<div align="center">ABSTRACT</div>

Rara & Rarissima

Future to express habitual actions in the past or present, and past to express immediate future!

The rara presented below have their origin in the contact with Tamil, the most widespread **Dravidian** language today spoken in India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Mauritius, Reunion, Thailand and Singapore by approximately 74 million people. Tamil has a **Subject-Object-Verb** word order or more precisely a verb final order and an **agglutinating, postpositional** and **suffixal** morphology. The rara to be dealt with here concern the interpretation of tense in Tamil.

Tamil verbs are conjugated for the three tenses: past, present and future. Verbs can thus be interpreted differently depending on the time reference and the context. However, there is not always a correlation between the morphological tense form and the corresponding time reference. Thus, for instance, the **past** tense forms of certain auxiliary verbs are used to express immediate **future**, as in the following situation *sānti iṅkē vā* [Shanti here come-imp.s.] 'Shanti come here'; *nāṉ va-ntu-viṭṭ-ēṉ* [I come-vbp-leave-pst-1s.] 'I'm coming'. Further, in a situation of threatening or warning, a conditional clause followed by a verb **in the past tense** is used to refer to the **future** time, as in *nī it-ai.t toṭṭ-āl ce-tt-āy* [you this-acc touch-cond. die-pst-2s.] 'If you touch this, you will die'.

Likewise, the interpretation of tenses in Tamil in the **future** is striking since it can be used to express rather various conditions than simply referring to future time. For instance, the **future tense** is used to express **habitual or repeated actions** or events in the **past** as in *ciṉṉa vayat-il nāṉ pamparam viḷaiyāṭu-v-ēṉ* [small age-loc I top play-fut-1s] '[when] I was young, I used to play with tops' or **present** as in *kumār aṭikkaṭi ciṉimā.v-ukku.p pō-v-āṉ* [Kumar often cinema-dat go-fut-3sm] 'Kumar often goes to the cinema'. Furthermore, **future** tense is also used in **generic** statements as in *māṭu piḷ tiṉ.ṉ-um* [cow grass eat-fut-3sn] 'Cows eat grass'. Thus, a hearer in a given speech situation can distinguish the time being referred to solely on the context.

Intensive long-term contact between several languages leads to languages influencing each other, as is the case in the small enclave of Pondichery between Tamil, French, English and other regional languages. As a result, the special features of Tamil in the future discussed above have been observed even in French and English.[1] Descendants of mixed Indian and French parentage in Pondichery, called Creoles, who are native French speakers, overseas French nationals, and "balanced" Tamil-French bilinguals, have carried over this tendency into their French. Thus, for instance, a Pondicherien French speaker may say[2] *Tous les matins elle* **ira** *à l'église*[3] to express a habitual action in the present or *n'importe qui* **aura** *ciseau, je* **prendrai** *des longues tresses comme ça,* **sera** *lourde, je* **garderai***, je* **prendrai** *le ciseau et* **cassera** *en deux*[4] to express a habitual or repeated action in the past. Further, in a sentence like *il y* **aura** *une grotte, devant la grotte il faut chanter pour la Vierge*[5] usage of the future is even extended to include descriptions, which would normally require the *imparfait* in French. Thus, even in the French variety of Pondichery, the future is used to express habitual actions in the past or present.

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[1] Here, however, the discussion is restricted to French alone.

[2] All quoted examples are taken from the recorded and analysed corpus of conversation which formed part of a research study on the language contact situation in Pondichery; cf. Kelkar-Stephan, 2005, *The French-Tamil Language Contact Situation in India*, Aachen: Shaker Verlag.

[3] She goes to the church every morning.

[4] It didn't matter who had a pair of scissors. I used to take them and cut the long, heavy braids [of some girls].

[5] There was a grotto and we had to sing for the Virgin Mother [standing] in front of it.