



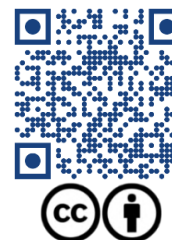
# The Conditional *enkil* as a Subtriggering Trigger: Evidence from Malayalam

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Received: 06 Feb 2026; Received in revised form: 08 Mar 2026; Accepted: 12 Mar 2026; Available online: 15 Mar 2026  
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**Abstract**— This paper examines the role of the conditional morpheme *enkil* in the Malayalam quantifier *aar-enkil-um*, arguing that *enkil* functions as a covert subtriggering trigger analogous to the subjunctive mood in Catalan as described by Dayal (2009). Building on the observation that English *any* is acceptable with necessity modals only when subtriggered by a post-nominal phrasal modifier, we show that *aar-enkil-um* is grammatical in non-overtly-subtriggered necessity modal contexts because *enkil* itself provides the subtriggering effect. This *enkil*-induced subtriggering is, however, strictly modal-specific: unlike overt subtriggering, which rescues *aar-um* in episodic contexts, the conditional *enkil* does not produce a subtriggering effect in episodic sentences, and *aar-enkil-um* remains ungrammatical in episodic contexts even with overt post-nominal modification. This modal-specificity reveals a previously undescribed constraint on covert subtriggering and has implications for the theory of free choice indefinites cross-linguistically.



**Keywords**— Conditional Morphology; Free Choice Items; Malayalam; Negative Polarity Items; Subtriggering.

## Introduction

The phenomenon of subtriggering — the rescue of a free choice item (FCI) in an otherwise illicit context through the addition of a post-nominal phrasal modifier — has been well-documented for English (LeGrand 1975; Dayal 1998) and several other languages. In English, **any** is unacceptable with a necessity modal unless subtriggered:

(1a) \***Ram must capture anybody.**

'Ram must capture anybody.'

(1b) **Ram must capture anybody he sees.**

(subtriggered)

'Ram must capture anybody he sees.'

Similarly, **any** is unacceptable in episodic sentences but can be rescued by subtriggering:

(2a) \***Minnu helped any child.**

'Minnu helped any child.'

(2b) **Minnu helped any child that came up to her.**

(subtriggered)

'Minnu helped any child that came up to her.'

Dayal (2009) observes that in languages where mood is morphologically visible, the subtriggering effect may be carried by mood rather than by an overt post-nominal modifier. Her Catalan data are illustrative:

(3a) **Van enaltir qualsevol voluntari que hagués participat en l'operació** (grammatical, subjunctive)

'They praised any volunteer that had [subj.] taken part in the operation.'

(3b) \* **Van enaltir qualsevol voluntari que havia participat en l'operació** (ungrammatical, indicative)

'They praised any volunteer that had [indic.] taken part in the operation.'

In (3a), the subjunctive mood produces a subtriggering effect that licenses the FCI; in (3b), the indicative does not. Dayal (2009) attributes this to the fact that the subjunctive introduces a set of non-actual possible individuals, which is precisely the domain needed for the FCI to be felicitous. This paper proposes that the Malayalam conditional

morpheme **enkil** in **aar-enkil-um** plays an analogous role, functioning as a covert subtriggering trigger in necessity modal contexts. Crucially, however, this **enkil**-induced subtriggering is modal-specific: it does not extend to episodic contexts, where the actuality requirement of the predicate clashes with the conditional semantics of **enkil**. This modal-specificity is, to our knowledge, a novel empirical finding in the literature on subtriggering.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 provides the theoretical background on subtriggering and the licensing of FCIs. Section 3 introduces the Malayalam quantifiers **aar-um** and **aar-enkil-um** and the conditional morpheme **enkil**. Section 4 presents the core data: the grammaticality of **aar-enkil-um** in non-subtriggered necessity modal contexts. Section 5 tests the modal-specificity claim through the episodic context data. Section 6 proposes an analysis, and Section 7 concludes with residual problems.

### Subtriggering: Theoretical Background

The term 'subtriggering' was introduced by LeGrand (1975) to refer to cases in which **any** is licensed by a subordinate clause. Dayal (1998) extended the notion to include adjectives and post-nominal modifiers more generally, showing that FCIs like **any** are felicitous in episodic sentences only in the presence of a post-nominal modifier. The reasoning is that FCIs are universal quantifiers over possible individuals; in episodic sentences without a modifier, there is no set of possible individuals to quantify over, rendering the FCI infelicitous. A post-nominal modifier introduces a set of possible individuals satisfying the modifier's restrictor condition, thereby supplying the domain the FCI requires.

Dayal (2009) characterises the licensing environments of **any** as follows: it is acceptable in generic statements (but not partitive generics), with possibility modals, with necessity modals only if subtriggered, and in episodic statements only if subtriggered. The key question for necessity modals is why subtriggering is specifically required there but not with possibility modals. The answer lies in the semantics of the modal operators: possibility modal operators allow strengthening through domain widening (Aloni 2002), while necessity modals do not, unless the domain is restricted by a subtriggering modifier.

The Catalan data from Dayal (2009) show that subtriggering need not be overt: the subjunctive mood itself can supply the relevant domain restriction. This opens the theoretical possibility that other morphological elements — such as conditional morphemes — might serve a similar function. The Malayalam data examined in this paper confirm this possibility while also revealing an important limit: such morphological subtriggering triggers may be constrained to specific modal environments.

### The Malayalam Quantifiers and the Conditional *enkil*

Malayalam has two counterparts for the English indefinite **any**: **aar-um** (who+CONJ, 'everyone'/'anyone') and **aar-enkil-um** (who+if+CONJ, 'someone'/'anyone'). In **aar-um**, the **-um** is the conjunction operator applied to the wh-word **aar** ('who'), yielding an infinite conjunction (universal force). In **aar-enkil-um**, **enkil** means 'if' and applies to **aar** before the conjunction, yielding an infinite disjunction (existential force). Both quantifiers function as NPIs and FCIs, as demonstrated by the following pairs:

(4) **aar-um ii pariikSa paas aak-um** (FC Reading)

who-CONJ this test pass be-MOD  
'Anyone will pass this test.'

(5) **aar-um var-illa** (NPI Reading)

who-CONJ come-NEG  
'No one will come.'

(6) **aar-enkil-um vann-aal mati-aa-yirunnu** (FC Reading)

who-if-CONJ came-if enough-be-ASP PRES  
'It would be enough if anyone came.'

(7) **aar-enkil-um ii pariikSa paas aa-kum-oo** (NPI Reading)

who-if-CONJ this test pass be-will-Q  
'Will anyone (at least one person) pass this test?'

The conditional morpheme **enkil** is a well-established conditional marker in Malayalam. When suffixed to an NP it can convey the meaning 'at least'; when it occurs at the end of a clause, it can mean 'although'. In **aar-enkil-um**, it is embedded between the wh-word and the conjunction, yielding a conditional-existential quantifier. This paper proposes that the conditional semantics of **enkil** — its introduction of a set of non-actual, hypothetical individuals — is precisely what produces the subtriggering effect in necessity modal contexts.

### The Core Finding: *enkil* as Subtriggering Trigger in Necessity Modals

In English, necessity modals that contain **any** become grammatical when subtriggered:

(8a) \***Ram must capture anybody.**

'Ram must capture anybody.'

(8b) **Ram must capture anybody he sees.**  
(subtriggered)

'Ram must capture anybody he sees.'

In Malayalam, **aar-um** behaves as English **any** does in this environment: it is ungrammatical without subtriggering but can be rescued by overt subtriggering. **aar-enkil-um**, however, is grammatical even without overt subtriggering. Consider the minimal contrast:

(9a) \* **amita ivar-il aar-e-yum iSTa-ppeta-Nam**

Amita these-LOC who-ACC-CONJ like-MOD

'Amita must like anyone.'

(9b) **amita ivar-il aar-e-enkil-um iSTa-ppeta-Nam**

Amita these-LOC who-ACC-if-CONJ like-MOD

'Amita must like anyone/someone.'

(10a) \* **John ii peNNungaL-il ninum aar-e-yum therañə eTukk-aNam**

John these girls-LOC from who-ACC-CONJ choose take-MOD

'\*John must choose any of these girls.'

(10b) **John ii peNNungaL-il ninum aar-ey-enkil-um therañə eTukk-aNam**

John these girls-LOC from who-ACC-if-CONJ choose take-MOD

'John must choose any (one) of these girls.'

In (9a) and (10a), **aar-um** is infelicitous in the necessity modal context without overt subtriggering. In (9b) and (10b), **aar-enkil-um** is grammatical in the same environments without any overt post-nominal modification. The only difference between the grammatical and ungrammatical forms is the presence of **enkil** in the quantifier. This strongly suggests that **enkil** itself is responsible for the grammaticality of **aar-enkil-um** in these non-subtriggered necessity modal contexts.

When overt subtriggering is applied, both quantifiers become grammatical in necessity modal contexts:

(11a) **kaaNu-nna aar-ey-um ram piTi-k'k'aNam** (subtriggered)

see-PRES who-ACC-CONJ Ram capture-MOD

'Ram must capture anybody he sees.'

(11b) **kaaNu-nna aar-e-yenkil-um ram piTi-k'k'aNam** (subtriggered)

see-PRES who-ACC-if-CONJ Ram capture-MOD

'Ram must capture anybody he sees.'

This confirms that overt subtriggering rescues **aar-um** in necessity contexts, and that **aar-enkil-um** is felicitous both with and without overt subtriggering in such contexts. The analysis proposed here is that **enkil**, by introducing conditional (non-actual) semantics, provides the set of possible individuals that the FCI requires — precisely the function served by the subjunctive in Catalan. Just as the Catalan subjunctive licenses **any** by ensuring that the relative clause describes a non-actual set of individuals rather than an actual one, **enkil** licenses **aar-enkil-um** by embedding the quantifier in a conditional domain.

### The Modal-Specificity of *enkil*-Induced Subtriggering

Having established that **enkil** functions as a subtriggering trigger in necessity modal contexts, we now turn to the critical question of whether this effect is general or modal-specific. The test case is the episodic context. In English, **any** is unacceptable in episodic sentences but can be rescued by overt subtriggering:

(12a) \***She hated anybody.**

'She hated anybody.'

(12b) **She hated anybody who was not a Jew.** (subtriggered)

'She hated anybody who was not a Jew.'

Both Malayalam counterparts are ungrammatical in plain episodic sentences:

(13a) \* **avaL aar-ey-um veRu-ttu**

she who-ACC-CONJ hate-PAST

'\*She hated anybody.'

(13b) \* **avaL aar-e-yenkil-um veRu-ttu**

she who-ACC-if-CONJ hate-PAST

'\*She hated anybody.'

When overt subtriggering is applied to the episodic sentences, however, the two quantifiers diverge sharply:

(14a) **Jew alla-yirunna aar-ey-um avaL veRu-ttu** (grammatical)

Jew not-be who-ACC-CONJ she hate-PAST

'She hated anyone who was not a Jew.'

(14b) \* **Jew alla-yirunna aar-e-yenkil-um avaL veRu-ttu** (ungrammatical)

Jew not-be who-ACC-if-CONJ she hate-PAST

'\*She hated anyone who was not a Jew.'

This contrast is confirmed with additional data:

(15a) **ii vazhi pooy-a aar-ey-um amita sahaayi-ccu** (grammatical)

this way pass-PAST who-ACC-CONJ Amita help-PAST

'Amita helped anyone who passed this way.'

(15b) \* **ii vazhi pooy-a aar-e-yenkil-um amita sahaayi-ccu** (ungrammatical)

this way pass-PAST who-ACC-if-CONJ Amita help-PAST

\*'Amita helped anyone who passed this way.'

The results of (14)–(15) establish the modal-specificity of *enkil*-induced subtriggering unambiguously. *aar-um* is rescued by overt subtriggering in episodic contexts (14a, 15a), as expected given its domain-widening properties. *aar-enkil-um*, however, remains ungrammatical in episodic contexts even with overt subtriggering (14b, 15b). The conditional *enkil* does not produce a subtriggering effect in episodic sentences. More strikingly, the presence of *enkil* actively blocks rescue: overt subtriggering, which would otherwise be sufficient to license a free choice reading, cannot overcome the incompatibility that *enkil* introduces in the episodic context.

**Analysis**

The core of the proposed analysis is as follows. The conditional morpheme *enkil* introduces a set of hypothetical, non-actual individuals into the domain of the quantifier. In necessity modal contexts, this is precisely what is required for a subtriggering effect: the set of possible

individuals satisfying the conditional condition supplies the restrictor that the necessity modal operates over. The structure of *aar-enkil-um* in necessity modal contexts is analogous to a sentence with a subjunctive relative clause in Catalan: both introduce a set of non-actual individuals that the FCI quantifies over, making the sentence felicitous.

In episodic contexts, however, the semantics of the conditional *enkil* becomes incompatible with the actuality requirement of the episodic predicate. Episodic sentences assert that an event occurred at a specific time in the actual world. The conditional *enkil* introduces a hypothetical or non-actual domain, which conflicts with the assertion of actuality required by the episodic predicate. This conflict cannot be resolved by overt subtriggering, because the post-nominal modifier operates over actual individuals in the episodic context, while *enkil* continues to impose its non-actual domain restriction. The result is an irresolvable clash between the actuality of the episodic assertion and the hypotheticality of the conditional domain.

*aar-um*, lacking the conditional *enkil*, does not face this clash. Its domain-widening property extends to any sufficiently restricted domain, including one restricted by a post-nominal modifier in an episodic context. Overt subtriggering provides the restrictor needed to define a set of possible individuals, and *aar-um* quantifies over that set, yielding a grammatical sentence. This asymmetry — overt subtriggering rescues *aar-um* but not *aar-enkil-um* in episodic contexts — is therefore predicted by the analysis.

Table 1 below summarises the licensing conditions established in this paper and their comparison with Dayal's (2009) characterisation of English *any*:

Table 1. Licensing Conditions and Subtriggering Effects

Context	English any	aar-um	aar-enkil-um
Necessity modal (no subtriggering)	*	*	ok
Necessity modal (subtriggered)	ok	ok	ok
Episodic (no subtriggering)	*	*	*
Episodic (subtriggered)	ok	ok	*
Possibility/permission modal	ok	ok	ok
Generic + partitive	*	*	*

The table reveals that *aar-enkil-um* patterns with English *any* and *aar-um* in most environments, but diverges in two critical respects: it does not need overt subtriggering in necessity modal contexts (because *enkil* supplies the subtriggering effect), and it cannot be rescued by overt subtriggering in episodic contexts (because *enkil*'s conditional semantics is incompatible with episodic actuality). These two divergences are the direct

consequences of the modal-specific subtriggering mechanism proposed in this paper.

**Conclusion and Residual Problems**

This paper has proposed that the conditional morpheme *enkil* in the Malayalam quantifier *aar-enkil-um* functions as a covert subtriggering trigger in necessity modal contexts, analogous to the subjunctive mood in Catalan (Dayal 2009). This *enkil*-induced subtriggering accounts for the

grammaticality of **aar-enkil-um** in non-overtly-subtriggered necessity modal contexts where **aar-um** — like English **any** — is ungrammatical. The proposal is further supported by the modal-specificity of the **enkil**-induced subtriggering: unlike overt subtriggering, which rescues **aar-um** in episodic contexts, **enkil** does not produce a subtriggering effect in episodic sentences, and **aar-enkil-um** remains ungrammatical in episodic contexts even with overt post-nominal modification.

The modal-specificity of **enkil**-induced subtriggering is a novel finding that adds to the cross-linguistic picture of how morphological elements can carry subtriggering effects. It also raises new questions. Why does **enkil**'s conditional semantics produce the subtriggering effect only in modal contexts? Is the incompatibility of **enkil** with episodic actuality a general property of conditional morphemes, or specific to **enkil** in Malayalam? What is the relationship between the subjunctive mood cross-linguistically and conditional morphemes in terms of their subtriggering-triggering capacity?

Additionally, the behaviour of **aar-enkil-um** with negation raises related questions. **aar-enkil-um** is infelicitous with negation alone (\* **aar-enkil-um var-illa**) but felicitous when the negative element is clause-external to the **enkil-um** element (**aar-enkil-um var-um-ennə ñaan pRatiikSik'k'unnilla**, 'I don't expect anyone to come'). This suggests a locality condition on the interaction between the conditional **enkil** and negative licensing that requires further investigation. The asymmetry in imperative contexts — **aar-enkil-um** is blocked in the negative imperative while **aar-um** is blocked in the positive imperative — also awaits a principled account within the framework proposed here. These residual questions are left for future research.

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