  
 He-N thief- n BE-PR  
 He is a thief.
- c. *ani sundari aaNE.* / \**uNTE*  
 Ani-N beautiful one-N BE-PR  
 Ani is beautiful.
- d. *naalum naalum eTTE aaNE.* / \**uNTE*  
 four-conj four-conj eight BE-PR  
 Four plus four is eight.

The examples in (18) involve the equative meaning, which includes "x = y", and "x is an element/subset of y". Such examples have prompted researchers to label *aaNE* as the *equative* BE, and *uNTE* as the *existential* BE (Asher 1968; Variar 1979). An example of purely existential BE is given in (19):

- (19)     *deiwam uNTE / \*aaNE.*  
           God-N   BE-PR  
           God exists.

If we take (18) and (19), where the two verbs are not interchangeable, as the archetypal instances of *aaNE* and *uNTE* respectively, it would be reasonable to conclude that the core meaning of *aaNE* is [x BE y], and that of *uNTE* is [x EXIST (LOC y)], where y is an abstract or concrete entity in the semantic fields of location or possession. These specifications are given as part of the lexical representations of the two verbs:

- (20) a.   *aaNE* : V [x BE y]  
       b.   *uNTE* : V [x EXIST (LOC y)]

#### 4. AANE CLAUSES AS REDUCED CLEFTS<sup>6</sup>

##### 4.1. Uniqueness

We have seen in (20) the meanings of the two copulas when they are not interchangeable. We must now identify the semantic distinction between them in cases when they are interchangeable, as in (1)-(4). An important clue as to what distinguishes *aaNE* from *uNTE* in such instances is found in the asymmetry between the contexts appropriate for examples (10a) and (10b), repeated below as (21a) and (21b) respectively.

- (21) a.   *friDjil kaappi uNTE.*  
           fridge-L coffee-N BE-PR  
           There is coffee in the fridge.
- b.   *friDjil kaappi aaNE.*  
           fridge-L coffee-N BE-PR  
           Coffee is what is in the fridge.

Example (21b) is acceptable only if the fridge does not contain anything other than coffee. If it contains not only coffee, but tea, milk, and vegetables, the sentence is unacceptable. In contrast, (21a) is acceptable in both contexts. When the entity and its location switch places, as in (9), repeated as (22), there is a corresponding asymmetry of meaning for the sentence with *aaNE* but not that with *uNTE*.

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<sup>6</sup> We have been asked why *aaNE* should be treated as a cleft marker rather than as a focus marker. Our reason is that a cleft construction marks focus, but not all focus constructions (e.g., contrastive focus) share the semantics of clefts. We use the term cleft to refer to a syntactic construction that expresses the semantics of clefts in English.

We have also been asked why we treat *aaNE* in clefts as a verb. The reason is that it has identical morphosyntactic behavior as the equative *aaNE* in non-clefts.

- (22) a. *kaappi friDjil uNTE*  
 coffee-N fridge-L BE-PR  
 There is coffee, in the fridge.
- b. *kaappi friDjil aaNE*  
 coffee-N fridge-L BE-PR  
 The coffee is in the fridge (and not somewhere else).

(22b) implies that there is coffee only in the fridge. If in addition there is coffee on the table, (22b) is unacceptable. (22a) is neutral to this distinction.

Thus, *aaNE* assigns a special meaning of “x and not anything other than x” to the constituent that immediately precedes it. Having seen this semantic contrast, we now note that the same contrast is found in the English cleft construction as well:

- (23) a. *John sent a book to Mary.*  
 b. *It was a book that John sent to Mary.*

(23b) is appropriate if John sent a book to Mary and did not send anything else. If John sent a book, a flower, and a vase, (23b) would be unacceptable, but (23a) would still be acceptable. Drawing on Carlson (1983) who originally pointed out this special meaning of clefts, we will represent this element of meaning as UNQ (unique), and define it as follows:

- (24) a. UNQ (x) = x and not anything other than x.  
 b. *aaNE* assigns UNQ to the constituent that immediately precedes it.

Given (24), the semantic distinction between (21b) and (22b) will be represented as (25a) and (25b) respectively:

- (25) a. **UNQ**  
*friDjil kaappi aaNE.* (= (21b))  
 fridge-L coffee-N BE-PR  
 There is coffee in the fridge.
- b. **UNQ**  
*kaappi friDjil aaNE.* (= (22b))  
 coffee-N fridge-L BE-PR  
 Coffee is what is in the fridge.

In (25a), UNQ is assigned to the theme, while in (25b) it is assigned to the location; in each instance, the constituent that immediately precedes *aaNE* is UNQ.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.2. The Cleft Construction

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<sup>7</sup> This analysis correctly predicts that the *aaNE* in a locative/dative construction cannot be clause initial.

The presence of UNQ in the *aaNE* sentences suggests the possibility that they are actually cleft constructions. The cleft construction in Malayalam is signaled by the presence of *aaNE* to the right of the clefted element, together with *atE* 'it' to the right of the verb, as illustrated in (26):

- (26) a. *eli*                      *puuccakke*                      *pustakam*                      *ayaccu*.  
mouse-N                      cat-D                      book-N                      send-pa  
The mouse sent a book to the cat.
- b. *eliyaaNE*                      *puuccakke*                      *pustakam*                      *ayaccatE*.  
mouse-N-BE-PR                      cat-D                      book-N                      send-pa  
It was the mouse who sent a book to the cat.
- c. *eli*                      *puuccakkaaNE*                      *pustakam*                      *ayaccatE*.  
mouse-N                      cat-D-BE-PR                      book-N                      send-pa  
It was the cat that the mouse sent a book to.
- d. *eli*                      *puuccakke*                      *pustakamaaNE*                      *ayaccatE*.  
mouse-N                      cat-D                      book-N-BE-PR                      send-pa  
It was a book that the mouse sent to the cat.

A brief comparison with the clefted counterparts of the *uNTE* clauses confirms the guess that the *aaNE* clauses with a non-nominative argument are indeed best treated as clefts. Consider the examples in (27) and (28):

- (27) a. *aanakke*                      *pani*                      *uNTE*                      (=1a)  
elephant-D                      fever-N                      BE-PR  
The elephant has a fever.
- b. *aanakke*                      *pani*                      *aaNE*                      *uLLatE*  
elephant-D                      fever-N                      BE-PR                      BE-it  
What the elephant has is a fever.
- c. *aanakke*                      *pani*                      *aaNE*.                      (=1b)  
elephant-D                      fever-N                      BE-PR  
What the elephant has is a fever.
- (28) a. *puucca*                      *tooTTattil*                      *uNTE*                      (=3a)  
cat-N                      garden-L                      BE-PR  
The cat is in the garden.
- b. *puucca*                      *tooTTattil*                      *aaNE*                      *uLLatE*  
cat-N                      garden-L                      BE-PR                      BE-it  
It is in the garden that the cat is.
- c. *puucca*                      *tooTTattil*                      *aaNE*                      (=3b)  
cat-N                      garden-L                      BE-PR  
It is in the garden that the cat is.

(27b)/(28b) are clefted versions of (27a)/(28a) respectively, the verb *uLLatE* being the phonological realization of *uNTE+atE*. In terms of meaning, (27c)/(28c) are identical to (27b)/(28b) respectively. Notice that the sentence glosses we gave in (1b) and (3b) are different from those in (27c) and (28c). Looking back, the new glosses are more accurate reflections of the meaning of these sentences. It would be reasonable to assume, therefore, that (27c)/(28c) are reduced versions of (27b)/(28b) with *uLLatE* missing.<sup>8</sup>

The uniqueness meaning in *aaNE* clauses with a non-nominative argument, stipulated earlier as a property of the verb *aaNE* under special circumstances, now follows from the hypothesis that they are reduced clefts. The puzzling asymmetries in the copula constructions in section 2 also turn out to be a consequence of the reduced cleft hypothesis.

### 4.3. Explanation for the Puzzles

In section 2, we identified four asymmetries between the *uNTE* construction and its *aaNE* counterpart. If we assume that the latter is in fact a reduced cleft, then the full cleft versions of the same *uNTE* sentences should exhibit the same asymmetries. We find that this expectation is indeed borne out.

#### 4.3.1 Possession

Consider the full clefts of (5a) and (5b), given in (29a) and (29b) respectively:

- (29) a. # *anikke kuTTi aaNE uLLatE*.  
 Ani-D child-N BE-PR BE-it  
 (Intended: "What Ani has is a child.")
- b. *anikke peNkuTTi aaNE uLLatE*.  
 Ani-D girl-child-N BE-PR BE-it  
 What Ani has is a daughter.

The unacceptability of (29a) is parallel to that of (5c). (29b) and (5d) are acceptable because they set up an implicit contrast (between a girl child and a boy child), thereby justifying the special meaning of the cleft.

#### 4.3.2 Specificity Effects

Consider the full clefts of (7a-c), given in (30a-c):

- (30) a. *tooTTattil puucca aaNE uLLatE*.  
 garden-L cat-N BE-PR BE-IT  
 It is a cat that is in the garden.
- b. \* *tooTTattil aaroo aaNE uLLatE*.

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<sup>8</sup> Our terminology of "reduced" clauses does not imply deletion, or a derivational framework.

garden-L      someone-N    BE-PR    BE-IT  
 (Intended: It is someone who is in the garden.)

- c. \* *ewiTeyoo      puucca      aaNE      uLLatE.*  
 somewhere    cat-N      BE-PR    BE-IT  
 (Intended: It is a cat that is somewhere.)

Once again, the unacceptability of the full clefts in (30b, c) parallels that of the reduced clefts in (8b, c). This unacceptability follows from the incompatibility of nonspecificity with the semantics of clefts.

#### 4.3.3. *Scrambling and the Copula*

Consider the full cleft versions of (9a) and (10a), given in (31a) and (31b) respectively:

- (31) a. *kaappi    friDjil    aaNE    uLLatE.*  
 coffee-N    fridge-L    BE-PR    BE-it  
 It is in the fridge that the coffee is

- b. *friDjil    kaappi    aaNE    uLLatE.*  
 fridge-L    coffee-N    BE-PR    BE-it  
 It is coffee that is in the fridge.

The meaning difference between (31a)/(31b) correlating to a difference in word order, parallels the corresponding difference between (9b)/(10b). (31a)/(31b) uniquely identify the location of the coffee and the contents of the fridge respectively, as do (9b)/(10b). Yet again, the assumption that (9b)/(10b) are reduced clefts explains their parallel with (31a, b).

#### 4.3.4. *Presuppositions*

Finally, the full cleft versions of (17a-c) are given in (32a-c) respectively.

- (32) a. *friDjil      kaappi      alla      uLLatE.*  
 fridge-L      coffee-N      BE:NEG:PR    BE-IT  
 Coffee is not what is in the fridge (but something else).

- b. *friDjil      kaappi      aaNoo      uLLatE?*  
 fridge-L      coffee-N      BE-Q-PR    BE-IT  
 Is it coffee in the fridge (or something else)?

- c. *friDjil      kaappi      aaNE      uLLatengil...*  
 fridge-L      coffee-N      BE-PR    BE-IT-IF  
 If it is coffee in the fridge (and not something else)...

The parallel between (32a-c) and (16a-c) follows directly from the reduced clause hypothesis.



The sentences in (34a, b), when juxtaposed with those in (1a, b) and (3a, b), suggest four possibilities for analysis, namely, that (34a) and (34b) are:

- (i) reduced versions of the *uNTE* clauses in (1a) and (3a) respectively;
- (ii) reduced versions of the *aaNE* clauses in (1b) and (3b) respectively;
- (iii) ambiguous between (i) and (ii) above;
- (iv) neither.

In what follows, we will demonstrate that the best way to explain the peculiarities of verbless clauses like those in (34) is to accept option (ii), and treat these clauses as reduced versions of reduced clefts. In other words, they are doubly reduced clefts.

## 5.2. Doubly Reduced Clefts

### 5.2.1. Possession

Like clefts and reduced clefts, verbless clauses with non-nominative arguments are unacceptable without a discourse context that justifies the meaning of uniqueness. This is illustrated in (36), which parallels the clefts in (29), and the reduced clefts in (5):

- (36) a. # *anikkE*      *kuTTi*.  
           Ani-D        child-N
- b. *anikkE*      *peNkuTTi*.  
       Ani-D        girl-child-N  
       What Ani has is a daughter.

The unacceptability of (36a) is parallel to that of (5c) and (29a). Notice also that the meaning of the sentence is that of the cleft, not that of the non-cleft in (5a).

### 5.2.2. Specificity Effects

Likewise, the unacceptability of (37b, c) parallels that of (8b, c) and (30b, c):

- (37) a. *tooTTattil*      *puucca*.  
           garden-L        cat-N  
           It is a cat that is in the garden.
- b. \* *tooTTattil*      *aaroo*.  
           garden-L        someone-N
- c. \* *ewiTeyoo*        *puucca*.  
           somewhere        cat-N

In other words, the arguments in these verbless clauses cannot be non-specific, as in the case of clefts and reduced clefts.

### 5.2.3. *Scrambling*

The meaning difference between (38a) and (38b) below parallels the meaning difference in clefts and reduced clefts with corresponding word orders:

- (38) a. *kaappi friDjil.*  
coffee-N fridge-L  
It is in the fridge that the coffee is.
- b. *friDjil kaappi.*  
fridge-L coffee-N  
It is coffee that is in the fridge.

(38a) and (38b) uniquely identify the location of the coffee and the contents of the fridge respectively, exactly like (31a) and (31b), as well as (9b) and (10b).

### 5.2.4. *Presuppositions*

Finally, let us look at the presuppositions of the verbless clause. The test of negation cannot be applied to this construction, because the negation of a copula in Malayalam is expressed by a negative verb form, and hence, if negation is to be expressed, the sentence cannot be verbless.

However, look at the question and the conditional in verbless clauses; (39a, b) are parallel to the reduced clefts in (17b, c), and the full clefts in (32b, c):

- (39) a. *friDjil kaappiyoo?*  
fridge-L coffee-N-Q  
Is it coffee in the fridge (or something else)?
- b. *friDjil kaappi engil...*  
fridge-L coffee-N IF  
If it is coffee in the fridge (and not something else)...

To sum up, what we have just seen is that the verbless construction with a non-nominative argument exhibits properties identical to those of the cleft and the reduced cleft. This behavior finds a natural explanation if we assume that this verbless construction is a doubly reduced cleft.

One last piece of evidence has to do with clefted questions. If we accept that in a cleft construction, all material other than the clefted constituents is presupposed, and that part of a presupposition cannot be questioned, it follows that the only constituents that can be questioned in clefts are the clefted constituents. This is true of the cleft construction in Malayalam (K. P. Mohanan 1984). As is predicted by our analysis of the *aaNE* construction and the verbless construction involving non-nominative arguments, these two constructions behave like clefts with respect to questions. Consider full cleft questions:

- (40) a. *kaappi friDjil aaNE uLLatE.*  
 coffee-N fridge-L BE-PR BE-IT  
 It is in the fridge that the coffee is.
- b. *kaappi ewiTe aaNE uLLatE?*  
 coffee-N where BE-PR BE-IT  
 Where is the coffee? (Lit.: Where is it that the coffee is?)
- c. \* *entE friDjil aaNE uLLatE?*  
 coffee-N fridge-L BE-PR BE-IT

The asymmetry in (40) is replicated in the reduced cleft in (41), and the doubly reduced cleft in (42):

- (41) a. *kaappi friDjil aaNE.*  
 coffee-N fridge-L BE-PR  
 It is in the fridge that the coffee is.
- b. *kaappi ewiTe aaNE?*  
 coffee-N where BE-PR  
 Where is the coffee? (Lit.: Where is it that the coffee is?)
- c. \* *entE friDjil aaNE?*  
 coffee-N fridge-L BE-PR
- (42) a. *kaappi friDjil.*  
 coffee-N fridge-L  
 It is in the fridge that the coffee is.
- b. *kaappi ewiTe?*  
 coffee-N where  
 Where is the coffee? (Lit.: Where is it that the coffee is?)
- c. \* *entE friDjil?*  
 coffee-N fridge-L

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper, we set out to investigate the syntactic and semantic distribution of two copulas in Malayalam that exhibit what appears to be a considerable overlap in spite of the strong intuition of distinction. This apparent conflict between intuition and data has frustrated the attempts at a rigorous analysis.

Our solution to the problem crucially hinges on the observation of the following broad correspondences of form and meaning in the use of the two copulas:

<u>Form</u>		<u>Meaning</u>		Neutral		Non-Neutral
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(A)	NP-NOM	cop	NP-NOM		x is an element/subset of y		<i>aaNE</i>		—
(B)	NP-DAT	cop	NP-NOM		possession, experience		<i>uNTE</i>		<i>aaNE</i>
(C)	NP-NOM	cop	NP-LOC		location		<i>uNTE</i>		<i>aaNE</i>

We have proposed that:

*uNTE* is an existential copula with the meaning of [x EXIST (LOC y)], where y is an abstract or concrete entity in the semantic fields of experience, location or possession. It occurs in environments (B) and (C).

*aaNE* has a dual function. (i) It is a plain equative copula with the meaning of [x BE y], occurring in environment (A). (ii) It is also a cleft marker occurring in environments (B) and (C), yielding a reduced cleft of existential clauses whose full version contains the existential verb *uNTE*. In other words, when the copula in (B) and (C) is *aaNE*, it is a cleft of the corresponding *uNTE* clause.

What is surprising about our conclusion is the claim that *aaNE* in (B) and (C) is a reduced cleft of the corresponding *uNTE* clause even though there is no overt *uNTE* in the sentence. We provided corroborating evidence for this claim by examining the properties of the following types of verbless clauses:

	<u>Form</u>		<u>Meaning</u>	
(A')	NP-NOM	NP-NOM	x is an element/subset of y	(neutral meaning)
(B')	NP-DAT	NP-NOM	possession, experience	(non-neutral meaning)
(C')	NP-NOM	NP-LOC	location	(non-neutral meaning)

We showed that (A') is a counterpart of (A), and that (B') and (C') are counterparts of the clefts of (B) and (C) with *uNTE*. In other words, even though (B') and (C') do not contain any overt verb, they are doubly reduced existential clefts.

In short, our analysis leads us to the following types of existential clauses in Malayalam:

Neutral:	with the existential verb <i>uNTE</i> .
Full cleft:	with the existential verb <i>uNTE</i> and the cleft marker <i>aaNE</i> .
Reduced cleft:	with the cleft marker <i>aaNE</i> alone.
Doubly reduced cleft:	with no verbs.

Central to our argument is the analysis of a set of facts that are explained in terms of the property of uniqueness. We define UNQ as "x and nothing other than x". Since UNQ is central to our solution, acceptance of our analysis argues for the incorporation of UNQ as an atomic construct in the universal inventory of semantic representations in grammatical semantics.

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