

# Iamitives

Perfects in Southeast Asia and beyond

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## Abstract

This study explores grammatical markers with meanings similar to the English perfect tense and words like *already*, as found in numerous languages across the world, and perhaps especially in languages of Southeast Asia, with the aim of describing the main function of these markers. Such items have previously been treated as belonging to the same category as the perfects of European languages but are tentatively termed “iamitives” in this study (from Latin *iam* ‘already’) since they differ from perfects in many respects. The investigation focusses on the semantic and pragmatic factors that determine the use of iamitive-like markers in Indonesian/Malay, Thai, Vietnamese and Mandarin Chinese, based on questionnaire data obtained through work with native speakers of the languages, with additional data coming from a number of languages spoken in other parts of the world. The results highlight the differences and similarities that can be found between iamitives, perfects and ‘already’, and explicates a number of conditions that are crucial for the use of iamitives, notably involving notions such as change-of-state and speaker expectations.

**Keywords:** aspect, tense, perfect, Southeast Asian languages

## Sammanfattning

Denna studie undersöker grammatiska markörer med betydelser som liknar engelskans perfekt och ord såsom *redan* vilka återfinns i många språk över hela världen och kanske särskilt i sydostasiatiska språk, med syftet att beskriva den huvudsakliga funktionen hos markörerna. Dessa har tidigare behandlats såsom tillhörande samma kategori som de europeiska språkens perfektmarkörer, men ges här den preliminära benämningen “iamitivor” (från latinets *iam* ‘redan’) då de skiljer sig från perfekt i flera avseenden. Undersökningen fokuserar på de semantiska och pragmatiska faktorer som bestämmer användningen av iamitiv-liknande markörer i indonesiska/malajiska, thai, vietnamesiska och mandarin, baserat på enkätdata som erhållits genom arbete med infödda talare av nämnda språk, samt ytterligare data från ett antal språk som talas i andra delar av världen. Resultaten belyser skillnader och likheter som finns mellan iamitivor, perfekt och ‘redan’, och tydliggör ett antal villkor som är avgörande för användningen av iamitivor, i synnerhet begrepp som övergångar till nya tillstånd och förväntningar hos talarna.

**Nyckelord:** aspekt, tempus, perfekt, sydostasiatiska språk

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## Abbreviations

ACC	Accusative
ADVERS	Adversative
ART	Article
CLAUSE	Clause marker
CL	Classifier
COMM	Comment marker
COMPL	Completive
COS	Change of state
DEM	Demonstrative
DIM	Diminutive
EMPH	Emphatic
EXCLAM	Exclamation
EXPER	Experiential
FUT	Future
GEN	Genitive
HORT	Hortative
IAM	Iamitive
IMP	Imperative
LNK	Linker
MOD	Modal
NEG	Negative
NEUT	Neutral
NONFUT	Non-future
PTCP	Participle
PFCT	Perfect
PFV	Perfective
PLUR	Plural
POSS	Possessive
PROSP	Prospective
PST	Past
PTCL	Particle
Q	Question marker
REDUPL	Reduplicated
REL	Relativizer
TOP	Topic
VEN	Venitive

# 1 Introduction

Several languages of Southeast Asia have words whose function often seems to be equivalent to that of the perfect tense/aspect, as found in English and other European languages. An example is Indonesian *sudah*, which is seen in the example below taken from a reference grammar:

- (1) Indonesian (Sneddon et al. 2010: 205)  
Dia **sudah** tidur.  
3sg            sleep  
'He has slept (and is now ready for work)'

Most examples with *sudah* given in Sneddon et al. (2010) are indeed translated with the English perfect *have V-ed* construction, so the correspondence between the two languages appears to be rather close at first glance. But there are many instances where *sudah* does not correspond to a perfect. Instead, *sudah* is translated using *already*, as in (2), or left untranslated, as in (3).

- (2) Indonesian (Sneddon et al. 2010: 23)  
Kecil-kecil, si Ali **sudah** pacaran.  
young.REDUPL DIM A.            date  
'Although young, Ali already has a girlfriend.'

- (3) Indonesian (Sneddon et al. 2010: 74)  
Kamar ini **sudah** bersih.  
room this            be.clean  
'This room is clean.'

Such patterns are not restricted to Indonesian. Languages of Southeast Asia typically have aspectotemporal markers that seemingly overlap with both the perfect and 'already', as in (1) and (2), while in other contexts the markers merely seem to indicate that a state holds at reference time, as in (3). This phenomenon is well known from languages of this area, but as lamented by Bisang (2006: 592), no detailed comparative survey has been done. The present study is an attempt to provide such a survey.

For the purposes of this work, the newly coined term *iamitive* (from Latin *iam* 'already') is used as a cover term for more or less grammaticalized markers that have functions shared by 'already' and the perfect. An important feature of iamitives is the marking of the current relevance of a previous event, as in (1) above. The notion "current relevance" is central in research on the perfect, and will be further discussed in Section 2. A second important feature concerns the way iamitives interact with stative situations. This will be developed later on in this work, but it can be noted at this point that certain types of states are particularly likely to be marked by iamitives, notably states that are the outcome of some natural process, such as 'be ripe' or 'be grown up'.

This study analyses markers that combine precisely these features, with focus on Indonesian/Malay, Thai, Vietnamese and Mandarin. Data from a number of other languages are also discussed, since iamitive-like markers seem to appear outside the Southeast Asian context as well. For example, Dahl (2001) notes that the use of the particle *su* 'already' in the Papuan language Hatam has much in common with the perfect, and Ebert (2001) makes similar claims about the Kiranti languages spoken in the Himalayas, to mention just two examples. While a global survey lies well beyond the scope of the present work, it can perhaps be seen as a first step towards a better understanding of iamitive-like markers in the languages of the world.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Several people contributed to this work, most importantly the speakers who provided data from their native languages: Pembayun Sekaringtyas, Auriza Salim Akbar, Sazziana Abdul Jalil, Sipapat Prasapsap, Hai Rydberg, Thanh Dong Nguyen, Teng-Chian Kuo and Xiaohui Zhang Östling. The term "iamitive" was invented by Östen Dahl.

## 1.1 Purpose

The major aim of this study is to provide a cross-linguistic analysis of the semantics and function of iamitive-like markers, with special focus on Southeast-Asian languages. This issue is highly relevant for research on the perfect, so an important aspect of the analysis will be to show whether iamitives can be said to differ in any significant way from the perfect gram-type (with which they have been grouped earlier, e.g. in Dahl and Velupillai 2005), and also, to show how their meaning and function differ from words meaning ‘already’, which is a recurring gloss in descriptions of iamitive-like markers in individual languages.

The central questions that need to be answered concern the semantic and pragmatic factors that shape the functional range of iamitives. What are the typical contexts that trigger the use of these markers? What are the features that these contexts have in common, within and across languages? If it can be shown that iamitives in different languages differ in their functional range – or obey different constraints – then this might be taken as clues about the diachronic development of the markers.

## 1.2 Background assumptions

The position on the meaning of grammatical categories that is adopted here can be summarized as follows. First, it is assumed that cross-linguistic comparison is a crucial tool in any attempt to delineate the functional range of a grammatical phenomenon. In the perspective of the diversity – and unity – that is exhibited by the languages of the world, it does not seem reasonable to analyze a linguistic category as a component of a self-contained system. Regardless of language, speakers are driven by largely the same communicative concerns, a fact that will be reflected in the make-up of the functional categories found in grammar. Speakers are also influenced by the languages that are spoken around them, and grammatical categories around the world cluster areally, as speakers model their use of linguistic structures on those employed by speakers of other languages with which they are in contact.

Second, it is maintained here that the purpose of investigating grammatical categories cannot be restricted to the mere question of which is the correct label to put on which marker, i.e. whether a given item fits better with, say, Comrie’s (1976) definition of a perfect or a perfective. The issue of correct labelling is of obvious importance in order to avoid terminological confusion, but ought not to constitute a goal in itself. Nor will there be any attempts to identify *the* meaning of a given grammatical marker, i.e. to provide some statement about its semantics that explains all the uses it can have. Although both of these approaches are commonly encountered in the descriptive literature, they are not capable of accounting for the heterogeneity of uses that a grammatical marker can have within a single language, while simultaneously accounting for the properties that such categories share across languages.

The alternative view that is adopted here treats the use of grammatical markers as resulting from a number of conditions and constraints whose interaction with the semantics of the marker determine when speakers use the category. These components ultimately originate in the diachronic sources from which grammatical markers derive, and are crucially shaped by influence from categories in other dominant languages. The aim of a study on a grammatical category across languages will then be to uncover the conditions and constraints that govern the use of the category in discourse, and to show how these factors differ across languages.

## 2 Theoretical issues

There is a vast literature on the perfect, and no attempt at a comprehensive survey will be done here.<sup>2</sup> Considerable amounts of ink have been spilt on the English Perfect (with McCoard 1978 being one of the most influential works), and much effort has been devoted to formal accounts of the semantics of the perfect (mostly the English Perfect; Reichenbach 1947 and Klein 1992 are two classics). Despite these endeavours there continues to be little agreement among researchers as to the semantics of the category. Studies on the perfect typically start out by listing a number of uses, such as “perfect of result”, “perfect of persistent situation”, “experiential” and “hot news” (see e.g. Comrie 1976: 56-61 for an overview of these) for which the author then attempts to provide a unified account. The minimal consensus seems to be that the perfect marks the current relevance of a previous event, although the precise meaning of ‘current’ and ‘relevance’ is hard to pin down (see e.g. Dahl and Hedin 2000). Diachronically, the current relevance feature is an extension of the “current result” meaning associated with the historic sources of the perfect: resultative constructions involving a copula and a participial verb form, and possessive constructions with a *habere*-verb plus a participle (see, e.g. Bybee et al. 1994: 69).<sup>3</sup> The grammaticalization paths of these so called *be*-perfects and *have*-perfects have received much attention in the literature (see e.g. Bybee et al. 1994: 68-69, Lindstedt 2000: 366ff.). This comes as no surprise given that the perfects of familiar European languages (e.g. Romance, Germanic, Finnish) are derived from resultative-possessive constructions.

Two other types of items are also mentioned in the literature as sources that give rise to perfects. Dahl notes that the Yoruba perfect (as used in his TMA questionnaire) is a particle with the meaning ‘already’ and that “there may well be more cases of a [perfect] derived from that kind of source” (1985: 129). Bybee and Dahl (1989: 68) add auxiliaries meaning ‘finish’ as another source of perfects, but do not provide further discussion on the issue. This lack of information on perfects with a non-resultative origin is unfortunately representative of the overall situation in the theoretical and cross-linguistic literature on tense and aspect, and it is hoped that the present work will contribute to our understanding of such perfects (if indeed they are perfects). There are, however, some important studies that will be discussed below.

One can distinguish four issues that are addressed in previous research on perfects of non-resultative origin. These recurring issues are: (1) current relevance; (2) interaction with predicates belonging to different Vendlerian aspectual classes (“Aktionsarten”); (3) the use of the Perfects (or some marker that seems to be derived from it) as marker of sequentiality in clause linking; and (4) non-aspectotemporal (or “modal”) uses of the Perfects. Based on this, a rough division into different “schools” can be attempted according to what issues are treated as central or marginal in earlier studies. One such research strand builds upon Li and Thompson (1981) and Li et al. (1982)’s analysis of Mandarin *le* and typically stresses current relevance, although this notion is applied differently by different researchers. Other authors focus on how the Perfects from ‘already’ and ‘finish’ interact with different Aktionsarten; this is true for the discussion in Bybee et al. 1994: 69-78, Ebert 2001 and Jenny 2001, and especially for a number of authors associated with the French linguist Antoine Culioli (Robert 1991, François 2003, Grangé 2010). Very little research is available on the use of these markers in clause linkage. The most thorough studies in this area are probably those on the diachronic development of Mandarin *le*, whose source verb *liao* ‘finish’ appears as a marker of sequentiality between clauses towards the end of the Han Dynasty (ca. AD 25-220; van den Berg and Wu 2006: 87ff.), a use that is not retained in present-day Mandarin. Finally, discussion of “modal” uses are typically kept brief, since most authors treat the aspectotemporal uses as primary, although others propose unified treatments to cover all uses of the items (e.g. Do-Hurinville 2006b for Vietnamese *đã*). This is an interesting issue, but it will not be

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<sup>2</sup>See e.g. Ritz (2012) for a recent overview.

<sup>3</sup>In fact, these are both resultative constructions. The differences lie in the choice of stative auxiliary (intransitive *be* versus transitive *have*), and in what argument is modified by the participial form (subject vs. direct object).

pursued here.

## 2.1 Current relevance and other pragmatic aspects

The purpose of Li and Thompson (1981) and Li et al.'s (1982) much cited work on the Mandarin sentence final *le* is to show that its main function in discourse is that of marking a “Currently Relevant State”. This is a feature that it shares with the perfect, and Li et al. do indeed regard *le* as a manifestation of the cross-linguistic category perfect (1982: 40). The approach taken is essentially pragmatic, with the goal of defining the “communicative function” of *le*. According to Li et al. (1982: 22), *le* signals that “a state of affairs has special current relevance to some particular Reference Time”, which is illustrated in (4), where *le* indicates that the relevance of the event “go shopping” holds at the moment of speech, so that Ms. Liao is not able to answer the phone call:

- (4) (Li and Thompson 1981: 240)  
(Someone calls Ms. Liao, and the person who answers the phone says:)  
tā chū-qù mǎi dōngxi le  
3sg exit-go buy thing  
'She's gone shopping'

In addition to illustrating the notion of current relevance, this example also illustrates a crucial methodological choice of Li et al.'s approach, namely the importance that is attributed to discourse context. Situating each example in a conversational setting (albeit an invented one) enables the authors to move beyond a purely sentence-based approach in which the understanding of grammatical categories is based on grammaticality judgements and translation equivalents.

Because of the impact Li and Thompson (1981) and Li et al. (1982) have had on subsequent research, their analysis will be discussed in some detail here. Li et al. explicates their notion of current relevance by identifying five situations (“categories” in their terminology) in which *le* is used to perform this function. The first situation involves a “Change of State”, as illustrated in (5). With *le*, this statement is appropriate in the specified context, since it signals that the state of ‘not being 24’ has changed into the state of ‘being 24’. The same statement without *le* could be used as a neutral (i.e., not signalling any change of state) answer to a waiter asking how many people there are (Li et al. 1982: 29).

- (5) (Li et al. 1982: 29)  
(One tour guide to another when the last tourist, after some delay, has finally climbed on the bus)  
wǒmen èr-shí-sì-ge le  
we two-ten-four-CL  
'Now there are 24 of us.'

This is clearly a change belonging to the temporal domain, but the notion Change of State also covers cases where the change is “simply a realization on the part of the speaker” (1982: 31), as when a speaker utters *xià yǔ le* ‘It’s raining’ just after discovering that it is raining. This is a very different conception of “change”, and other researchers have preferred to think of this in terms of manipulation of a “common ground” (van den Berg and Wu 2006: 32, Soh 2009).

In the second situation, “Correcting a Wrong Assumption”, *le* signals that the state of affairs is contrary to what the hearer assumes, as in (6).

- (6) (Li et al. 1982: 33)  
(To the accusation that the speaker has spent the afternoon sleeping)  
wǒ kàn-le sān-běn shū le  
I look-PFV three-CL book  
'(What do you mean?! I have read three books!'

Again, Li et al.'s analysis suggests that this use is not temporal but rather of a discourse-pragmatic nature. Note however that this example (as well as the two following below) also uses the homophonous marker *-le* immediately following the verb. This aspectual marker is often referred to as “verbal *le*” (in contrast to “sentential *le*”) and is typically analyzed as a perfective (Li and Thompson 1981: 185). The semantics of sentences with verbal and sentential *le* present at the same time will be discussed in Section 4.3.

The third situation, “Progress So Far” brings the hearer up to date about the progress the speaker has made in some activity:

- (7) (Li et al. 1982: 35)  
 Táng shī sān-bǎi-shou wǒ bèi-chu-lái-le yì-bàn le  
 T. poem three-hundred-CL I memorize-exit-come-PFV one-half  
 ‘I’ve memorized half of the 300 Tang poems now (so far).’

This use is rather difficult to separate from the Change of State-use, since “having memorized 300 poems” can be thought of as a change from the earlier situation “not having memorized 300 poems”. The authors specify that the progress concerns “a more extensive project or venture about which the speaker and hearer know”, but this description seems equally true of (5).

The same holds for the fourth situation, “What Happens Next”. This category is rather heterogeneous and includes situations where a new state of affairs “determines what happens next”, as in (8), and announcements about a state of affairs that is about to materialize, as in (9).

- (8) (Li et al. 1982: 36)  
 wǒ xǐ-hǎo-le yīfu le  
 I wash-finish-PFV clothes  
 ‘I’ve finished washing the clothes (so now we can go to the movies, etc.)’

- (9) (Li and Thompson 1981: 280)  
 Xiǎo Huáng jǐu yào lái le  
 Little Huang soon will come  
 ‘(Hurry!) Little Huang is about to arrive  
 (so: hide the gifts/put your pants on/get ready to holler ‘Surprise!’ etc.)!’

Example (8) is similar to (5) in that both express a change of state. Clearly, these utterances will have different consequences in their respective settings, but this depends on the implicatures to which they give rise and can hardly be attributed to different uses of *le*. The inclusion of events that are about to happen into this category is also hard to justify, since the “imminent” interpretation of (9) is not derived from the presence of *le*. The use of *le* and other iimitive-like markers in sentences describing events that are about to take place will be discussed in Section 4.2.

In the fifth situation, “Closing a Statement”, *le* “brings a statement into the current situation by tagging it as the speaker’s total contribution as of that moment” (Li et al. 1982: 37). The following pair of utterances are given as an illustration. The speaker does not need to add *le* in (10) since it is the answer to a question, and its relevance is therefore obvious. In (11) on the other hand, *le* is needed to signal that “the volunteered information is all that the speaker has to contribute at the moment” (Li et al. 1982: 38).

- (10) (Li et al. 1982: 37)  
 (To a child:) Why are you crying?  
 tā dǎ-le wǒ yì-quán  
 3sg hit-PFV 1sg one-punch  
 ‘S/he punched me.’

(11) (Li et al. 1982: 38)

(To a friend:)

tā dǎ-le wǒ yī-quán le

3sg hit-PFV 1sg one-punch

‘(What I want to say is that) s/he punched me! (and that’s it).’

Of the five situations this use is perhaps the most difficult to grasp, and Li and Thompson (1981: 288) note that omitting *le* in this situation “is probably the most common error made by nonnative speakers”. It is also hard to see what this use has to do with tense and aspect, and several authors question Li et al.’s treatment of *le* as a perfect altogether, e.g. Ebert, who states that “it seems doubtful whether sentence final *le* is an aspecto-temporal marker at all” (2001: 152), and van den Berg and Wu (2006), who do not refer to the domain of tense and aspect at all in their monograph on *le*.

Despite the doubts regarding the status of *le*, Li et al.’s account continues to exert influence on the analysis of perfect-like categories. Bisang and Sonaiya (1997) compare *le* with the Yoruba particle *ti* according to what they call a “typological framework for describing Perfect and its interaction with pragmatics” which essentially consists in the introduction of the notion “reference to a preconstructed domain” (1997: 157). Unfortunately, the authors remain vague about the application of this notion to *le*, as when they state that it “has to do with the speaker’s reaction towards certain presuppositions or even expectations with regard to a given situation”, which certainly is true for *le* but also for most other discourse-related phenomena. The discussion of Yoruba *ti* is clearer since the authors are more explicit about their interpretation of notions such as “expectation”. For example, they state that the utterance *ó ti jẹun* ‘s/he has eaten’ is possible only if the event is “preconstructed”, as in “a parent returning from work and wanting to know whether the baby has already been fed” (1997: 147). The force of this argument is diminished by the fact that it partly hinges on the presence of the English word *already* in the context supplied by the authors, but it still seems reasonable to interpret the response as conveying something akin to “the event that was expected to take place has indeed taken place, so it is not necessary to take any further action to make it happen”, a gloss that appears to match most of Bisang and Sonaiya’s other examples as well. Although it remains unclear to which extent the functions of Mandarin *le* and Yoruba *ti* coincide, it is unquestionable that both particles have discourse-pragmatic functions that go beyond those of the European Perfects. It will be argued later that many perfect-like markers in Southeast Asia (but arguably not *le*) are similar to Yoruba *ti* in that they crucially involve the expectations of the participants.

## 2.2 Interactions with Aktionsarten

A striking difference between for example Mandarin *le* or other categories that have been analyzed as perfects in Southeast Asian languages on the one hand, and Perfects in European languages on the other, is found in the way in which they combine with predicates of different aspectual classes, such as stative or dynamic verbs. Compare Mandarin *zhèi duǒ huā hóng le* “This flower is now red” where the interpretation is that the state of being red currently holds, with the Swedish sentence *Denna blomma har varit röd*, in which the Swedish Perfect is combined with the stative predicate *vara röd* ‘be red’. This sentence is a bit odd in isolation, but the most natural reading is probably that the flower used to be red but has switched to some other color, i.e. that the state does *not* hold at present. Such differences between iamitives and the perfect are discussed by several authors.

Iamitives combined with stative predicates convey not only that the state holds at reference time, but also that the current state is the outcome of a change of state. This is not a trivial observation, and authors typically devote some space to explain how they perceive this phenomenon. A recurring strategy in glossing such examples is to add the word *now* to the translation, and this word does indeed provide good illustration of the issue. The English word *now* is typically understood as a deictic pointing to the time frame immediately associated with the moment of speech. When combined with

a stative predicate that is understood to hold at reference time “by default”, *now* clearly adds the implicature that there has been a change of state: *this book costs 10 dollars now* is used to inform the hearer that the price of the book has gone up or down. A sentence such as *five times two equals ten now* is mathematically impeccable but pragmatically odd, since it suggests that this was not the case before. It is important to keep in mind that *now* merely implicates an earlier change of state, so the sentence refers to the ensuing state and not to the change of state itself. Sentences referring to a change of state would be e.g. *Liza reached the top of the mountain* and *the window broke*. This sometimes causes some confusion, as when Bybee et al. in a discussion of some iamitive-like markers state that “when such grams are used with stative predicates they take on a dynamic interpretation – that of the beginning of the state or becoming” (1994: 76) although their examples make clear that the interpretations in fact remain stative, but seen as resulting from a change of state, e.g. Island Carib *maráotu* ‘She is childless’ vs. *maráoharu* ‘She has become childless’ (p. 75).

Ebert draws attention to the change-of-state interpretation that is obtained when a Southeast Asian “perfect” is used with a stative predicate, and treats this as a crucial factor for not analyzing these markers as perfects. In her view the morphemes that she is discussing belong to a different gram type that marks a “new situation” (whence her term “newsit marker”), which she understands as “any situation following a limit” (Ebert 2001: 155). This definition also covers the interaction found between iamitives and activity predicates. Here, iamitives can apply to the situation after either the initial or final boundary (i.e. the starting point or endpoint of for example *to sing*). In Ebert’s view, this gives rise to ambiguity in a language without tense (where reference time is determined from context) so that an utterance of the type “we IAMITIVE eat” could have the readings ‘we are eating’ or ‘we have eaten’. The idea of a “new situation” is also prominent in work on iamitive-like categories by a number of French linguists (Grangé 2010 on Indonesian *sudah*, François 2003: 118ff. on Mwothlap *mal*; see also Robert 1991: 35ff. on the Wolof Perfect) who analyze these items as marking a situation preceded by a shift from an earlier negative situation. Ebert compares the “newsit” markers with the particle *already*, with which they share several important features, notably the presupposition of an earlier negative state/situation. The similarities with *already* are also central in studies on Mandarin sentential *le* by Soh and Gao (2008) and Soh (2009), and in work on the use of *already* in e.g. Singaporean English (Zhiming 1995, Fong 2005, Matthews and Yip 2009). The semantics of ‘already’ are outlined in the next section.

### 2.3 Research on ‘already’

There is a considerable amount of research on words meaning ‘already’, especially with focus on the semantic complexities of language-specific ‘already’-words (e.g. Löbner 1989 for a well-known take on German *schon*) but also cross-linguistic studies (van der Auwera 1993, 1998). There is disagreement about the accurate representation of the relationship between *already* and other “phasal adverbials” (to use van der Auwera’s term) such as *not yet*, *still* and *no more*, not to mention the differences between these words and their equivalents (or rather near-equivalents) in other languages. It should also be noted that phasal adverbials typically have various more or less idiomatic uses that are often referred to as “modal” (i.e. not related to the temporal domain – a rather unfortunate term perhaps) and often involve scalarity in one way or another. These uses are generally left outside the discussion, and a semantic representation covering all of them would hardly be feasible. Despite the controversy some basic semantics properties of ‘already’ can be given. The most fundamental is that *already* applies to (i.e. refers to or has scope over) a positive phase, and presupposes the corresponding negative phase, from which the positive phase is separated by a transition (a “change of state”). Therefore *already* is equally strange with “eternal” states as *now* (cf. above) such as *Five times two already equals ten*, and with states that are not preceded by their reverse counterpart, e.g. *This egg is already raw*. That this characterization is not sufficient to account for *already* is evident from that fact that *finally* also

shares the property of applying to a positive phase after a transition (this is probably also true for *now* in its phasal use), yet *already* and *finally* are not in any way synonymous – in fact, they are quite incompatible (\**She is finally already at home*). An account of phasal adverbials has to make reference to a second time line representing a different but possible course of events, against which the actual events are evaluated. A relatively straightforward example is when something happens earlier than expected, as in *It's only 6 p.m., but it's already dark* where the occurrence of the state *be dark* is evaluated against a possible or expected course of events in which it becomes dark at, say, 8 p.m. The impossibility of *already* occurring with *finally* is explained by the fact that *finally* requires to be evaluated as 'later than expected', a feature that is not supported by *already*. This holds for English *already*, but many languages have an 'already'-adverbial that freely combines with 'finally' (see Section 4.7), i.e., it "does not rule out late evaluation" (van der Auwera 1998: 48). The 'already'-words of these languages are in some sense "weaker" than English *already*, and it could perhaps be argued that they have little more in common with *already* than the core semantics of marking the positive phase after a transition. It will be argued here that imitative-like markers share precisely this core with *already*, while their function in language use is closer to that of the perfect.

### 3 Method and data

The primary method used in this study is questionnaire-based work with informants, combined with analysis of previous descriptive literature on the subject. This section discusses the rationale behind this methodological choice, and some of the problems associated with the approach.

Since the aims of this work are centered upon cross-linguistic comparison, it might seem appropriate to use the “traditional” method of typological research, i.e. analyze data from a representative sample of reference grammars. As a preliminary to the discussion of methodology, a short comment on the reason for rejecting this approach will be considered. It should be mentioned that the use of this method was actually attempted in the earliest stage of the investigation but it soon became apparent that it would not provide sufficiently detailed data for the purposes of the investigation.

Typological studies typically cover domains that are known from traditional grammar (e.g. relative clauses, comparison or negation) or domains that have been subject to more recent enthusiasm in the linguistic community (ergativity, evidentiality etc.), so that many of the parameters that are relevant for the investigation can be expected to be found in descriptive grammars, even for less familiar languages. This is not the case if the researcher chooses a phenomenon that has enjoyed less attention among field linguists, as is the case with the present study. Many grammars can be found that contain interesting data suggesting that the language indeed has some iamitive-like marker, but the cursory description that are typically offered make it impossible to draw any conclusions regarding the function of the items. The experience coming from work with such material made it obvious that the typological method would not be a viable approach.

#### 3.1 The Iamitive Questionnaire

##### 3.1.1 The use of questionnaires in cross-linguistic research

The use of translation questionnaires in typology is primarily associated with Dahl’s (1985) work on tense and aspect, and his study seems to be the only major application of this method to date. An extensive discussion of this method is provided by Dahl (1985: 44ff.), but it will also be discussed here since there are several differences in the application of this method for the present study.

Questionnaire work is basically a form of elicitation, and so carries with it all problems associated with this technique. It has a number of practical limitations and can impossibly be used for the kind of large scale language samples that are commonplace in typological studies. The design of the questionnaire can be very time-consuming since a preliminary version needs to be piloted with informants in order to arrive at a definite version. The present study was conducted during a 4-month period (with only a few weeks available for work with informants), and depended entirely on the availability of speakers who were willing to spend time filling out the questionnaire in return for coffee and snacks. Given these limitations there was no time to develop the questionnaire based on the experiences from the first sessions. Fortunately no major problems related to the questionnaire design were encountered during the work with informants.

The primary advantage of the questionnaire method is that it allows the researcher to obtain comparable data in a controlled way. If reference grammars are used, the outcome is dependent on whatever information happens to be present in, or can be derived from, the description made by the author of the grammar. Even if most grammars provide a wealth of interesting information, it is rarely the case that two authors choose to describe the same details of some related constructions in their respective languages, a fact that makes comparability hard to achieve. In a questionnaire the researcher can address whatever issues s/he is interested in. The importance of this fact is clearest when the research concerns some phenomenon that typically does not receive much attention by field linguists, either because it is unknown or considered to be marginal for some other reason. Yet, it is important to point out that the findings of a questionnaire are confined to what the researcher chooses to include in it, i.e.

it is impossible to avoid that the results are biased by the researcher's preconceived ideas about what kinds of questions are relevant to ask. The results obtained through a questionnaire will be a mere "best guess so far", but in many cases a far better guess than can be derived from reference grammars of the same languages.

Another important advantage of questionnaire data is that the researcher has the ability to construct a contextual setting which may serve to narrow down the possible interpretations of an utterance. In reference grammars it is not unusual that the author simply demonstrates the correctness of some label, say "Past Tense", "Perfect" or "Stative", by presenting a number of (elicited) examples with translations such as "She has sung" or "It has been raining". Such data given *in vacuo* are almost entirely uninformative if one is interested in the semantics of the category, since it is impossible to know to what extent the translations are justified, and if the translation equivalence between the source language and the language of the grammar continues to hold in examples other than the ones listed in the grammar (it probably doesn't). If, on the other hand, the sentence translated as "It has been raining" is accompanied by the gloss "The speaker looks out of the window. It isn't raining, but s/he sees that the street is wet, and says: ..." then the author of the grammar (or the researcher using the grammar as a secondary source) might, after comparing it with other examples, be justified in concluding that the category in question is used for, say, events that are inferred by the speaker.<sup>4</sup> The best way to ensure comparability when using a translation questionnaire is to provide such contextual clues to the native speaker in charge of the translation. Of course, it is impossible to provide sufficient contextual information to guarantee complete extensional isomorphy between sentences elicited from the same questionnaire item, but a carefully constructed context will be of help to both the speaker and the researcher in narrowing down the number of possible interpretations of a sentence.

### 3.1.2 Design of the Iamitive Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed so that it would address all the key issues that seemed relevant for the description of iamitives, with the limitation that a speaker should be able to work through it in at most 2 hours. The total number of items in the questionnaire was 38, with each "item" consisting of one or two short sentences to be translated. In the following, individual items from the questionnaire will be referred to using the letter Q and the number corresponding to the item (see the Appendix).

The questionnaire was developed during the first stages of the investigation and the choice of what to include was based on the picture that had emerged from the initial overview of the existing literature. It goes without saying that many questions emerged at later stages that ought to have been addressed in the questionnaire. But given that this is a pilot study, the questionnaire proved to be an adequate tool for unraveling some basic similarities and differences between the languages on which it was tested.

Since iamitive-like markers have been treated as perfects in some of the literature much of the focus of the questionnaire was laid on contexts that were likely to trigger a iamitive but not a European-style perfect, in order to clarify the basic differences between the two categories. For example, the items Q5–Q15 all concern states that hold at reference time and as such correspond to sentences with a copula verb and a predicative adjective or noun in e.g. English, and a perfect would be unlikely in these sentences. Most of the states are the outcome of a transition from a preceding negative state, and the contexts mark them as having direct consequences for the speech situation, as in (Q5). One sentence with a state lacking an initial transition was also included, as such states should not be compatible with iamitive-like markers (Q6).

(Q5) You can't eat this one. It BE ROTTEN.

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<sup>4</sup>The gloss is adapted from a corresponding item in Dahl's (1985) questionnaire.

(Q6) You can't eat this one. It BE RAW.

Another central questionnaire item that was included to provide a contrast against the perfect is (Q2) since it describes an unexpected event with clearly unfavourable consequences for the speaker, a type of scenario that should not be compatible with a iamitive with "fulfilled expectation" as a central part of its semantics.

(Q2) I LOSE my wallet! Can you help me look for it?

A weakness of the questionnaire in its present form is that pays no specific attention to the actual similarities between the perfect and iamitive-like markers. Since iamitives have been lumped together with perfects in some of the previous research, it was judged to be more important to pin down the differences between the two, and thus provide some new knowledge instead of confirming the old classification. If the present investigation is extended to more languages, it would be wise to include more questionnaire items covering the focal uses of the perfect (as in the questionnaires used by Dahl 1985 and Lindstedt 2000).

Following Dahl (1985) the verbs were given in the infinitive form (and in capital letters), in order to minimize the influence from the English verbal categories. Some of the questionnaire items consisted of one or two sentences without any special context indicated since the material to be translated was judged to give sufficient contextual clues by itself, as in (Q15). Other items added context within parentheses (Q33). The design was explained to the speakers and they were instructed to omit the parts within parentheses in their translation.

(Q15) Hurry up, we BE LATE!

(Q33) (On the phone: Tell your brother to start working!)  
It's ok, he WORK (= he is sitting in front of the computer, working)

### 3.1.3 Choice of informants

Several factors played a role in the choice of languages and informants. It was decided in an early stage of the investigation that the work should focus on languages of Southeast Asia, since these languages were known to have iamitive-like markers that have also been described in existing grammars. Languages from this area are also known for their largely isolating morphology, which means that the researcher does not have to perform any advanced morphological analysis to uncover what grammatical markers are used in the translations. This would have been very time-consuming, and a likely source of errors for a researcher without the required expertise of the languages.

A further advantage of working with Southeast Asian languages is that it is relatively easy to find speakers of the languages in Stockholm, where the research was carried out. As mentioned above, the project did not have any financial means at its disposal and therefore relied entirely on the speakers' interest and generosity for the data collection. Eventually, 8 speakers agreed to assist in translating the questionnaires into their native languages (see table 1). All of the speakers had lived in Sweden for shorter periods (between 1 and 4 years) except one of the Vietnamese speakers, who moved to Sweden in the 80's but has continued to use Vietnamese on a daily basis for professional purposes. All speakers had a good command of English, and some of them also some proficiency in Swedish. The questionnaire was translated in its entirety for all languages except Thai, where time constraints on the part of the speaker made it necessary to choose a few items that were considered to be crucial and have these translated.

The working procedure can then be summarized as follows. I met with each speaker at a café, offered the speaker some coffee or tea and briefly explained the task. I emphasized the importance of

Table 1: Native speakers in charge of translating the questionnaire.

	Language	Grew up in	Age group
Speaker 1	Indonesian	Jakarta, Indonesia	20–30
Speaker 2	Indonesian	Jakarta, Indonesia	20–30
Speaker 3	Malay	Singapore	20–30
Speaker 4	Thai	Nakhon Sawan, Thailand	20–30
Speaker 5	Vietnamese	Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam	50–60
Speaker 6	Vietnamese	Hanoi, Vietnam	20–30
Speaker 7	Mandarin Chinese	Taiwan	20–30
Speaker 8	Mandarin Chinese	China	20–30

making the translations sound as “natural” as possible, and asked the speaker to translate the items as if s/he were talking to a friend.<sup>5</sup> Each questionnaire was filled in by a single speaker except the ones for Indonesian, on which speaker 1 and 2 collaborated, and on Mandarin, which was filled out by speaker 7 and 8 on two different occasions.<sup>6</sup> For some of the items in the questionnaire it was of particular interest to know if it would be possible to add or remove a iamitive, and if this would change the meaning of the translation somehow. This type of manipulation was carried out carefully so that the speaker would not feel intimidated. One of the speakers seemed somewhat uneasy when asked this kind of question, so I immediately decided to let the person translate the items without any further interference.

The speakers filled out the questionnaire using their native orthography, except the Mandarin speaker who volunteered to write the translations in both Chinese characters and *pin yin*-romanization. The orthography was a problem only in the case of Thai since there is no agreed-upon method for romanizing Thai script. Instead, the speaker was asked to read the translations aloud so that a rough phonetic transcription could be made, and this was then used in combination with the native script to transliterate the sentences. It should be mentioned that the processing of the Thai questionnaire (transliteration and glossing) required more time than any other questionnaire, although the Thai speaker only translated 6 of the 38 items in the questionnaire. This gives an indication of the difficulties involved when working with unprocessed data written in an unfamiliar writing system.

### 3.2 Conventions

Language data are cited throughout with the name of the language and an indication of the source. For Indonesian, three different terms are used. Data from secondary sources are labeled as “Indonesian”, which is the name given by the sources used here. Questionnaire data from the speaker who grew up in Singapore is labeled “Singapore Malay” while the data from the Indonesian speakers are labeled “Jakarta Indonesian”. These labels are merely a convenient way of separating the different sources and should not be taken to mean that the data is supposed to be representative for some specific variety of Indonesian/Malay.

Data from the questionnaire is cited as (own data), and this also covers data that was obtained from

<sup>5</sup>The attentive reader will notice that this instruction was interpreted differently by the speakers, as can be seen in the data through the varying politeness levels shown in the choice of personal pronouns. In the examples pronouns will be glossed according to their referent, so that e.g. Thai *nǐu* is glossed as “1sg” if it refers to the speaker and as “2sg” if it refers to the addressee, without any reference to the politeness level or to the lexical meaning of the pronoun (‘rat’ in this case). It can only be hoped that each speaker’s choice of politeness level had no important impact on the tense and aspect markers used in the translations.

<sup>6</sup>Having several persons working together on a questionnaire is probably the ideal method, since it allows for interesting metadiscussion between the speakers about the meanings of the sentences and the different ways of translating them, an observation that could be applied in future research.

native speakers although not part of the questionnaire. Data from secondary sources are cited using the orthography of the source, which means that the Thai data from Jenny (2001) is written using a different romanization method than is used with the other Thai data.

## 4 The semantics and pragmatics of iamitives

This part presents the outcome of the investigation, along with discussion of the significance of the results. The presentation draws heavily on data from Indonesian/Malay, Thai, Vietnamese and Mandarin, for which data is available through the questionnaire and through secondary sources. These languages belong to four different language families: Austronesian, Tai-Kadai, Austro-Asiatic and Sino-Tibetan respectively, and are spoken in a region characterized by a long history of language contact, as evidenced by the fact that several of the iamitives in these languages seem to have been borrowed. The relevant markers in each language are given a short presentation below in order to orient the reader before the following discussion.

- **Indonesian/Malay:** In Indonesian, the iamitive *sudah* is placed before the verb, as can be seen above in examples (1–3). *Sudah* is considered to be a borrowing of Sanskrit *śuddha* ‘pure, acquitted’ (Gonda 1973: 565, cited in Grangé 2010: 6). Indonesian also has a second iamitive-like marker *telah* which differs subtly from *sudah* in its semantics, as mentioned in Section 4.3.1. However, the present work will not analyze *telah* in any detail, since this marker is mainly used in written language. The variety referred to as Malay in this work mainly employs the marker *dah*, with a function very close to Indonesian *sudah*. Some differences between these markers will be outlined in Section 4.3.2.
- **Thai:** The iamitive *lɛ̀w* generally appears sentence finally. It seems to be derived from Chinese *liǎo* ‘finish’ although this lexical meaning only survives in a few idiomatic expressions (Bisang 1992: 357ff., Jenny 2001: 125).
- **Vietnamese:** In this language there are two items that fit the description of iamitives: the preverbal marker *đã* and the sentence-final marker *rồi*. It is likely that *đã* is related to Indonesian *sudah* (Gregerson 1991; compare the Vietnamese progressive *đang*, presumably corresponding to the Indonesian progressive *sedang*), while the origin of *rồi* is unknown.
- **Mandarin:** The sentence-final particle *le* is outlined in Section 2.1 above, and the hypotheses about its origin will be discussed in Section 4.8. In this work, some of its interactions with the homophonous verb-final marker *le* and the word *yǐjīng* ‘already’ will also be discussed.

Additional data comes from several languages from different language families and geographical areas, that all have iamitive-like markers. These languages are Mwotlap (Austronesian), Lao (Tai-Kadai), Yoruba (Niger-Congo), Makalero (Papuan), Toqabaqita (Austronesian), Guaraní (Tupi-Guaraní), Baure (Arawak), Burmese (Sino-Tibetan) and Khmer (Austro-Asiatic).

### 4.1 Boundary selection depending on Aktionsart of predicate

It has already been mentioned that a clear difference between iamitives and perfects lies in the way they interact with predicates of different Aktionsarten (see 2.2). This section will provide discussion of these interactions based on data from several languages.

#### 4.1.1 Stative predicates

The most straight-forward interaction concerns stative predicates, which combine with iamitives to yield the reading that the state currently holds. This is also clear from the literature on the languages in the questionnaire: Indonesian (Gonda 1954: 251, Sneddon et al. 2010: 204, Grangé 2010: 12), Thai (Jenny 2001: 126, Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom 2005: 161), Vietnamese (Do-Hurinville 2004: 102ff.) and Mandarin (Chao 1968: 691ff., Li and Thompson 1981: 250). These authors point out that the assertion of the state is not “neutral” since the presence of a iamitive implies that the state is the result of a

change from the earlier negative state. This is illustrated for Vietnamese in (12a) where the presence of *đã* presents the state of being old as something that holds now (as opposed to before), while this implication is lacking in the “neutral” (b).

(12) Vietnamese (Do-Hurinville 2006a: 6)

- a. Paul **đã** già  
 P. be.old  
 ‘Paul is old now’
- b. Paul **rất** già  
 P. very be.old  
 ‘Paul is very old’

The presence of *now* (*maintenant* in the original) in the translation of (12a) is one example of how authors try to render the meaning of statives combined with iamitives. Another example comes from the description of the Austronesian language Mwotlap (François 2003). In the French original, the gloss *ça y est* ‘that’s it’ is systematically added to any utterance containing a stative predicate and the iamitive *mal*:

- (13) Mwotlap (François 2003: 118)  
 Berna **mal** tog Numea  
 B. stay Nouméa  
 ‘*Ça y est*, Bernard already lives in Nouméa”

The issue of stative predicates is addressed in the questionnaire, for instance in the following examples based on the trigger sentence Q5, repeated below. In all of the languages the iamitive is in fact obligatory in this context (Malay is not represented below, but behaves like Indonesian), seemingly because this kind of state (‘rotten’) is the end-point of a natural course going from non-rotten to rotten. Further discussion relating to the issue of natural developments towards some end-state will be provided in Section 4.3.

(Q5) You can’t eat this one. It BE ROTTEN.

- (14) Jakarta Indonesian (own data)  
 Kamu tidak bisa memakan-nya. Itu **sudah** busuk.  
 2sg NEG can eat-3 it rotten

- (15) Thai (own data)  
 an níi kin mây dâay, man nàw **léew**.  
 CL this eat NEG can it rotten

- (16) Vietnamese (own data)  
 Màỵ không thể ăn cái này được. Nó hỏng **rồi**.  
 2sg NEG can eat CL this get it rotten

- (17) Mandarin Chinese (own data)  
 nǐ bù néng chī zhè-ge. tā làn **le**  
 2sg NEG can eat this-CL 3sg rotten

On the contrary, iamitives are normally not possible if the situation is an initial state that does not originate in some previous state. Jenny (2001) notes that the Thai sentence below<sup>7</sup> would be possible

<sup>7</sup>In Jenny’s romanization system, *léew* is rendered as *leeu<sup>3</sup>*, with the superscript number indicating tone.

in a science fiction novel where people are born old and become younger, but not in ordinary life. A similar observation is made for Vietnamese *đã* by Do-Hurinville (2004: 105, n. 44).

- (18) Thai (Jenny 2001: 128)  
 \*khau<sup>4</sup> pen dek<sup>1</sup> lɛɛu<sup>3</sup>  
 3sg be child  
 ‘He is a child now’

Although there is no direct reason to question the *communis opinio* about the applicability of iamitives to stative predicates, a caveat regarding the difficulties of identifying genuinely stative predicates is in order. While English and other familiar European languages have verbs that make a clear differentiation between dynamic actions that mark the beginning of a situation, such as ‘fall asleep’ and, on the other hand, verbs that refer to the less dynamic situation that ensues, e.g. ‘sleep’, many languages have a number of verbs that express both the initial transition and the following situation (see e.g. Johansson 2000: 63–64). It can not be excluded that many of the verbs cited in the literature as “stative” in fact belong to this type, so that some of the verbs glossed as ‘rotten’ in (14)–(17) should perhaps be more adequately translated as ‘become rotten/be rotten’. If this is true for a given verb, the contrast between the way iamitives and perfects interact with the verb disappears, because the iamitive can be said to apply to its change-of-state reading (‘become rotten’), giving the same meaning as a perfect applied to a change-of-state verb, viz. “has become rotten”. However, the assumption will be made that the languages discussed here do have purely stative predicates, and that iamitives combine with these yielding the interpretation that a state holds at reference time, as described above, since this is the picture that emerges from the descriptive literature.

#### 4.1.2 Dynamic predicates

The interaction between iamitives and dynamic predicates crucially depends on the telicity of the predicate. With a telic predicate, the “new situation” asserted by the iamitive corresponds to the situation following the final boundary (or, with an achievement, following the only boundary). This is seen in the Vietnamese examples in (19) and (20), and the same effect is found with Indonesian *sudah* (Grangé 2010: 11), Thai *lɛɛw* (Jenny 2001: 126), Mandarin *le* (Soh 2009), Mwotlap *mal* (François 2003: 118).

- (19) Vietnamese (Do-Hurinville 2004: 99)  
 Paul *đã* vẽ một vòng tròn  
 P. draw one circle round  
 ‘Paul has drawn a circle’
- (20) Vietnamese (Do-Hurinville 2004: 98)  
 Paul *đã* tới  
 P. arrive  
 ‘Paul has come’

The interaction with predicates lacking a clear inherent end point is more complicated since a iamitive can be interpreted as applying either to the initial boundary, thus yielding an on-going interpretation, or to the final boundary, yielding a completed, “past” interpretation. This effect is emphasized by Ebert, who hypothesizes that this “flip-flop” is the origin of some asymmetries in the tense/aspect systems of the Kiranti languages (2001: 155). A clear example is provided by Mwotlap where a sentence with the Accomplished *mal/may* plus a verb such as ‘dance’ can receive two different temporal readings:

- (21) Mwotlap (François 2003: 118)  
 Ige susu **may** laklak.  
 PLUR small dance  
 a. ‘Ça y est, the children have started to dance.’  
 b. ‘Ça y est, the children have finished dancing.’

In François’ view this is explained by the fact that *mal* “operates on the punctual event *j* (rather than on the state *k*) [*l’Accompli travaille sur l’événement ponctuel j (plutôt que sur l’état k)*]” (2003: 118). Predicates denoting activities do not have a boundary (François’ “punctual event”) that is automatically more prominent than any other, so what transition is picked out by *mal* is a matter of context. François points out that this effect is not a property of the Accomplished but rather a property of the entire verbal system, since similar interactions are found with the other aspectotemporal markers of the language.

The same pattern of ambiguity is confirmed for Thai, where *léew* applied to a durative atelic situation “usually refers to the completion of either the act itself or of its beginning” (Jenny 2001: 126), as in (22), and closely related Lao (23). The same is observed in Indonesian, where an activity marked with *sudah* can be interpreted differently depending on the context (24) (this is also noted by Gonda 1954: 251).

- (22) Thai (Jenny 2001: 126)  
 khau<sup>4</sup> tham ñaan **léew**<sup>3</sup>.  
 3hum do work  
 a. ‘He has worked’  
 b. ‘He is working now’ (=‘He has started working’)
- (23) Lao (Enfield 2007: 182)  
 nam<sup>4</sup> nan<sup>4</sup> tom<sup>4</sup> **lèew**<sup>4</sup>  
 water DEM boil  
 a. ‘That water has already been put to boil (and is now heating up)’  
 b. ‘That water has already been boiled (and is now okay to drink)’
- (24) Indonesian (Grangé 2010: 12)  
 a. Iwan **sudah** bekerja, dia cepat-cepat pulang.  
 I. work 3sg quick-quick come.back  
 ‘Iwan has worked, he quickly comes back home.’  
 b. Iwan **sudah** bekerja, dia di depan komputer-nya.  
 I. work 3sg at front computer-3  
 ‘Iwan has started to work, he is in front of his computer.’

The situation in Vietnamese is difficult to assess, and there are no clear examples showing ambiguity with either *đã* or *rõi*. However, Do-Hurinville states that the Completive *xong* needs to be added to an activity predicate preceded by *đã* to show unambiguously that the final boundary of the situation is attained (2004: 96), so it appears that *đã* behaves similarly to *léew* and *sudah* in this respect, although no examples supporting this are given. An attempt was made in the questionnaire to address the issue of ambiguous readings of activities by including the trigger sentences in (25).

- (25) (On the phone:) Tell your brother to start working!  
 a. It’s ok, he WORK (= he is sitting in front of the computer, working)  
 b. It’s ok, he WORK (= he already finished the work)

For all the languages from which data were obtained on this point (Indonesian, Malay, Vietnamese and Mandarin) the speakers spontaneously marked the translation of (a) with a progressive (*sedang, tengah, dang* and *zài* respectively), whereas iamitives were used only in (b). The Malay and Vietnamese speakers also used an explicit completive in the (b) sentences (Malay *habis*, Vietnamese *xong*). The speakers were asked if the progressive marker in (a) could be replaced by a iamitive, but this version was readily accepted only by the Indonesian speakers (confirming the examples in 24). The Malay and Vietnamese speakers were reluctant to do this and the issue was not pursued further, in order to avoid forced translations. It is doubtful whether any conclusions can be drawn from these data, except that the different readings are not equally accessible to all speakers. It is also possible that the situations set up in (25) put too much emphasis on the “on-going” and “completive” nature of the sentences, so that speakers are not willing to leave this unmarked in the translations.

#### 4.1.3 Iamitives and resultative states

The discussion so far has treated the semantics of iamitives as a purely aspectual matter, but the interaction with predicate types and their aspectual boundaries should only be seen as a starting-point for the understanding of the more pragmatic functions of iamitives. Here, a brief illustration will be given showing that an account that relies exclusively on aspect clearly fails to explain the difference between the use of iamitives and perfects in sentences that have a resultative meaning (i.e., that refer to a state that is seen as the result of a past event; see Nedjalkov and Jaxontov 1988). In some languages with perfects, the availability of a resultative interpretation of a situation makes the use of the past tense unlikely, so that the perfect (or a devoted resultative construction) is used in such contexts instead, a use that is known as the “Perfect of result” (see Comrie 1976: 56). This can be seen in (26) which is a possible Swedish translation of Q35. Here, the perfect *har kommit* ‘has come’ is the idiomatic option and it cannot be replaced by a past tense verb, since the result of the event ‘to come’ continues to hold at reference time (the uncle is there).

(Q35) (At a party, commenting on which guests arrived:) S: Good, my uncle COME. Let’s go talk to him.

(26) Swedish (own knowledge)  
Vad bra, min farbror **har kommit**. Kom så går vi och pratar med honom.

However, it seems that the presence of a resultative meaning is not a sufficient condition for the use of iamitives. The Indonesian speakers spontaneously gave the translation in (27) for Q35, using only the bare verb *datang* ‘come’.

(27) Indonesian (own data)  
Bagus, paman-ku datang. Mari berbicara dengan-nya.  
good uncle-1 come HORT speak with-3

The iamitive *sudah* can be added before *datang*, but then implies that there was a strong expectation that the uncle would come. Similar observations can be made for the other languages of the questionnaire, which shows that a continuing result does not by itself trigger the use of a iamitive, but that there are additional pragmatic factors involved in their use. The pragmatic factors are in this case expectations, which will be discussed in Section 4.3.

In spite of this difference between the use of perfects and iamitives, it is argued here that iamitives are similar to perfects in that their central functional property is the marking of a new situation that has consequences at reference time, corresponding to the Current Relevance associated with perfects. For iamitives, however, current result does not seem to be a sufficient consequence. The next section illustrates a type of new situations that have more salient effects upon the speech situation, and therefore trigger iamitives.

## 4.2 Iamitives with “Imminent/prospective future” readings

Iamitive-like markers in several languages are claimed to be used for marking future events – a use that seemingly clashes with the recurring characterization of them as perfects. The type of future reference where they are found is what Comrie (1976: 64) calls “prospective aspect”, which is basically understood as a mirror-image of the perfect: instead of relating a present state with a previous event (as does the perfect), the prospective relates a present state to some future event. The English *be about to*-construction is an example of this, as in *We’re about to leave* uttered when the speaker is standing in the doorway, just before leaving. Strictly speaking this is not future reference, since reference is made to the state holding before the event and not to the event itself. Below, data from several languages illustrating this will be discussed.

Li and Thompson (1981) discuss Mandarin sentences with sentence-final *le* that have an “imminent” reading under the heading “What Happens Next”. Such sentences contain some explicit marker providing the imminent meaning, such as *yào* ‘want’ or *kuài* ‘fast; soon’, so it is not the case that *le* alone provides this interpretation. This is seen in (9), repeated here as (28):

- (28) Mandarin Chinese (Li and Thompson 1981: 280)  
 Xiǎo Huáng jiù yào lái le  
 Little Huang soon will come  
 ‘(Hurry!) Little Huang is about to arrive  
 (so: hide the gifts/put your pants on/get ready to holler ‘Surprise!’ etc.)!’

Jenny (2001) refers to the imminent future reading as “the most puzzling property of *léew*”, and notes that it usually, but not necessarily, combines with “prospective” *ca* or some adverbial that explicitly marks the future reference. Indonesian and Malay seem to behave in a similar way: *sudah* and *dah* can be used readily with events that are about to take place, but are then combined with markers such as Indonesian *mau* or Malay *nak*, both meaning ‘want’. Vietnamese uses *rồi* in combination with the prospective marker *sắp*. The trigger sentence and the data from Indonesian and Vietnamese are presented below.<sup>8</sup>

- (Q28) (At a birthday party for a child:) Little brother is about to arrive! (So hide the gifts/get ready to scream “surprise!”)

- (29) Indonesian (own data)  
 Budi sudah mau datang!  
 B. want come

- (30) Vietnamese (own data)  
 Nam sắp đến rồi!  
 boy PROSP come

Other authors also comment on the presence of iamitives in sentences with imminent future reference. Huber notes that Makalero *hai* in rare instances “can be said to have some sort of imminent reading” (2011: 363), as in the following example:

<sup>8</sup>The Vietnamese speakers were not asked whether it would be possible to add *đã* to the sentences elicited from Q28, but Do-Hurinville presents a literary example with *đã sắp* (Do-Hurinville 2004: 100):

Thứ đã sắp ngủ lại bị hơi lạnh làm tỉnh dậy  
 T. PROSP sleep but ADVERS breeze cold make wake.up  
 ‘Thứ was falling asleep when a fresh breeze woke him up  
 (Thứ était sur le point de s’assoupir quand une brise fraîche l’a réveillé)’

However, Do-Hurinville comments that this combination is not frequent (nor natural), although it is sometimes encountered in literary works from the first half of the 20th century.

- (31) Makalero (Papuan; Huber 2011: 363)  
 Aftane' isi-so'ot      hai mini-ni      uai=te'e      ei muni mei pa'uk-ini.  
 PST      1pl:POSS-want      follow-LNK      CLAUSE=after 2sg return take bad-do  
 'He was going to agree with us, then you spoil it.'

Similarly, the Toqabaqita Perfect *naqa* can be used for “situations that are on the verge of happening” (Lichtenberk 2008: 716). Such sentences usually contain a future-tense subject marker, as in (32), but Lichtenberk provides one example where *naqa* combines with a non-future subject marker and still has imminent future meaning (33).

- (32) Toqabaqita (Austronesian; Lichtenberk 2008: 716)  
 Qoo, kamiliqa miki      mae naqa! [...]  
 oh      1pl      1pl.FUT die  
 (Prisoners held in the lower deck of a ship and wanting to get out shouted.)  
 ‘Oh! We’re dying!/We’re about to die!’

- (33) Toqabaqita (Austronesian; Lichtenberk 2008: 716)  
 Nau ku      lae naqa  
 1sg      1sg.NONFUT go  
 ‘I’m going now’

Very similar examples can be found in languages from other parts of the world. One interesting case is presented by Guaraní *-ma*. This suffix is analyzed as a perfect in Tonhauser (2011), and the following description by Dietrich (2010: 78) connects it with *already*, making it seem clearly iamitive-like: “*-ma* specifies the resulting fulfillment of ‘an event that was consciously or unconsciously hoped for’, so the translation *ya* (‘already’) captures something essential [*-ma explicita la realización resultativa de ‘un hecho consciente o inconscientemente esperado’, de modo que la traducción castellana por ‘ya’ capta algo esencial*]”. Although not mentioned by the authors, *-ma* is also used with a prospective meaning, as is seen in the following example:

- (34) Guaraní (Tupian; Tonhauser 2006: 244)  
 Hake!      Ho'a-ta-ma!  
 watch.out      3.fall-MOD-PFCT  
 ‘Watch out! It’ll fall!’

Very similar examples from another South American language come from Baure (an Arawakan language) whose clearly iamitive-like Perfect *ver* also is used with prospective meaning (see Danielsen 2007: 260, 275).

Judging from the above data it appears misleading to say that iamitives can mark “future tense” (or anything similar). What the iamitives used above mark is the new situation that is predicted to lead to some future event (Comrie’s prospective). In fact, these examples constitute a good illustration of the core properties of iamitives: the existence of a “new situation” and its immediate relevance for the speech situation, as illustrated by Q28 (“He’s about to arrive – do something!”).

### 4.3 Expectations

This section describes the various ways in which expectations on different levels affect the use of iamitives, drawing on discussion in the existing literature and on data obtained through the questionnaire.

### 4.3.1 Iamitives making strong reference to expectations

In the beginning of his chapter on the Perfect, Comrie (1976) illustrates the idea of “continuing present relevance of a past situation” by means of the sentence *I have lost my penknife* as opposed to *I lost my penknife*. The former sentence implies that the penknife is still lost in a way that the latter does not, so it neatly captures one of the core functions of the English Perfect. But this use contrasts with the situation in Indonesian and Thai, where the corresponding examples (35-36) are rendered most naturally without any TMA particles. In fact, the Indonesian speakers judged (35) to be unacceptable if *sudah* is added, and the Thai speaker judged (36) to be unacceptable with *léew*.<sup>9</sup>

- (35) Jakarta Indonesian (own data)  
 I LOSE my wallet! Can you help me look for it?  
 Aku (\***sudah**) menghilangkan dompet-ku! Bisa-kah kamu membantu mencarika-nya?  
 1sg                    lose                    wallet-1            can-Q            2sg    help                    find-3
- (36) Thai (own data); same context as (35)  
 chûay hǎa krà pǎo nǎn nǎy? raw tham krà pǎo nǎn hǎay        (\***léew**).  
 help    find wallet                    little 1sg make wallet                    disappear

The question *Can you help me look for it?* unambiguously shows that the result of the event ‘lose one’s wallet’ is relevant at the moment of utterance, i.e. the wallet is still missing. Although Indonesian *sudah* and Thai *léew* share the feature of marking Current Relevance with the perfect their use seem to be banned from (35)–(36). It is likely that this restriction derives from a feature that has been noted in the literature on Indonesian *sudah* and Thai *léew*, viz. that these markers present a situation as expected by the speaker. To illustrate this feature of *sudah*, Grangé (2010: 13) points to the contrast between (37a) and (37b) and states that while (a) is a neutral assertion, (b) “seems bizarre, as if the speaker had expected this accident as something unavoidable, or wished for, or even premeditated”.<sup>10</sup> The neutral character of (a) comes from that fact that *telah* carries no such “subjective” meaning.

- (37) Indonesian (Grangé 2010: 13)
- a. Om Pasikom **telah** jatuh dari pohon.  
 Uncle P.                    fall    from tree  
 ‘Uncle Pasikom fell from a tree.’
- b. Om Pasikom **sudah** jatuh dari pohon.  
 Uncle P.                    fall    from tree  
 ‘Uncle Pasikom has already fallen from a tree.’

The difference between *sudah* and *telah* is highly interesting but the issue will not be pursued here.<sup>11</sup>

Very similar observations have been made for Thai. According to Jenny (2001: 128), *léew* expresses “that an *expected* situation has started or fully developed [my emphasis]”, and because of this (38) can be used only if Chai’s arrival was expected by the speaker. For the same reason, the utterance in (39) can only be interpreted as expressing surprise about Chai’s early arrival. The alternative translation is unavailable since it implies that Chai was not expected to come.

<sup>9</sup>Note that the Thai speaker preferred to reverse the order of the two sentences in (36).

<sup>10</sup>One of the Indonesian informants suggested that the sentence in (b) could be uttered naturally during a tree-climbing contest in which the speaker has placed a bet on Uncle Pasikom as loser of the contest.

<sup>11</sup>It appears that *telah* is primarily used in written Indonesian, and the Indonesian speakers who participated in the investigation reported that they were not entirely comfortable with this word. Grangé (2010) contains a neat overview of *sudah* and *telah* based on corpus data.

- (38) Thai (Jenny 2001: 128)  
 dii naʔ³, chai maa lɛɛu³.  
 good EMPH C. come  
 ‘Good, Chai has come now.’
- (39) Thai (Jenny 2001: 128)  
 plɛk¹ dii naʔ³, chai kɔ² maa lɛɛu³.  
 strange good EMPH C. COMM come  
 ‘How strange, Chai is already here’;  
 \*‘How strange, Chai has come too.’

These data suggest that speaker expectations are part of the semantics of at least some iatives, but before discussing the extent to which this is true across languages, it will be necessary to develop the concept of “expectation” somewhat. The preceding examples involved expectations that are part of the narrow speech situation, as when a guest is expected to show up at a party. But expectations can also be present on a wider scale, as when the occurrence of an event belongs to some more general cultural script. François (2003) discusses expectations on the “situation specific” and the “culture specific” level and shows that reference to both of these domains has to be made in order to account for the use of *mal*. The utterance in (40) can be made in the context of travelers reaching their destination, and so corresponds to the Thai example in (38) insofar as the expectation is associated with the speech situation and not to the wider cultural setting. The use of *mal* in (41) involves a culturally established expectation, since one is expected to have children at some point. François (2003: 120) explains the general use of *mal* in such statements by saying that “culturally, it is recognized as normal that during the course of life, one should get married, have children or visit the capital at least once” [*il est culturellement reconnu comme normal, dans la vie d’une personne, de se marier, d’avoir des enfants ou de visiter au moins une fois la capitale*].

- (40) Mwotlap (François 2003: 119)  
 kēy mal dēn me.  
 3pl reach VEN  
 ‘Ça y est, they have arrived.’
- (41) Mwotlap (François 2003: 120)  
 inti-mōyō mal aē?  
 son-2dual exist  
 ‘Do you have children?’

Mwotlap *mal* is opposed to the Perfect *me-* which does not carry any expectational meaning. The contrast between the two is made clear in (42) and (43). The Accomplished is used in (42) since marriage is seen as an obligatory event in a person’s life. If further specifications are added, as in (43), this implication is cancelled and the Perfect is used instead.

- (42) Mwotlap (François 2003: 123)  
 ithi-k may leg.  
 brother-1sg married  
 ‘My brother is already married, *ça y est*.’
- (43) Mwotlap (François 2003: 123)  
 ithi-k me-leg mi ni-misis vitwag.  
 brother-1sg PFCT-married with ART-white.woman one  
 ‘My brother is married to a European woman (\**ça y est*)’

The opposition between the Mwotlap Accomplished and Perfect is somewhat reminiscent of the contrast found between Indonesian *sudah* and *telah* in (37). The speakers who participated in the investigation did not employ *telah* so the function covered by the Mwotlap Perfect corresponds better to sentences without a iamitive in the variety represented here, as shown in the translations of (42) and (43) offered by the Indonesian speakers:

(44) Jakarta Indonesian (own data)

Kakak saya **sudah** menikah  
 older.sibling 1sg get.married  
 ‘My brother is married’

(45) Jakarta Indonesian (own data)

Kakak saya (\***sudah**) menikah dengan se-orang perempuan Eropa  
 older.sibling 1sg get.married with one-CL:person woman Europe  
 ‘My brother is married to a European woman.’

These data show the same pattern as the Mwotlap data: if asked about the marital status of the brother the answer will contain *sudah*, corresponding to the Mwotlap sentence in (42). If a specification is added, *sudah* can not be used. One of the Indonesian speakers commented on the impossibility of *sudah* in the latter sentence thus: “I cannot use *sudah* because what kind of woman he can be married to varies, and a European is not a type of woman that people must, or generally do, get married to”. This statement seems to summarize the phenomenon rather well: while ‘getting married’ is considered a “natural”, or even expected development and therefore combines with iamitive markers, ‘getting married to a European woman’ stands out as a more untypical course of events and so does not combine with Mwotlap *mal* and Indonesian *sudah*. The following Thai data points in the same direction, since *léew* is used in a question about marital status (although the author notes that this can be dropped in spoken Thai) and the corresponding answer (46), while no aspectotemporal markers are used in (47).

(46) Thai (Smyth 2002: 158)

a. khun téŋ ŋaan léew rá yang?  
 2sg get.married or remain  
 ‘Are you married?’  
 b. téŋ léew  
 get.married  
 ‘Yes.’

(47) Thai (Smyth 2002: 117)

faràŋ thii téŋ ŋaan kàp khon thay díaw níi mii yó  
 Westerner REL get.married with person Thai right.now exist many  
 ‘Now there are lots of Westerners who are married to Thais.’

One might be tempted to connect the use of iamitives marking events that are expected to take place during the course of life with the so called “experiential” use of the perfect, as in “Have you ever eaten a durian crêpe?”. However, several of the languages discussed here have a separate experiential marker, for example Indonesian *pernah*, and there are clear differences between how iamitives and experientials are used. It can be observed that experientials do not prompt the type of expectations that are often present with iamitives, so a question using *pernah* typically focusses on, for example, the knowledge gained by the person who tried the durian crêpe, and not whether the expected situation or outcome has been attained yet, as is the case with iamitives. With a question using an experiential, a likely follow-up to an affirmative answer could be “Ok, so tell me, is it as good as everybody says?”. With

a question containing a iamitive, the implication of an affirmative answer seems to be that it is not necessary to make any further effort to make the event take place, for example, undertake the trip to the capital or find some suitable partner to marry. The following minimal pair illustrates the difference between Indonesian *pernah* and *sudah* used in a question:

(48) Indonesian (own data)

A person has heard about durian crêpes but never ate it, and wants to know if it is good. So s/he asks a friend:

Kamu **pernah** makan durian crepe?

2sg    EXPER    eat    durian    crêpe

(the answer is perhaps “Yeah, they are pretty good – you should try it.”)

(49) Indonesian (own data)

At a picnic with some friends. The speaker brought food for everyone, including some durian crêpe for each participant. The speaker thinks that everybody has eaten their crêpe, but doesn’t remember if s/he gave one to Uncle Budi, or if he is still waiting to get his portion. So s/he asks him:

Kamu **sudah** makan durian crepe?

2sg                    eat    durian    crêpe

(the answer is perhaps “No, I didn’t get any.” – “Oh sorry, here you are.” etc.)

The use of *sudah* in (49) is in line with the expectation that every participant at the picnic is supposed to receive their allotted amount of durian crêpe, and until that has been fulfilled, the activity of distributing them needs to continue. The context in (48) has no such expectation built into it – durian crêpe is one of many Southeast Asian culinary trends and is not part of any cultural script demanding that a person should have it at some point during life, which is why a general question about it using *sudah* is hard to imagine.

To summarize, it can be concluded that Indonesian, Thai and Mwotlap have iamitives that make reference to expectations as part of their semantics, and this feature is apparently so strong that it is impossible to use a iamitive when an event is seen as unexpected (e.g. “I’ve lost my wallet!”), although the message is clearly of current relevance. These expectations apparently stem from both the narrow speech event and the broader cultural context, as made clear by François’ discussion. However, it is probably misguided to think of expectations in the speech event and in the cultural context as different “types” of expectations. Rather, these form part of a broader semantic feature that can be thought of as “natural development” and that is also highly relevant for the data discussed in the section on stative predicates (see Section 4.1.1).

#### 4.3.2 Iamitives involving less strong expectations

One of the most important findings of the present investigation is that the restriction banning iamitive-like markers from events that are not anticipated by the discourse participants seem to hold to a much lesser degree, or perhaps not at all, in Vietnamese, Mandarin and, interestingly, in the variety of Malay that is represented by questionnaire data. In what follows the data from these languages will be reviewed, starting with Vietnamese.

The situation in Vietnamese is complicated by the existence of the two iamitive-like markers *đã* and *rồi*, to which should be added the combination *đã...rồi* since the semantics of this construction differ from its constituent parts. All three marking possibilities overlap partly with Indonesian *sudah*, but one difference is found in item Q2 of the questionnaire, where both speakers used *rồi* in their translations, as in (50). This contrasts with the Indonesian and Thai sentences in (35) and (36) for which the speakers judged the addition of *sudah* and *λέω* unacceptable.

(50) Vietnamese (own data)

Tao mất ví rồi! Mà giúp tao tìm nó được không?  
1sg lose wallet 2sg help 1sg search it get not

One of the Vietnamese speakers was asked about the possibility of adding *đã* to the first part of (50) and judged this equally felicitous (giving *Tôi đã mất ví rồi!* ‘I’ve lost my wallet!’), although it is not clear if there is a difference in meaning between the two versions. These distributional facts indicate that the Vietnamese iimitives are not subject to the constraints that have been discussed in connection with (35) and (36) above. Additional support for this comes from item Q8 in which the Indonesian speakers rejected the use of *sudah* whereas the Vietnamese speakers used *rồi*:<sup>12</sup>

(51) Vietnamese (own data)

I received some bad news about my uncle. He BE ILL.  
Tao vừa nhận được tin xấu, Bác tao bị ốm rồi  
1sg just receive get bad.news uncle 1sg ADVERS sick

One of the speakers was also asked if *đã* can be added to the last part of (51), and stated that this was possible although with a slight difference in meaning that was not available to the speaker at the moment. Again, this suggests that the feature of “expected event” is much weaker in the Vietnamese markers than in the iimitives of Indonesian and Thai. At the same time it must be stressed that there is no reason to assume that expectations are absent from the meaning of *đã* and *rồi*, although this part of their semantics remains very elusive. In her study on *đã*, Vu (1985) refers to the notion “achieved objective [*objectif atteint*]” to explain the contribution of this marker in examples like (52a), where “the event can be considered preconstructed in that it corresponds to an aim [*le procès peut être considéré comme préconstruit en tant que correspondant à un objet visé*]”, which can be compared to Bisang and Sonaiya’s reference to a “preconstructed domain” in their discussion of Yoruba *ti*. The use of *đã* in (52a) is opposed to (52b), where no such preconstruction is implied.

(52) Vietnamese (Vu 1985: 24)

a. (A small boy impatiently awaits the return of his mum. When he sees her in the distance, he shouts:)

A! Mẹ đã về!  
EXCLAM mother come.back  
‘Oh, mum is back!’

b. (Remark by a child who happens to notice that mum has come back:)

A! Mẹ về!  
EXCLAM mother come.back  
‘Oh, mum is back!’

The semantics of *rồi* in this respect is even harder to pin down, and the existing literature does not bring much clarity to the issue. However, one observation that appears in the literature is that *rồi* is used to answer questions containing *chưa* ‘not yet’ (e.g. Do-Hurinville 2004: 139), as in the exchange in (53). This seems to suggest that *rồi* could be interpreted as meaning something akin to “what was expected to take place has indeed taken place”, although this interpretation is much dependent on ‘not yet’ as a translation of *chưa*, which is a complex issue in itself.

(53) Vietnamese (Vuong and Moore 1994: 156)

Mr. and Ms. Phụng are about to leave for the restaurant:

<sup>12</sup>One of the speakers first gave the sentence without *rồi*, then added it commenting that “it is used in spoken language”.

- a. *Mình chuẩn bị xong chưa?* [...]
   
2sg prepare COMPL not.yet
   
'Are you ready yet?'
- b. *Xong rồi mình ạ.*
  
COMPL 1sg PTCL
   
'I'm ready, dear.'

This suggests that *đã* and *rồi* do make reference to speaker expectations to some extent, but this part of their semantics is apparently not sufficiently strong to ban them from appearing in Q2.

The tense-aspect system of the variety of Malay that is represented by the data from Singaporean informant differs from Jakarta Indonesian in that Malay has three iimitive-like markers: *sudah*, *telah* and *dah*. The two first seem mostly confined to written language, and the speaker spontaneously used *dah* in the questionnaire. This marker is transparently derived from *sudah*, with loss of the first syllable (compare Vietnamese *đã* from the same source). The distribution of *dah* in the questionnaire is virtually identical to that of Indonesian *sudah*, so the two markers seem to carry a very similar functional load. But as in the Vietnamese case, Q2 shows that *dah* is permitted in this context, unlike Indonesian *sudah*. The speaker volunteered the sentence using a bare verb, but judged it to be fine with *dah* added, without any perceivable difference in meaning. Interestingly, the speaker rejected the addition of *sudah*, which apparently retains the same restriction as its Indonesian equivalent.

- (54) Singapore Malay (own data)  
 I LOSE my wallet! Can you help me look for it?  
 Dompet aku (**dah**/\***sudah**) hilang! Boleh tolong carikan?  
 wallet 1sg disappear can help find

The case of Mandarin is even more complex. Sentence-final *le* is similar to Vietnamese *đã* and *rồi* in that it is used in Q8: *Tā shēngbìng le* '(I received some bad news about my uncle) He is sick'. In fact, *le* is obligatory in this context, suggesting that its function in these situations is essentially to bring the hearer up to date about the new situation that holds. Thus this is one point where *le* differs from *sudah*. Yet, it is not difficult to find examples that seem to involve expectations. Example (5) above is a case in point: "being twenty-four" can be interpreted as an "expected" outcome given the scenario with the tourist guide waiting in the bus. However, the reason why *le* is used in that example is probably not directly related to expectations, rather it seems that any statement asserting a change of state that the speaker considers of direct importance to the speech situation needs to be marked by *le* in Mandarin. The presence of expectations is more salient in sentences with "double *le*", i.e. with both verbal *le* and sentential *le* present (separated by e.g. a noun phrase). The semantics of this construction are complicated, but two crucial conditions for its use are that (1) the event denoted by the verb is known by the speaker and the hearer because it is expected to take place, and, if the postverbal noun phrase is singular, (2) that the event is supposed to happen once and then it is no longer required to happen again (it is "enough for the time being"; Chappell 1986). A situation where a double *le*-sentence is appropriate is with the predicate *shuì jiào* 'sleep (a sleep)' used to confirm that a small child has taken its daily nap "and thus done what it's supposed to do" (Chappell 1986: 230), as in (55). Chappell contrasts this with the context of the Perrault-Grimm tale "Sleeping Beauty" (in which a princess sleeps for 100 years) where the comment in (55) would be impossible since 'sleep for 100 years' is not what one is supposed to do.

- (55) Mandarin Chinese (Chappell 1986: 230)  
 Tā shuì-le jiào le  
 3sg sleep-*PFV* sleep  
 'She's had her nap.'

Another situation where double *le* is excluded is given below. The requirement that the event is known by the speaker/hearer explains the infelicity of a double *le*-sentence as the answer to the WH-question in (56), since this answer would require that the event was expected. With sentence-final *le* added the interpretation of the answer would be “My elder brother has already kicked me once”, a reading that is not supported by the context.

(56) Mandarin Chinese (Chappell 1986: 229)

- a. Nǐ kū shénmo?  
2sg cry what  
‘Why are you crying?’
- b. Gēgē tī-le wǒ yì jiǎo (\*le)  
elder.brother kick-*PFV* 1sg once foot  
‘My elder brother kicked me’

The picture that emerges from these data (see also discussion in Chappell 1986) suggests that statements with sentence-final *le* need to be kept apart from sentences with double *le*, since the contribution of the two *le*’s in the second type is not simply the sum of the meanings that the two markers have when used independently. When sentence final *le* marks a change-of-state (or, more broadly, a new situation) it does not carry any meaning related to expectations, as opposed to *sudah* (and double *le*). This explains why *le* is compatible with the situations in Q2 and Q8 while *sudah* is impossible. Often *le* will be used in statements that refer to an expected outcome of a change-of-state, as in (5), where a possible interpretation is “We’re twenty-four, as expected, so now we can leave”, but this meaning arguably derives from implicature and is not part of the inherent semantics of *le*. That *le* has no such inherent meaning (as opposed to *sudah*) is confirmed by its use in Q2, where it is obligatorily present:

(57) Mandarin Chinese (own data)

- wǒ de qiánbāo diào le! Nǐ kěyǐ bāng wǒ zhǎo ma?  
1sg poss wallet fall 2sg can help 1sg find Q

In connection with the notes on double *le*, it should be mentioned that sentential *le* also often appears with the particle *yǐjīng* ‘already’, and with certain types of verbs the addition of *yǐjīng* is even obligatory if *le* is present (Chappell 1986: 231). The exact meaning of this combination lies outside the scope of this study. However, an interesting tendency that has not been made in the literature can be observed in the questionnaire data, namely that Mandarin sentences with *yǐjīng* and *le* pattern with sentences containing both *đã* and *rồi* in Vietnamese. The 8 Mandarin translations that contained *yǐjīng...le* correspond to translations with Vietnamese *đã...rồi*, although there were three additional contexts that triggered *đã...rồi*, so the correspondence is not complete. Most of these trigger sentences suggest situations where the event occurs earlier than the speaker or hearer expected (e.g. Q13 and Q14) and are quite compatible with ‘already’, although a Swedish speaker who was asked to fill out the questionnaire only used *redan* ‘already’ in one of these sentences (Q16). Other sentences that triggered *yǐjīng...le* and *đã...rồi* refer to “accumulative” processes (Q23, Q 25) which will be discussed in Section 4.4.

#### 4.3.3 Iamitives and expectations: patterns

This section briefly reviews some tentative conclusions that can be drawn from the results presented above. First, stative situations that are the outcome of a “natural course of events” must be distinguished. Clear examples of this come from the natural world, as the ripening of a fruit (or the passage from daytime to night, etc.). When the final stage of this kind of unidirectional development is reached and the consequences thereof are of pragmatic relevance to the speech situation (i.e. “It’s ripe – so you

can eat it”) a iamitive is necessarily used in all of the languages represented in the questionnaire. This use does not involve any additional expectations or wishes, so the use of iamitives is equally obligatory for a favourable outcome (‘be ripe’) as an adverse outcome (‘be rotten’). If the situation is not the outcome of any transition at all, but represents an initial stage, a iamitive is impossible in all languages, as in Q6 (You can’t eat this one. It BE RAW).

A second type of situation is a state that does not constitute the endpoint of some unidirectional, unavoidable process but rather a state that can shift back and forth freely, such as ‘be sick’ or ‘be well’. The languages of the questionnaire behave differently with this type of situation. The crucial questionnaire items are repeated below:

(Q8) (I received some bad news about my uncle) He BE ILL.

(Q9) (I received some good news about my uncle) He BE HEALTHY/WELL.

Mandarin demands sentence-final *le* in both sentences, since both are “new situations”. In Indonesian and Malay, *sudah* and *dah* are obligatory in Q9<sup>13</sup> but impossible in Q8 although this context also represents a new situation. The reason for this pattern is presumably that *sudah* and *dah* cannot mark transitory states that are unexpected (or not wished for), as the scenario in Q8 suggests. The Indonesian speakers volunteered this sentence with the Progressive *sedang*, giving *Dia sedang sakit* ‘He is ill’, but they judged it equally acceptable without *sedang*. Vietnamese seems to lean more towards Mandarin, since one of speakers used *rõi* in both Q8 and Q9, in accordance with the Mandarin speaker’s use of *le*. The other speaker used *rõi* at first only in Q9, but then added it to Q8 as well (see above), but also added that *rõi* is not obligatory in any of the two sentences. This contrasts with Mandarin *le* which must be present in both. Furthermore, the speaker who volunteered *rõi* in Q9 combined it with *đã*, a use that was judged fine by the other speaker although it was not volunteered. The exact contribution of the Vietnamese markers remains unclear, but the situation can perhaps be thought of as midway between Mandarin and Indonesian/Malay: iamitives are possible in both Q8 and Q9 (as with *le*), but Q9 is more “iamitive-worthy” and seems to attract the use of *đã* and *rõi* more than Q8 (corresponding to the use of *sudah/dah*).

The last puzzle concerns Q2 (“I’ve lost my wallet!”). Indonesian and Thai represent one extreme, since *sudah* and *léw* are impossible in this context, as in (35) and (36) above. Mandarin is at the other extreme with *le* obligatorily present, as in (57). Vietnamese patterns with Mandarin, as *rõi* is used in (50) (cf. discussion above), although it is not obligatory. It was observed above that the Malay speaker found the addition of *dah* fine in (54). It is impossible to draw any conclusions from a single example, but the possibility of using *dah* in this context could be related to a claim that is present in the literature, namely that preverbal *dah* has developed into a perfective in colloquial Malay (Soh 2012).

#### 4.4 Accumulation: “progress reports”

A common observation is that iamitives typically occur in contexts where progress in some “accumulative” process is reported, a use that Li et al. (1982) subsume under the category “progress so far” in their analysis of Mandarin *le* (see Section 2.1). Interestingly, this phenomenon seems to be particularly salient in wh-questions, as pointed out by a number of authors. Wh-questions were not treated in the questionnaire but the statements found in the literature offer a rather coherent picture of the contribution of iamitives in these contexts.

<sup>13</sup>Without iamitives, the translations of Q9 in Indonesian and Malay will be interpreted as general truths about the uncle. The version without iamitive offered by the Indonesian speakers, *Dia sehat* means “He is healthy” (as answer to a general question about the uncle), and the Malay translation *Dia baik* means “He is good (=a good person)”. The differences are due to the different lexical choices of the speakers.

According to Vu's (1985) discussion the presence of *đã* in the question below (mother asking a child) implies that there is a shared project involving a number of tasks that are supposed to be performed. The expected answer will not simply be a list of things, but a progress report about what events in the chain of tasks have been completed (Vu 1985: 26).

- (58) Vietnamese (Vu 1985: 25, diacritics added)  
 Hôm nay con đã làm được những gì?  
 day now 2sg do get PLUR what  
 'What have you managed to do today?'  
 ('*Qu'est-ce que tu as réussi à faire aujourd'hui ?*')

According to Jenny (2001) Thai *léew* can not be used in wh-questions except if the question is inquiring "about a quantity that has been reached by the time of asking" (2001: 129), as illustrated by the following pair:

- (59) Thai (Jenny 2001: 129)  
 a. \*khrai maa læu<sup>3</sup>?  
 who come  
 'Who has come?'  
 b. maa kan kii<sup>1</sup> khon læu<sup>3</sup>?  
 come together how.many CL  
 'How many people have come so far?'

The function of Burmese *-pi* in wh-questions is very similar, in that *pi* marks "a point on an imaginary scale reached by a certain time":

- (60) Burmese (Okell 1969: 384)  
 be-samye?hna-ăhtí hpa?-yá-pi-lè  
 which-page-up.to read-can-PI-Q  
 'Up to which page have you read so far?'

Okell also adds that "the notion of approaching the point by degrees still obtains, but there is the added implication [...] that there is yet more to come beyond this point". This description is echoed by Chappell, who states that a Mandarin sentence with double *le* "carries the implication of the action proceeding into the future" (1986: 226).

Similar examples are also found outside the Southeast Asian context. An interesting case is provided by Mwotlap, where a question about accumulation uses the iimitive *mal/may* (the "Accomplished") in combination with *vatag* 'already':<sup>14</sup>

- (61) Mwotlap (François 2001: 790)  
 Nêk may ēglal vatag n-eh vēvēh?  
 2sg know already ART-song how.many  
 'So far, how many songs do you have in your repertoire?'  
 ('*Jusqu'à présent, tu en es à combien de chansons à ton répertoire ?*')

<sup>14</sup>Interestingly, François also notes that in some of the closest relatives to Mwotlap the Accomplished is actually formed by combining the Perfect with 'already' (Mosina *me...vatag* and Vürës *mE...vitiag*) (François 2001: 790). One could speculate that the different constructions found in these languages (*mal...vatag*, *mal* and *me-* and their equivalents) represent different stages of the same grammaticalization path leading from 'already' to perfect via iimitive.

Bisang and Sonaiya (1997) make the same observation about the use of Yoruba *ti* in wh-questions. The question in (62a) using *ti* is used when there is a certain number of friends to be seen, and the speaker wants to know how many of these friends have effectively been seen, while (62b) involves no such “preconstruct”:

(62) Yoruba (Niger-Congo; Bisang and Sonaiya 1997: 148)

- a. ta lo ti rí nínú àwọn ọ̀rẹ́ ẹ.  
 who 2sg see inside PLUR friend POSS.2sg  
 ‘Who have you seen among your friends?’
- b. ta lo rí nínú àwọn ọ̀rẹ́ ẹ.  
 who 2sg see inside PLUR friend POSS.2sg  
 ‘Who did you see among your friends?’

These observations, made independently by different authors, are strikingly parallel. Indeed, this type of cumulative situation seems to be a prototypical context where iamitives appear, as they involve the occurrence of a new situation represented by the attained amount that is referred to by the predicate, and also expectations about some amount that should be reached.

Although data on wh-questions are not available from the questionnaire, there are two items that strongly suggest the type of progress that is asked about in the questions exemplified above, Q23 and Q25. These sentences triggered the use of iamitives in all of the languages in the questionnaire. Q23 (and the corresponding Q24) will be discussed in the next section, but it can be noted that the Malay speaker pointed out that (63) receives an on-going interpretation if *dah* is removed, i.e. “I’m reading three books”.

(Q23) (How is the reading going so far?) Good, I READ 3 books (so far).

(63) Singapore Malay (own data)  
 Baik, aku **dah** baca tiga buku  
 good 1sg read three book

Thus, it seems that *dah* is required to obtain the required telic reading of the sentence. The same comment was made by the Indonesian speakers about the presence of *sudah* in the translation of Q25. If it is removed, the sentence will have the on-going reading “I’m memorizing all of the poems now”.

(Q25) I MEMORIZE all of the poems now.

(64) Jakarta Indonesian (own data)  
 Aku sekarang **sudah** menghafal semua puisi.  
 1sg now memorize all poetry

These differences are interesting, but it is not known if they extend to the other languages that have been discussed.

#### 4.5 Occurrence restrictions with downward-entailing quantifiers

As discussed above, iamitives are used when the new situation is the result of accumulation on a scale. However, data suggest that iamitives are not used when the sentence expressing the attained amount is modified with certain quantifiers, known as downward-entailing in the literature. This is noted by Soh (2009), who discusses the incompatibility of Mandarin *le* with quantifiers such as *bùdào* ‘less than’ and *zuiduō* ‘at most’. Sentences containing such quantifiers were included in the questionnaire, notably the following pair:

(Q23) (How is the reading going so far?) Good, I READ three books (so far).

(Q24) (How is the reading going so far?) Bad, I only READ three books (so far).

The following data from four languages display a clear pattern: in the (a)-sentences, corresponding to Q23, iamitives are used in all languages. In the (b)-sentences, corresponding to Q24, none of the speakers used a iamitive, and all speakers judged the addition of a iamitive unacceptable.

(65) Mandarin Chinese (own data)

- a. Hén hǎo, wǒ xiànzài yǐjīng kàn-wán sān-běn shū le  
very good I so.far already look-finish three-CL book
- b. Hén hǎo, wǒ xiànzài cái kàn-wán sān-běn shū (\*le)  
not good I so.far only look-finish three-CL book

(66) Indonesian (Jakarta, own data)

- a. Mayan, aku sudah membaca tiga buku sejauh ini.  
great I read three book so.far
- b. Buruk, aku baru (\*sudah) membaca tiga buku sejauh ini.  
bad I only read three book so.far

(67) Vietnamese (own data)

- a. Tốt, tôi đã đọc ba quyển sách rồi.  
good I read three CL book
- b. Tôi chỉ mới (\*đã) đọc được ba quyển sách thôi (\*rồi)  
I only new read get three CL book only

(68) Thai (own data)

- a. kô dii raw àan dâay sǎam lêm léew  
PTCL good 1sg read get three CL:book
- b. mây khôy dii raw àan dâay khêe sǎam lêm (\*léew)  
NEG quite good 1sg read get only three CL:book

To account for these distributional facts a first hypothesis could be that the (b)-sentences refer to an unexpected or unfavourable situation, which could restrict the possibility of using a iamitive. This would not account for the impossibility of Mandarin *le* in (65b), however. As argued above, *le* does not involve expectations to the extent that Indonesian *sudah* does, so the adverse nature of the situation does not seem to be a sufficient reason for *le* to be excluded in this context. Also, none of speakers seemed to feel that the iamitive was impossible because of a clash with the expectations present in the context (as was noted by several speakers in the case with item Q2), but instead commented that it sounded “weird” with a iamitive added. A more likely hypothesis, it seems, is that iamitives are impossible with ‘only’ because of the change-of-state meaning implied by the markers, as argued for *le* by Soh (2009).

The argument goes as follows. When ‘only’ modifies a numeral expression (e.g. *three books*) it entails that all values higher than three are false, so that *only three books* is equivalent to *three books and at most three books*. Thus, ‘only’ is downward-entailing (as opposed to e.g. ‘at least’, which is upward-entailing).<sup>15</sup> Iamitives refer to the phase after a transition from a previous negative phase

<sup>15</sup>The issue of whether ‘only’ is downward-entailing is somewhat controversial (see Horn 1996 for discussion). The controversy does not affect the argument as presented here.

(from  $\neg P$  to  $P$ ), as do ‘already’ (cf. discussion in the background section). From this follows that if a iamitive (or ‘already’) has scope over, say, *only three books* this will signify that at reference time, the predication is true for three and at most three books. However, since iamitives presuppose an earlier negative phase, this entails that there was a previous situation where *not only three books* was true. Under negation the scale is reversed, so *not only three books* is equivalent to *more than three books*. This explains why iamitives and ‘already’ are incompatible with ‘only’: one cannot first have read ‘more than three books’ and then, after the transition to the positive phase, suddenly have read ‘three books and at most three books’.<sup>16</sup>

Note that *dah* in Colloquial Malay is claimed to be compatible with downward entailment when used in preverbal position (Soh 2012), which could be a further proof that the change-of-state meaning of *dah* has weakened as it is developing into a perfective. However, this claim is not supported by the questionnaire data, but this is perhaps because of dialect differences or some other unknown factor.

The constructions used to express ‘only’ in Southeast Asian languages are complicated and have received little attention in the literature. An interesting aspect of Indonesian *baru* ‘new’ is that apart from being used as a quantifier meaning ‘only’ it can be used to mark immediate past, as in *Dia baru tiba* ‘He just arrived’ (Sneddon et al. 2010: 207); in this use it is equally incompatible with *sudah*.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4.6 Interaction with negation

Words meaning ‘already’ and iamitives interact with negation in two ways depending on the scope relations holding between the negation and the iamitive. In the first case, the iamitive has scope over a negated predicate. The resulting meaning is a mirror-image of the meaning that an affirmative sentence has with a iamitive present: instead of asserting a positive phase and presupposing an earlier negative phase, the combination [iamitive[neg V]] asserts that a negative phase holds which is separated from an earlier positive phase by a transition. This meaning can be called “discontinuative”, since it says that an earlier situation does not continue (this term is used in van der Auwera 1998). Whereas English expresses discontinuative meaning by means of *no longer*, *no more* and *not anymore*, many languages express these notions by combining ‘already’ with a negator, e.g. Spanish *ya no* ‘no longer’ and Russian *uže ne* ‘no longer, not anymore’ (both lit. ‘already not’, cf. also Latin *iam non* ‘no longer’). Given that words meaning ‘already’ and iamitives have essentially the same semantics it comes as no surprise that several of the languages investigated here can express the notion ‘no longer’ by combining a iamitive with a negated predicate. In the languages represented in the questionnaire, this is the case in Indonesian/Malay, Thai and Mandarin. The questionnaire does not contain items involving negation, but such data are easily obtained from reference materials. In Indonesian, *sudah* preceding the negators *tidak* or *bukan* gives a discontinuative sense, often (but not obligatorily) with *lagi* ‘again’ cooccurring (69). Thai *mây* (NEG) combined with *léew* also gives a discontinuative sense (70), as well as Mandarin *le* combined with a negated predicate (71).

<sup>16</sup>This is because book-reading is an accumulative process, it is impossible to “un-read” a book. Other processes can go either way, e.g. states such as *have X [amount of money]*. This predicts that ‘only’ should be compatible with ‘already have X Swedish crowns’. This was confirmed by several Swedish speakers, who after some hesitation judged the following sentence to be perfectly fine: *Det är början av månaden och jag har redan bara 1000 kr kvar av min lön* ‘It’s the beginning of the month and I have already only 1000 crowns left of my salary’. Unfortunately, there was no time to test whether this prediction holds for the languages represented in the questionnaire.

<sup>17</sup>The polysemy pattern of markers expressing both scalar quantification and immediate past is also present in several Germanic languages, e.g. English *just*, or Swedish *precis* and Norwegian *akkurat*, both meaning ‘exactly’ in their scalar use. Interestingly, the Germanic markers are also incompatible with ‘already’ in their immediate past use (e.g. \**He has just already arrived*), so it seems that their original use of quantifying a scale remains present in their temporal use. A possible analysis is that the scalar use is simply transferred to the temporal domain, so that instead of quantifying a numeral scale, the markers quantify the time line. It is unclear if such an analysis could account for the polysemy of Indonesian *baru* ‘new’, however.

Table 2: “No longer”

Language	Construction	Analysis	Source
Baure	ver nka (...-wapa)	IAM NEG (...-COS)	Danielsen 2007: 276, 283, 299
Burmese	mə-...-tɔ̀-bù	NEG-...-?-NEG	Romeo 2008: 73
Indonesian	sudah tidak	IAM NEG	Sneddon et al. 2010: 209
Khmer	le:ng	“quit, no longer do”	Haiman 2011: 14, 259
Lao	bòø lèèw4	NEG IAM	Enfield 2007: 183
Makalero	hai nomo	IAM NEG	Huber 2011: 156-157
Mandarin	bu le	NEG IAM	Li and Thompson 1981: 252
Mwotlap	et-... si te	NEG-... also NEG	François 2003: 319
Thai	mây léew	NEG IAM	Howard 2000: 394-395
Toqabaqita	[negative] naqa	NEG IAM	Lichtenberk 2008: passim
Vietnamese	không...nũa	NEG...more	Vuong and Moore 1994: 85

(69) Indonesian (Sneddon et al. 2010: 210)

Karena asap menara pengendali **sudah** tidak terlihat lagi.  
 because smoke tower controller NEG be.seen again  
 ‘Because of the smoke the control tower could no longer be seen.’

(70) Thai (adapted from Howard 2000: 395)

thī sŭŋ phŭan kháw mây tŏŋ lian kan léew  
 that which friend 3sg NEG must study together  
 ‘[courses] which her friends don’t have to take anymore’

(71) Mandarin Chinese (Li and Thompson 1981: 254)

wǒ shízài huó-bu-xiàqù le  
 1sg really live-NEG-continue  
 ‘I can’t go on living anymore’

It is not clear whether Vietnamese *đã* and *rồi* combine with negation, but ‘no longer’ seems to be expressed by *không...nũa* lit. ‘not...more’, without any iamitives involved. An informal survey including some additional languages with iamitives (or, iamitive-like markers) shows that discontinuatives derived from iamitives are not restricted to the languages of the questionnaire: of the 11 languages, at least 7 can express discontinuative with a iamitive (see Table 2).

In the second case, the negation has scope over the “new situation” that is expressed by iamitives. This results in a slightly more complicated scenario. When the situation that is asserted by a iamitive is negated, this equals “new situation does not hold”, i.e. the previous situation continues at reference time. Iamitives presuppose a negative situation prior to the asserted situation, and since presuppositions survive under negation, the earlier situation is still negative. Thus, what is asserted is that a present negative situation is the continuation of an earlier negative situation – i.e., no change, which is equivalent to ‘still not’. However, just as the semantics of iamitives involve expectations to some degree, it seems that the negation of a iamitive-type “new situation” implies that the continuation of the negative situation is unexpected, i.e., it is expected that it will change into a positive situation. With this kind of expectation, ‘not yet’ is a better equivalent. Table 3 shows how ‘not yet’ is formed in the same 11 languages as above. Several languages actually combine ‘still’ with negation to express this domain, underlining the similarity between ‘still not’ and ‘not yet’.

There are two observations to be made about the data in Table 3. Firstly, the semantic description outlined immediately above suggests that these items have the meaning [not[iamitive V]], but none

Table 3: “Not yet”

Language	Construction	Analysis	Source
Baure	wokow	not.yet	Danielsen 2007: 341
Burmese	mə-...-θe-bù	NEG-...-still-NEG	Romeo 2008: 71
Indonesian	belum	not.yet	Sneddon et al. 2010: 209
Khmer	mwn toan	NEG be.in.time	Haiman 2011: 257
Lao	bóø than2	NEG on.time	Enfield 2007: 219
Makalero	oko nomo	still NEG	Huber 2011: 366
	oko-na	still-?	Huber 2011: 170
Mandarin	hái méi	still NEG	
Mwotlap	et-... qete	NEG-... ?	François 2003: 321
Thai	yaŋ mây	still NEG	Smyth 2002: 139
Toqabaqita	[negative] quu	NEG still	Lichtenberk 2008: 179
Vietnamese	chưa	not.yet	Vuong and Moore 1994: 243

of the 11 languages express ‘not yet’ using a negated iamitive, so there is no direct symmetry in the expression of ‘no longer’ and ‘not yet’. The reason for this asymmetry is probably that iamitives and ‘already’ are fundamentally markers of change-of-state, and since ‘not yet’ asserts that no change has occurred the development of a ‘not yet’-construction out of a negated ‘already’ is unlikely.<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, there are three languages that have simplex words meaning ‘not yet’ (Indonesian/Malay *belum*, Vietnamese *chưa* and Baure *wokow*), and Makalero has the semi-analyzable word *okona* (cf. *oko* ‘still’). For ‘no longer’, all languages in Table 2 use a negative morpheme combined with some particle, the only exception being Khmer *le:ng* which Haiman variously gives the glosses ‘release’, ‘let go’, ‘divorce’, ‘quit’, ‘no longer’ and ‘no longer do’, so it is not easy to say how well it corresponds to the markers in the other languages. ‘Not yet’ in Indonesian and Vietnamese is illustrated in (72) and (73). The other questionnaire languages, Mandarin and Thai, do not have simplex negative continuatives but use words meaning ‘still’ combined with a negative: Mandarin *hái méi* or *hái bu* (‘still NEG’) and Thai *yaŋ mây* (‘still NEG’), both meaning ‘not yet’.

(72) Indonesian (Sneddon et al. 2010: 121)  
 Masalah itu **belum** terselesaikan oleh kami.  
 matter this not.yet be.resolved by 2pl  
 ‘We haven’t yet been able to settle that matter.’

(73) Vietnamese (Thompson 1987: 211)  
 Ông ấy **chưa** về  
 he PTCL not.yet return  
 ‘He hasn’t returned home yet’

If the presence of simplex words meaning ‘not yet’ and relative absence of words meaning ‘no longer’ represents a real tendency (which is of course impossible to tell from these minimal data sets), then this would perhaps be possible to explain given the semantics associated with the different scope relations outlined above. That the meaning [not[iamitive/already V]] (i.e. ‘not yet’) is more commonly expressed by simplex forms than [iamitive/already[not V]] (‘no longer’) would be expected given that languages often have a number of words that are “inherently” negated, e.g. English *never*. It seems less likely that

<sup>18</sup>Note however that ‘not already’ is fine in contexts that license negative polarity items, so the conditional sentence “If you haven’t already finished your thesis, you should consider choosing a new topic” sounds much better than “I haven’t already finished my thesis”, at least outside context.

languages would have words with an “inherent ‘already’” built into them, which would be the case with simplex ‘no longer’. However, this remains purely speculative in the absence of more systematic data.

#### 4.7 Occurrence with *at last*-adverbials

It was noted in Section 2.3 that English *already* does not combine with adverbials such as *finally* and *at last* since their meaning ‘later than expected’ clashes with the semantics of *already*. Given that the semantic content that iamitives share with ‘already’ seems to be basically the change-of-state component and, to varying degree, the expression of expectations, one could speculate that iamitives should be compatible with ‘at last’-adverbials, since this would mean that iamitives have no meaning components that rule out a ‘later than expected’ interpretation. This possibility was not tested for in the questionnaire, but there is data from Indonesian supporting this, as *sudah* can be found with *akhirnya* ‘at last’:

- (74) Indonesian (Echols and Shadily 1975: 63)  
**Akhirnya** ia **sudah** berpindah ke alam baka  
 at.last 3sg move to world eternal  
 ‘He has finally gone to the great beyond’

However, in many languages the translation equivalent of English *already* is in fact compatible with *at last*-adverbials. Several such cases are cited by van der Auwera (1993: 623, 1998: 52), and further examples are not difficult to find, as in the following four languages:

- (75) Finnish (Matti Miestamo, p. c.)  
 Nyt on **jo vihdoin** kesä.  
 now is already at.last summer  
 ‘Now it’s finally summer’
- (76) Urarina (Olawsky 2006: 174)  
 nitçata+hanu-ĩ kuane **tabiitça nãe** ekoo-ka u-e  
 three+day-PTCP inside finally already appear-NEUT come-3  
 ‘After three days she [the lost girl] finally appeared.’
- (77) Luiseño (Hyde and Elliott 1994: 188)  
 ‘**íxmaqanik wám**’ mómka-t míi-qu\$.  
 finally already big-abs be-pst  
 ‘And already they (the acorns) were big’
- (78) Latin (Vergilius, *Aeneid* 6.61)  
**iam tandem** Italiae fugient-is prendimus or-as  
 already finally Italy.GEN fleeing-GEN grasp.PFV.1pl edge-PLUR.ACC  
 ‘At last we have reached the shores of fleeing Italy’

This shows that ‘already’ is a heterogeneous particle, and it is very likely that the ‘already’-words found in English and some other familiar European languages represent one end of a continuum with stronger semantic restrictions imposed upon them, while many languages have ‘already’ with more bleached semantics, making them similar to iamitives.

#### 4.8 Iamitives marking sequentiality

In several languages iamitives appear as markers of sequentiality, i.e. marking roughly that one event happens before another. The Thai sentence in (79) illustrates this use. The iamitive *léew* is in the usual position after the verb, but this sentence is followed by a second sentence, which results in something resembling clause linkage.

- (79) Thai (Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom 2005: 277)  
 prachum sèt léew khôy pay súu khǒŋ dii máy  
 meeting finish softly go buy thing good question.particle  
 ‘(After) the meeting is over, shall we go shopping?’

The semantics of this type of constructions are not entirely clear. Enfield (2007: 183) states that the clause marked with Lao *lèw4* often conveys an event that almost is a condition for the occurrence of the event in the second clause. The following sentence is one of the examples he gives:

- (80) Lao (Enfield 2007: 184)  
 lang3 caak5 namø-man2 muu3 man2 fot2 dèè1 lèw4 caw4 kaø qaw3 saj5-kòøk5  
 back from water-oily pig 3 boil a.little 2sg TOP.LNK take sausage  
 niø long2  
 TOP descend  
 ‘After the pork oil is boiling a little, you put the sausages in.’

It is tempting to analyze this as the same function that iamitives have elsewhere, i.e. marking a new situation with consequences at reference time, with the only difference that it is the second clause instead of the moment of speech that marks the reference point. This does not appear to be a correct analysis, because the sequential use does not show the type of pragmatic functions that have been discussed above. The examples (79) and (80) clearly show the kind of current relevance that triggers iamitives (“The meeting is over!” → we can go shopping) but this probably follows from the fact that such sequences of events are likely to be expressed using clause linkage constructions, and not from the use of *léew*. Many of the other examples offered by Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom (2005) and Enfield (2007) show no such pragmatic connection between the clauses, but rather seem to express narrative sequence.

The constructions in which iamitives appear as sequentiality markers also have varying structural properties, sometimes even within the same language. For example, Vietnamese *ròi* can appear last in a clause that also has the initial subordinator *khi* ‘when’ (81), but also without any other marker of the temporal relationship (82). In many cases *ròi* appears initially in the second clause, giving the impression that it has moved over the clause boundary (83). This suggests that the use of iamitives as markers of sequentiality is a separate function, especially since the use of *ròi* in (83) does not even involve a verb. Jenny (2001: 130-131) provides very similar examples from Thai, so this is not restricted to Vietnamese.

- (81) Vietnamese (Matthew 2:8, 1934 translation)  
 (...) khi tìm được rồi, hãy cho ta biết, ...  
 when seek get IMP make 1sg know  
 ‘(...) when you have found him, report to me (so that I also may come and worship him).’
- (82) Vietnamese (Matthew 8:28, 1934 translation)  
 Đức Chúa Jêsus qua bờ bên kia rồi, ...  
 holy lord Jesus cross shore side over  
 ‘And when he came to the other side, (...) (two demon-possessed men met him).’

- (83) Vietnamese (Matthew 8:15, 1934 translation)  
 (...) rét liền mắt đi; rồi người đứng dậy giúp việc hầu Ngài.  
 fever immediately disappear go 3sg stand.up help work serve 3sg  
 ‘(...) the fever left her: and she arose, and served him.’

Other languages have markers of sequentiality that are transparently derived from a iamitive although not phonologically identical. Example (84) illustrates Burmese *pì* used for connecting clauses which only differs in tone from the iamitive *pi*. Other cases are found in Malayo-Polynesian languages, which often have conjunctions meaning ‘after’ derived from a iamitive, e.g. Indonesian *sesudah* and *setelah*, Sasak *sesampun* (cf. *sampun* corresponding to Indonesian *sudah*).

- (84) Burmese (Okell 1969: 389)  
 nayi thó pei-pì sǎpwè-po tiñ-htà-t  
 clock key give-PI table-on place-put-NONFUT  
 ‘After winding up the clock (he) put (it) on the table’
- (85) Indonesian (own data)  
**Sesudah** minyak panas, taruh daging-nya.  
 after oil hot, put meat-3  
 ‘After the oil is hot, you add the meat.’

It is also worth noting that Mandarin verbal *-le* has one use that is very similar to the function of iamitives in the previous examples. None of the two *le*’s are used in clause combination in present-day Mandarin, but verbal (perfective) *-le* is clearly reminiscent of its origin as a marker of sequentiality. This use is called “First event in a sequence” by Li and Thompson:

- (86) Mandarin Chinese (Li and Thompson 1981: 198)  
 wǒ chī-wán-le nǐ chī  
 1sg eat-finish-PFV 2sg eat  
 ‘After I have finished eating, then you eat.’

The sequential use of iamitives is generally treated rather casually by authors (e.g. it is simply described as meaning ‘after’), so there is little information on the semantics of this construction. For example, it is not known whether there are restrictions on what types of predicates can combine with iamitives in these cases – the only exception is Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom (2005: 150), who state that Thai *léew* does not combine with stative verbs when used as a marker of sequentiality.

Yet, it can be argued that the sequentiality use offers some interesting perspectives on the diachronic development of iamitive-like markers. Important evidence comes from historical data on the Mandarin *le* particles, although it is not sure what conclusions can be drawn from it. The origin of verbal *-le* and sentential *le* is a controversial issue in Chinese linguistics, the two main hypothesis being (1) that the items come from the same source verb, *liǎo* ‘finish’; or (2) that verbal *-le* derives from *liǎo* while sentential *le* derives from the verb *lái* ‘come’. If we assume the first hypothesis to be correct, then this offers an interesting parallel to how iamitives are used both in main clauses and in clause linking across languages. According to this hypothesis, the origin of verbal *-le* and sentential *le* is to be found in constructions as the following, where *liǎo* marked the completion of one event followed by another:

- (87) Middle Chinese (Sun 1996: 89, no tone indicated in the source)  
 junguan shi liao, bian ji du jiang  
 officer eat finish then soon cross river  
 ‘Immediately after finishing eating, the officers cross the river.’

In this use, *liǎo* competed with a number of other verbs meaning ‘finish, complete’, which were gradually replaced by *liǎo* (Sun 1996: 88, van den Berg and Wu 2006: 88). It appears to be uncontroversial that this development lies behind verbal *le*, especially since the sequential use is still seen in modern Chinese, as noted for (86) above. Now, there are two main difficulties that have to be accounted for if one is to maintain that sentential *le* also derives from this construction: firstly, how a verb meaning ‘finish’ can combine with stative predicates giving a “state currently holds”-reading, and secondly, how sentential *le* acquired the various discourse-pragmatic uses found in present-day Mandarin. Stative predicates appear with sequential *liǎo* in texts from the Tang Dynasty (AD 618–907), as in the following example:

- (88) 10th century Chinese (van den Berg and Wu 2006: 89, no tone indicated in the source)  
 Zhi dai nan nü ankang **liao**, aniang fang shi bu youchou  
 until boy girl safe finish mum then begin not worry  
 ‘Mum will not stop worrying until the children are safe and well.’

The question is then how ‘be safe’ can combine with ‘finish’ to yield the interpretation “when they are safe”. In van den Berg and Wu’s account it is suggested that it is the entry into the state that is “finished”. This hypothesis might well be correct, but another, perhaps more plausible, scenario is that ‘finish’ signals completeness of the state, i.e. that the state holds to the fullest degree. Support for this view comes from Bybee et al. (1994: 71-75), who present data from several languages where ‘finish’ has the sense ‘completely’ when it is combined with stative predicates. It can also be noted that the translation “until the children are *completely* safe and well” fits well with the context in (88) and *completely* can be added to the other examples provided by van den Berg and Wu. As the completive meaning is bleached, what is left will be the ‘state currently holds’-meaning. During the period when *liǎo* starts to occur with stative predicates, it also starts appearing in sentence final position, i.e. without any other clause following. It is not clear how this shift happened, but *liǎo* was perhaps no longer felt to be a marker for linking clauses, but rather for larger discourse units, as it moved from ‘finish’ towards a more general completive sense. In its sentence-final use, *liǎo* often co-occurred, and later merged, with the particle *ye* which, according to van den Berg and Wu (2006: 89) expressed “assertion”. In their analysis, the pragmatic force of this particle was transferred to the sentence-final *le* which was the outcome of this merger. Although van den Berg and Wu’s account is speculative, it appears to be coherent with the cross-linguistic picture. There are many languages that have iamitive-like markers that also function as markers of sequentiality, including languages that cannot reasonably have been influenced by Chinese, e.g. Yoruba (Bisang and Sonaiya 1997: 150), Baure (Danielsen 2007: 275) and Bislama (Crowley 2004: 194), which undermines the idea that modern Mandarin *-le* and *le* are accidental homonyms (as would be the case if they come from two different source verbs). Furthermore, the fact that sentential *le* has several discourse-pragmatic functions that do not seem to be shared by other iamitive-like markers could be explained if these ultimately originate in the merger with the discourse particle *ye*, as suggested by van den Berg and Wu (2006).

Although inconclusive, the Chinese data are of clear interest since they offer a unique picture of the history of a iamitive-like marker. It is likely that the main functional differences between iamitives and European perfects are explained by their respective diachronic sources: iamitives derive from items implying transitions between phases, i.e. “already” and “finish”, while European perfects derive from resultative constructions, which refer to a current state without any presupposition about a transition from an earlier negative state. However, more research is needed to bring clarity to the issue of the origin of iamitives.

Table 4: Properties of iamitives in the languages of the questionnaire

	Indonesian <i>sudah</i>	Malay <i>dah</i>	Thai <i>léew</i>	Vietnamese <i>đã</i> <i>ròi</i>	Mandarin <i>le</i>	
“State holds” interpretation	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
On-going/completed ambiguity	yes	?	yes	yes?	?    ?	
Prospective reading	yes	yes	yes	no?	yes	yes
Strong/weak expectations	strong	weak	strong	weak	weak	–
Impossible with ‘only’	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
‘No longer’ when negated	yes	yes	yes	–	–	yes
Corresponding suppletive ‘no yet’	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no

## 5 Conclusions

The aim of this study has been to provide an analysis of the semantics and pragmatics of iamitives, a term that has been applied to aspectotemporal markers in different languages with functions that converge upon what seems to be a number of “core” uses, which in turn overlap to a large extent with the function of the perfect as found in European languages. This section summarizes the main findings, and proposes a typology of pragmatic factors that need to be taken into account in the description of iamitives and related categories. A simplified overview of some of the properties associated with the iamitives analyzed through the questionnaire is found in Table 3.

### 5.1 Summary of the main findings

As a starting point, Section 4.1 gave an overview of the interaction between iamitives and the aspectual properties inherent in the predicates they modify, and the temporal interpretations that arise as a consequence of these interactions. It was shown that iamitives apply to the situation following an aspectual boundary. With a single-boundary predicate the iamitive will have scope over the situation that holds after that boundary is crossed; if the predicate has both an initial and a final boundary, iamitives can apply to either one, so other overt aspectual indications or the context alone will show what boundary marks the transition.

The idea that iamitives mark a new situation with immediate consequences for the speech situation is particularly salient in their use with prospective situations (Section 4.2), i.e. when they apply to a state related to some subsequent event that is predicted to occur in the immediate future. Here, the consequences for the speech situation are typically that some action has to be undertaken before the prospective event occurs, for example in order to prevent it from occurring.

One of the most important results was outlined in Section 4.3, which reported on the role played by the expectations that are present in the speech situations for the use of iamitives. The sources of the expectations vary, as they can derive from generalized cultural scripts that determine what types of events are expected to occur during a person’s life, or from the circumstances in the narrower context of a conversation. It was argued that expectations constitute a crucial condition for the use of iamitives in many contexts, since the occurrence of an expected event typically has the implication that the affected participants no longer have to anticipate or wait for the event to occur – and once it occurs, the attention can be directed at other things. It was also argued that this meaning component prevents iamitives in Indonesian and Thai from occurring in utterances involving clearly unexpected developments, so this feature appears to be stronger in some languages than in others.

The feature “new situation with immediate consequences for the speech event” and the component of expectations are clear in utterances referring to accumulation along a scale, as discussed in Section 4.4. This type of context simultaneously involves a clear transition to a new situation each time a new

level on the scale is attained, and a situation where expectations on how far an activity is supposed to progress can be confirmed.

Related to the issue of scalarity is the restriction that was observed with constructions meaning ‘only’ in Section 4.5. It was argued that these constraints arise as a consequence of the presupposition about an earlier negative situation that it triggered by the iamitive. The fact that iamitives involve transitions between states is also evident from their interaction with negation, and in Section 4.6 it was suggested that some interesting cross-linguistic patterns can be glimpsed in the expression of ‘no longer’ and ‘not yet’ across languages, although this requires further research. Finally, it was argued that the use of iamitives in clause chaining expressing sequentiality could provide insights on the diachronic development of iamitives, based on hypotheses about the history of Chinese *le*.

## 5.2 Towards a typology of iamitive-worthiness

The findings presented in this study can be grouped along two parameters that appear to capture the principal features of iamitive-like markers: (1) the notion of a “new situation” that holds after a transition; and (2) the consequences that this situation has at reference time for the participants in the speech event. Iamitives have the former feature in common with ‘already’, while the latter is shared with the perfect. The discussion has traced the various components that make up a “new situation”, such as the attainment of the final stage of some natural course, or different types of accumulative processes. Furthermore, the factors that cause the “new situation” to be perceived as having pragmatically relevant consequences have been touched upon, and it was argued that the some of the differences between iamitive-like markers within and across languages derive from the varying impact of these factors. Future research on iamitives and similar grammatical phenomena can expand on these issues, in order to arrive at a comprehensive account that explains why speakers judge certain contexts to be “iamitive-worthy”, i.e. be appropriate for the use of these markers. An extended survey, building on data from more languages, is likely to increase our knowledge not only of iamitives, but also of the general pragmatic factors that determine the use of aspectotemporal such as the perfect.

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## 6 Appendix: The Imitative Questionnaire

**Instructions:** Please translate the sentences into your language (omit the bits within parentheses, these just explain the context). Try to make it sound as “natural” as possible, as if you were saying it to a friend! It’s important that you don’t try to translate “word-for-word”, because that will not sound natural. In order to avoid influence from English, the verbs (in CAPITAL letters) have been written in their infinitive form. Please translate them into whatever form sounds good in each sentence!

- (Q1) (I want to give your brother a book to read, but I don’t know which. Is there any of these books that he READ already?) Yes, he READ this book.
- (Q2) I LOSE my wallet! Can you help me look for it?
- (Q3) Did I tell you what happened to me yesterday? I LOSE my wallet! ...
- (Q4) ...Then I got a call from a man. He said he FIND it on the bus.
- (Q5) You can’t eat this one. It BE ROTTEN.
- (Q6) You can’t eat this one. It BE RAW.
- (Q7) You can eat this one. It BE RIPE.
- (Q8) I received some bad news about uncle X. He BE ILL.
- (Q9) I received some good news about uncle X. He BE HEALTHY/WELL.
- (Q10) Her child already BE A STUDENT.
- (Q11) He BE RICH, because he worked hard.
- (Q12) He BE RICH, what more does he want?
- (Q13) Her brother doesn’t have to apply for a visa, because he BE AN AMERICAN CITIZEN.
- (Q14) (A: Your brother is really nice!) B: Oh no, forget about him - he BE MARRIED.
- (Q15) Hurry up, we BE LATE!
- (Q16) When we arrived, the concert (already) START.
- (Q17) Oh no, I FORGET to put the ice cream in the freezer! It MELT!
- (Q18) (On the telephone: Can I speak to X?) No, he LEAVE 5 minutes ago.
- (Q19) (On the telephone: A: Can I speak to X? B: No, he’s not here...) He GO SHOPPING.
- (Q20) (Can I see you next month?) No, next month I BE in Japan.
- (Q21) (A: Where is my apple?) B: Oh, X EAT it.

- (Q22) (A: Oh, my stomach hurts now.) B: You EAT too much!
- (Q23) (A: How is the reading going so far?) B: Good, I READ 3 books (so far).
- (Q24) B: Bad, I only READ 3 books (so far).
- (Q25) I MEMORIZE all of the poems now.
- (Q26) I only MEMORIZE half of the poems (so far).
- (Q27) As soon as you SEE my brother, come and tell me.
- (Q28) (At a birthday party for a child) Little brother BE ABOUT TO ARRIVE! (So hide the gifts/get ready to scream "surprise!")
- (Q29) (To a child: A: Why are you crying?) B: She PUNCH me!
- (Q30) When the oil BOIL a little, you put the meat in.
- (Q31) When I GRADUATE, I got a really nice job.
- (Q32) When I GRADUATE, I became unemployed.
- (Q33) (On the phone:) Tell your brother to start working! It's ok, he WORK (= he is sitting in front of the computer, working)
- (Q34) It's ok, he WORK (= he already finished the work)
- (Q35) (At a party, commenting on which guests arrived:) Good, my uncle COME. Let's go talk to him.
- (Q36) How strange, my uncle COME. He wasn't invited.
- (Q37) (Calling to a friend who is at the party) Who COME?
- (Q38) Who COME so far?

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