An investigation on priority information used for the processing of Sinhalaese sentences.

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Introduction
The structure of the sinhalaese

Sinhalaese, one of the major languages spoken in sri lanka is a member of Indo-Arian language group such as hindi, pali Bengali and etc. due to geographical proximity an influence of the south Indian languages considerable amount of words have contributed to build Sinhalese present lexicons. Therefore, pali and Sanskrit are said to be the mother languages of the present Sinhalese (Gamage et al). Sinhalese can be devided basically in to two groups as literary Sinhalese and spoken Sinhalese. Again both categories can devide in to sub categories as formal and informal literary, and formal and informal spoken language. The present study investigates the Sinhalese in its informal spoken (colloquial) status.

Japanese and Sinhalese

Most of linguistic studies regarding the Sinhalese, the word order is considered to be SOV and, thus this makes Japanese and Sinhalese typologically in the same word order (Herath et al, 1994). Regardless to the word order fact, there are some grammatical and lexical components which demonstrate similarities and dissimilarities between Sinhalese and Japanese in their syntactical structure. The word order in Japanese sentences is flexible (Tamaoka et al, 2005). Yet, the word order is more flexible in Sinhalese when compared to Japanese word order. Even though the basic typological order remains SOV in Sinhalese, it can also be re-ordered to OSV or SVO (as same as English) with having the same meaning of the sentence in canonical SOV (see Hearth et al, 1994, p154).

Although, the case particles play a fundamental role in Japanese sentences when deciding the subject and object, unlike in Sinhalese, suffixation of nouns is very vital. Nominative case markers like ga/ha do not exist overtly as in Japanese and vice versa, Japanese nouns cannot be suffixed as Sinhalese nouns. Even though in Sinhalese the nominative is unmarked, yet
the other particles like de/ni/kara etc can be seen in Sinhalese structure too.

Possible information cues for predicting the canonical order in Japanese

There are three main information cues to determine the canonical word order used by Japanese native speakers (Tmaoka et al 2005). First, ‘the case particles’ in a noun phrases provide the necessary information to decide relation between a predicate and noun phrases: in Japanese, the nominative particle –ga assigns a noun phrase while –o assigns an accusative as in example 1). Furthermore, in japanese subject and object usually adhered with a particle with regardless to the animacy or the lexicons(contrast 1) & 2) with object). Here, having the case particles provide information for deciding Taro as the nominative noun phrase and Jiro as an accusative noun phrase. As a result the sentence can be taken to mean as Taro did an action of hitting Jiro. Second, canonical order can be predicted with ‘the thematic roles’. In the same example Taro ga Jiro o nagutta, an agent Tarou-ga proceeds a theme Jiro-o and the action (Verb) comes at the end and Taro-ga Jiro-o nagutta is organized. Third, ‘the grammatical funtions’ can also prove the canonical order in such a way that the subject precedes the object but not the vice versa. As in both 1) & 2), the subjects Taro and Hanako precede the objects Jiro and kocha.

1) 太郎が次郎を殴った。
   Taro-ga jiro-o nagutta
   SUBJECT (NOM +ga)  OBJECT (ACC +o)  VERB (hit +PAST)
   Taro hit Jiro

2) 花子が紅茶を作った。
   Hanako-ga kocha-o tsukutta
   SUBJECT (NOM+ga) OBJECT(ACC+o) VERB(make+PAST)
   Hanko made tea
Application of the cues for predicting the canonical order in Sinhalese

In the case of Sinhalese although the other particles exist as in Japanese, hitherto, case markers as nominative (/ga/ha/) or accusative (/o/) does not exist overtly ex 2) & 3). In 2), although the object Jiro is adhered by the dative –ta(to), there is no particle adhered to the subject Taro. Hence, in 3) both the subject and the object appear with no case markers. this contrasts Japanese particle usage as Japanese has both nominative –ga and accusative –o to indicate which is what. Therefore, evidently it is difficult to predict the canonical order with using case particles in Sinhalese as can be done in Japanese.

The second information cue ‘thematic roles’, seems to provide information of the canonical order only when the object is an animate. Below both 2) & 3) represent active sentences with transitive verbs. The object (jiro) is an animate noun in 1), while in 2) the object (tea) is an inanimate noun. Here it is evident that when an animate lexicon appears in the object the dative –ta adhere it but not when it’s inanimate. This structure can be presumed as 「SUBJECT/animate)+OBJECT/animate-ta/inanimate+VERB)」. But the question remains still predicting the canonical order when an inanimate comes to the object. Because, as in 4) it is not evident which is what (subject or object) when a particle does not vary them (giving the priority information). Therefore we can assume that the Interplay of animacy and the dative case-marker ta may play a major role when predicting canonical order of the Sinhalese sentences.

3) taro jirota gehuwa
   SUBJECT OBJECT(ACC+ta(dative)) VERB (hit+PAST)
   Taro hit Jiro

4) hanako the- heduwa
   SUBJECT OBJECT VERB(make+PAST)
   Hanako made tea
Explanation of the four experiments

**Role of animacy and the dative case marker –ta in four types of sentences**

Interplay of animacy and the dative case-marker *ta* to determine cases of active sentences with two or three arguments. Q1. *does animacy provide case-markers for active sentences with two arguments?* Nominative (*ga*) and accusative (*o*) are not marked in Sinhalese and only information available is animacy (and, it is possible to have a flat structure).

#1) **active sentence with transitive verb**

Taro jirota gehuwa
Taro hit Jiro

#2)**active sentence with di-transitive verb**

Ayya mata potak dunna
Elder brother gave me a book.

#3)**Passive sentence with transitive verb**

Malli nangita gasanu lebuwa
Younger sister was hit by younger brother.

#4)**Potential sentence**

Nangi*ta* pi-nanna puluwan
Younger sister can swim

**References**

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