

On Sinhala subject case marking and A-movement

Chao-Ting Tim Chou^{a,*}, Sujeewa Hettiarachchi^b

^a Taipei Medical University, Taiwan

^b University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka

Received 16 September 2013; received in revised form 18 December 2015; accepted 21 December 2015

Available online 1 February 2016



Abstract

The relation between volitive/involitive moods of Sinhala verbs and subject case marking remains unresolved in the scarce generative literature on Sinhala. Previous analyses of subject case marking in this language (Gair, 1990a,b; Inman, 1992; Beavers and Zubair, 2010, 2013) assume that non-nominative cases are lexical/inherent/quirky cases assigned by involitive verbs to the subject NP, whereas nominative case is not tied to any particular lexical semantics, and arises as the default case when the semantic conditions for all available quirky cases fail. We argue that the distinction between nominative and non-nominative cases in Sinhala should not be characterized as one between default and lexical/inherent/quirky cases. Rather, based on previously unnoted data, we contend that (i) nominative case in Sinhala is a structural case assigned by a finite T, and (ii) A-movement in Sinhala is driven by case valuation (see Epstein and Seely, 2006; Bošković, 2002, 2007), rather than by a universal EPP structural requirement on T (contra Gair, 1990a,b; see Chomsky, 2000, 2001). © 2015 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: (In)volitives; Lexical case; Structural case; A-movement; EPP; Sinhala

1. Introduction

Sinhala, an Indo-Aryan language spoken in Sri Lanka, has a well-known but uncommon semantic classification of verbs. Each Sinhala verb root occurs in one or two stem classes, commonly known as *volitives* and *involitives* (see Gair, 1990a,b; Kahr, 1989; Gair and Paolillo, 1997; Gunasekara, 1999; Inman, 1992; Henadeerage, 2002; Beavers and Zubair, 2010, 2013). The (in)volitivity of a verb denotes the extent to which the referent of the subject or external argument, in a given context, is involved in the action denoted by the verb. For instance, in (1a) with the volitive form of the verb, *natənwə* 'dance' is both volitional and intentional on the part of the subject *Lal*. By contrast, in (1b), with the involitive verb, the act of dancing is either non-volitional or unplanned as far as *Lal* is concerned.^{1,2,3}

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +886 2 27361661x2657.

E-mail addresses: chaotingchou@gmail.com (C.-T. Tim Chou), sujeewah@sjp.ac.lk (S. Hettiarachchi).

¹ The following abbreviations are used: ACC = accusative case, COMP = complementizer, DAT = dative case, EMP = emphatic marker, GEN = genitive case, ERG = ergative case, FUT = future tense, INDEF = indefinite NP, INF = infinitival, INST = instrumental case, INVOL = involitive verbs, LOC = locative case, NOM = nominative case, NOMIN = nominalizer, OPT = optative marker, VOL = volitive verbs, PAST = past tense, PRED = predicate, PRES = present tense, PRT = participle, Q = question particle/morpheme, SUBJ = subjunctive, 3SG = third person singular.

² In this paper, our focus is on standard colloquial Sinhala as spoken in and around the western province of Sri Lanka (Dissanayake, 1976). Our informants (age: 30–40 years old), including one of the authors of this paper, are native Sinhala speakers who use it as their most dominant language in day-to-day communication. However, subject case marking and scopal interpretation in Sinhala can be subject to dialectal variation (see e.g., Beavers and Zubair, 2010, 2013; Dissanayake, 1976).

³ Notice that volitive verbs do not strictly entail volitionality. The semantic/pragmatics of the use of volitive and involitive verbs in Sinhala is not the focus of this paper. See Inman (1992) and Beavers and Zubair (2008, 2010, 2013) for details.

- (1) a. *lal natənəwa.*
Lal.NOM dance.VOL
 'Lal (actively/voluntarily) dances.'
- b. *lal-tə nətənəwa.*
Lal-DAT dance.INVOL
 'Lal (involuntarily) dances.'

This volitive/involitive contrast among Sinhala verbs correlates with different case marking of the external argument of a typical finite clause (see Gair, 1990a,b; Inman, 1992; Kariyakarawana, 1998; Henadeerage, 2002; Jany, 2005; Beavers and Zubair, 2010, 2013): a volitive verb almost always takes a nominative subject⁴ (1a) and (2), while the subject of an involitive verb most often takes a range of non-nominative cases,⁵ including dative (1b) and (3), instrumental (4), and accusative (5)⁶:

- (2) *lal/*lal-tə/*lal-athin/*lal-wə natənəwa*
Lal.NOM/-DAT/*-INST/*-ACC dance.VOL.PRES*
 'Lal (actively/voluntarily) dances.'
- (3) a. *lal-tə nətənəwa*
Lal-DAT dance.INVOL.PRES
 'Lal (involuntarily) dances.'
- b. *lal-tə induwa-k kiyəuna.*
Lal.DAT song-INDEF sing.INVOL.PAST
 'Lal (involuntarily) sang a song.'
- (4) a. *sita-athin⁷ karamē kəduna.*
Sita-INST tap.ACC break.INVOL.PAST
 'Sita (involuntarily) broke the tap.'
- b. *amma-geṇ sinhala kəmə hoⁿdətə hādenəwa.*
mother-INST Sinhala food.ACC well make.INVOL.PRES
 'Mother makes Sinhala food well.'
- (5) *lameya-wə waturə-tə wətuna.*
child-ACC water-into fall.INVOL.PAST
 'The child (involuntarily) fell into water.'

The major goal of this paper is not to give a detailed discussion of the semantic/pragmatic conditions under which each non-nominative subject case is assigned in Sinhala. Rather, this paper investigates the syntactic (structural) conditions of subject case assignment and the driving force of A-movement in Sinhala, especially in light of recent developments in Minimalism (Chomsky, 1995 and thereafter). We focus on the assignment of nominative case with volitives in this paper, and propose that (i) nominative case is a structural case assigned/valued by a finite T, whereas non-nominative case is an inherent case assigned by the involitive verb, and (ii) involitive subjects remain within vP, whereas the subject of a volitive verb must raise to spec-TP for case assignment/valuation by the finite T. Two important consequences of our proposal are that (i) A-movement can be triggered by (structural) case valuation, rather than by a universal EPP requirement on

⁴ Beavers and Zubair (2013) and Gair (1990a,b) observe that some volitive verbs such as *dannəwa* 'know' can occur with DAT subjects. However, we observe that this is commonly found among Sinhala speakers whose dominant language is Tamil.

⁵ Beavers and Zubair (2010, 2013), contra Inman (1992), correctly show that some involitives such as *bindənəwa* 'break', *ærenəwa* 'open', and *mærenəwa* 'die' also allow nominative subjects. Our intuition is that nominative subject is only allowed with an inherently involitive verb which lacks a volitive counterpart. However, our focus in this paper is limited to non-nominative subjects, mainly dative subjects, in involitive constructions. We leave it for future research to determine whether nominative with (inherent) involitives patterns like nominative with volitives (as suggested by Beavers and Zubair, 2010, 2013) or they behave like dative and other non-nominative subjects associated with involitives. The major goal of this paper is to show nominative subjects with volitive verbs and dative subjects with involitive verbs pattern differently in a number of contexts to be examined in section 3.

⁶ Despite the variation shown in (3)–(5), subject case marking in involitive constructions shows some obvious patterns (Gair, 1990a,b; Inman, 1992; Henadeerage, 2002). Dative subjects can occur with both intransitive involitives (3a) and transitive involitives (3b). By contrast, instrumental subjects are only allowed with transitive involitives (4). Accusative subjects in (5) are only found with a certain class of intransitive involitives which are known as 'P only verbs' (Gair, 1990a,b) or 'unaccusatives' (Beavers and Zubair, 2013).

⁷ Sinhala has two distinct morphological forms associated with the instrumental case: *-athin* and *-geṇ* (see Gair, 1990a,b).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/935476>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/935476>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)