

Teaching and Learning Tamil as a Second Language in Sri Lanka: Special Reference to Auxiliary Verb Construction in Tamil and Sinhala Languages

R. Kailainathan

Department of Linguistics and English, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to present a brief comparative and contrastive analysis of the syntactic structure of the auxiliary verbs in Tamil and Sinhala languages on a structural basis. It describes and pin-points the areas of difficulty that the speakers of these two languages have in learning each others' languages. There are number of regional and social dialects existing in both Tamil and Sinhala. However, the Tamil data represent the author's own dialect, the Jaffna Tamil which is a socio-regional sub-dialect of Sri Lankan Tamil. The Sinhala data represent the Colombo dialect of Sinhala. This study involves the methodology of comparative and contrastive analysis of syntactic structure of auxiliary verbs in Tamil and Sinhala, in order to establish the facts that there are similarities and dissimilarities in the two languages. To our knowledge so far, no one has attempted to embark on this selected topic. It is believed that this study of this kind would facilitate the teachers' task of preparing teaching materials and to identify students' difficulties in learning a second language. Further, it will reduce the students' burden of learning a second language. This research study can be a source for implementing trilingualism at the university level. Furthermore, this study will encourage other scholars to undertake more research work in this field, so as to contribute to human knowledge and communal harmony.

Keywords: Auxiliary Verbs, Communal Harmony, Trilingualism.

I. INTRODUCTION

An attempt is made in this article to make a comparative and contrastive analysis of syntactical patterns of auxiliary verbs in Sri Lanka Jaffna Tamil and the Colombo variety of Sinhala within a structural framework.

Sinhala, Tamil and English are the major languages spoken in Sri Lanka. Of these, Sinhala is the Language of the majority, Tamil the Language of the largest minority, while English is the language used by the educated of all communities, in addition to its being the mother tongue of the Bugar community.

Tamil and Sinhala are members of two different Language families. Tamil, a Dravidian Language is spoken by more than 50 million people mainly in South India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia and some other Asian-African countries. Sinhala an Indo-Aryan Language is spoken exclusively in Sri Lanka by more than 10 million people. Both Languages are now constitutionally recognized as national and official languages of Sri Lanka.

Language has been a vexed problem in Sri Lanka for long. Today the government of Sri Lanka has declared Tamil and Sinhala as the national Languages of the country in its new constitution. In order to overcome the language problems among the major communities in Sri Lanka, the government of Sri Lanka is adopting several measures. If this programme is to be a success, priority

should be given to the preparation of effective materials for teaching these languages as a second language.

There are number of regional and social dialects existing in both Tamil and Sinhala, however the Tamil data represent the author's own dialect the Jaffna Tamil which is a socio-regional sub dialect of Sri Lanka Tamil. The Sinhala data represent the Colombo dialect of Sinhala. Sinhalese students learning Tamil as a second language and the Tamil teachers teaching them, Tamil may have many difficulties. Therefore the purpose of this research is to identify and pin-point some of the major difficulties beforehand.

This experience gained at the University of Kelaniya in teaching Jaffna Tamil to Sinhalese students is highlighted here that the difficulties faced by the learners and the teacher.

Earlier, some Linguistics scholars have pointed out the intricacies of the phones, phonemes and Noun phrases of the two Lanugages. In this research paper, the possible difficulties in teaching and learning of auxiliaries have been highlighted.

Jaffna Tamil and Sinhala differ to a remarkable extent at all levels especially the phonemic and morphemic levels and to a considerable extent in Syntax and Semantics. As a result, speakers of these two languages experienced certain difficulties in understanding each other's Language.

II. AUXILIARIES IN TAMIL AND SINHALA

Auxiliaries are a group of verbs, that are attributive to their preceding verbs in the grammatical aspects and their identity is revealed in their combination with another verb as a second member.

The predicate of a Tamil clause may consist of a compound verb construction. This compound verb construction has a verb in verbal participle or infinitive form as first element and a verb inflected according to the syntactic context of the compound verb construction for the various verbal categories, example : tense, person, number and Gender etc.

Unlike Tamil, Sinhala compound verb construction generally has a verb in perfect tense or infinitive and in a few cases also in the present tense form.

In both languages, the first verb element of the compound verb construction has a lexical function that denotes as action, event, or state and is therefore called the main verb. The second member of the verb element however does not have a lexical function. Instead it expresses grammatical categories such as aspect, mood, passive etc and for this reason, the second verb is referred to as the auxiliary verb.

2.1. Modals and Aspectuals

In terms of the morphemic structure of the auxiliary verbs in Tamil and Sinhala the following structural classes can be set up:

- (i). Modal verbs
- (ii). Aspectual verbs

Table 1: Modals in Tamil and Sinhala

Modals	Tamil auxiliary forms and meanings conveyed	Sinhala auxiliary forms and meanings conveyed
Obligative	veeNum (obligation/need/necessity)	oon ə (obligation/need/necessity)
Negative obligation	veeNTaam (don't/need not/should not/must not)	epaa (don't/ must not/Should not)
Prohibitive	pa Taatu / kuu Taatu (should not/ must not)	epaa (Should /don't/ must not)
Potential	muTiyum /laam /eelum (physical ability /can/possible / able)	puluvaŋ (ability/can/possible/able)
Negative potential	muTiyaatu eelaatu maaaTT - (not able to / inability)	bææ (not able to /inability)
Probability	- laam (may/possibility /probability)	æti / puluvaŋ (possibility /probability)
Permissive	-laam -aTTum (let)	- aave (let)

Tamil has a total set of eleven modal auxiliaries constituted of five affirmatives with corresponding six negatives, where as Sinhala presents a total set of six modals of which four are affirmatives and two are negatives.

Table 2: Aspectuals in Tamil and Sinhala

Aspectuals	Tamil auxiliary forms and meanings conveyed	Sinhala auxiliary forms and meanings conveyed
Perfect/Supposition	iru (be)	tiyənəva innəva (be)
Perfective completive definitive	viTu (leave/give up)	daanəva arinəva (drop/leave/give up)
Reflexive	koL	gannəva
Trial/Experimental	paar	balənəva
Benefactive	kuTu / taa	denəva
Future utility	vay	tiyənəva (completion of an action / fully finishing) innəva/ tiyənəva/ enəva/ yanəva (continuous progressive action/fully finishing)
Progressive Durative	koNTiru	innəva/tiyənəva/enəva/ yanəva (Continuous progressive action)
Full completion	pooTu (completion/impatience)	daanəva (completion/rashness/impatience)
Realization/Potentiality	-	enəva yanəva
Finality	aaku	-
Disgust	tulay	-
Riddance	taLLu	-
Completive	-	kərenəva
Etc and such	-	kiyənəva
Completion	-	arinəva
Trial/get ready	-	hadənəva
Inceptive/Intentionality	-	ævidinəva

Tamil has a total set of sixteen aspectual auxiliaries where as Sinhala presents a total set of fifteen aspectuals.

2.2. From the point of the Sinhala speaker

As for learning the auxiliaries of Tamil, the Sinhala speaker faces several problems. The important features of contrast of the verb phrase of these two languages with reference to tense, modality and aspect are summarized below.

The first striking contrast that can be easily noticed by any learner, is that whereas in Sinhala the main verbs and auxiliaries (whether modals or aspects) are realized separately. In Tamil they are generally agglutinated so that one cannot distinguish the main verb and the auxiliaries easily.

Examples:

TL: makaL ammaakkup puu puTuᅇkikkuTu kkiRaa.
SL: duvə ammaTə mal kadəla denəva 'The daughter picks flowers for her mother'.
TL: piLLayaL viLayaaTikkoNTirukkalaam
SL: Lamay Sellaᅇ kəᅇnəva æti 'The Children may be playing'

The other important contrast is that in Tamil the same idea can be expressed by more than one modal auxiliaries, whereas in Sinhala the modals are limited.

Examples:

TL: tampi kooyilukkᅇᅇ pookalaam tampi kooyilukkᅇᅇ pooka muTiyum tampi kooyilukkᅇᅇ pooka eelum 'Younger brother can go to the temple'.
SL: malliTə kooviləTə yannə puluvaᅇ malliTə kooviləTə giyə hæki 'Younger brother can go to the temple'.

In Tamil, the modals do not inflect according to PNG markers. But modal maaTT – in Tamil meaning 'cannot' in certain context falls together with the future negative in meaning and takes the PNG pronominal ending.

Examples:

TL	
naan ooTa veeNum 'I must run' (1st person, sg.)	naan ooTa maaTTen 'I won't run' (1st person, sg.)
enaalay ooTa muTiyum 'I can't run' (1st person, sg.)	naanᅇkaL ooTa maaTTam 'We won't run' (1st person, pl.)
nii ooTa veeNTaam 'You don't run' (2nd person, sg.)	nii ooTa maaTTaay 'You won't run' (2nd person, sg.)
avayaL ooTa muTiyaatu 'They can't run' (3rd person, pl.)	niiᅇkaL ooTa maaTTiiᅇkaL 'You won't run' (2nd person, sg/pl.)

Modals in Sinhala do not inflect according to person, number, gender and tense.

Examples:

SL	
mamə duvannə oonə 'I must run'	oyaa duvannə eppa 'You don't run'
maTə duvannə puluvaṇ 'I can run'	eyaalaTə duvannə bææ 'They can't run'

In Tamil modals always take the infinitive of the main verb.

Examples:

TL	
pooka veeNum 'Must go'	eLuta muTiyum 'Can write'
pooka veeNTaam 'Must not go'	eLuta muTiyaatu 'Cannot write'

Sinhala too modals take the infinitive of the main verb, except æti and hæki. æti takes the present form of the main verb, and hæki takes the present participle form of the main verb.

Examples:

SL	
yannə oonə 'Must go'	liyannə bææ 'Cannot write'
yannə eppa 'Must not go'	vahinəva æti 'May be raining'
liyannə puluvaṇ 'Can write'	ahatə hæki 'Can listen'

Every finite verb in Tamil marked for person number and gender.

Examples:

TL	
naan pooRen 'I go' (1st person sg.)	avar pooRaar 'He goes' (3rd person sg. mas. polite form)
niiipooRaay 'you go' (2nd person sg., impolite form)	ava pooRaa 'She goes' (3rd person sg. fem. polite form)
niiṇkaL pooRiiṇkaL. 'you go' (2nd person sg. polite form)	avaL pooRaaL 'She goes' (3rd person sg. fem. impolite form)
naaṇkaL pooRam. 'we go' (1st person pl.)	avayaL.pookinam 'They go' (3rd person, mas., fem., pl.)
avan pooRaan 'He goes' (3rd person sg. mas. impolite form)	

Unlike Tamil, Sinhala finite verb is not marked for person, number and gender.

Examples:

SL	
mamə yanəva 'I go' (1st person sg.)	api yanəva 'We go' (1st person pl.)
oyaa yanəva 'you go' (2nd person sg.)	eyaa yanəva 'He/She goes' (3rd person sg.)
oyaala yanəva 'you go' (2nd person pl.)	eyaala yanəva 'They go' (3rd person pl.)

Every finite verb in Tamil carries either present, past or future tense markers.

TL
naan kuTikkiRen 'I drink' (1st person sg. present)
naan kuTiccen 'I drank' (1st person sg. past)
naan kuTippen 'I will drink' (1st person sg. future)

Unlike Tamil, every finite verb in Sinhala carries one of the two formal tenses i.e past and non past. Past tense includes, perfect tense also.

Examples:

SL	
mamə bonəva 'I drink' (1st person sg. present)	mamə bonəva 'I will drink' (1st person sg. future)
mamə bivva 'I drank' (1st person sg. past)	mamə biila 'I have drunk' (perfect tense)

In Tamil subject pronoun can be omitted since the finite verb itself indicates all grammatical meanings.

Examples:

TL	
vānten - 'I came'	vāntaan - 'He came'
vāntam - 'We came'	vāntaa - 'She came'
vāntaay - 'You came'	vāntaal - 'She (impolite) came'
vāntiṅkaL - 'you (sg.pl.) came'	vāntinam - 'They came'

In Sinhala subject pronoun is obligatory (when there is no contextual clue)

Examples:

SL	
mamə aava - 'I came'	oyaala aava - 'You (pl) came'
api aava - 'We come'	eyaa aava - He/She came
oyaa aava - 'You (sg.) came'	eyaala aava - 'They came'

Tamil aspect iru – has human, non – human distinctions.

Examples:

TL
naan toosai caappiTtirukkiRen 'I have eaten toosai' (human)
naay toosai caappiTtirukkutu 'The dog has eaten toosai' (non - human)
avaa maruntu kuTiccirukkiRaa. 'She has drunk medicine'

But in Sinhala verbs 'innəva' and 'tiyenəva' have animate, inanimate distinctions. 'innəva' – takes animate subject. 'tiyenəva' takes inanimate subject. But the aspectual verbs 'innəva' and 'tiyenəva' under the auxiliary constructions 'tiyenəva' can also take the animate subject. But the aspect 'innəva' never takes an inanimate subject.

Examples:

SL
mamə toose kaala tiyenəva
'I have eaten doosai' (animate)
balla toose kaala tiyenəva
'The dog has eaten doosai'
eyaa beet biila tiyenəva
'He/She has drunk medicine'

Aspects in Tamil are expressed by verbal participle except the verbs poo, paTu, paar. These verbs are expressed by infinitive too.

Examples:

SL
avan iTli caappiTtirukkiraan
'He has eaten idli'

The Sinhala speakers will find it difficult to choose the proper auxiliary verb constructions. Therefore, the teacher should train the Sinhala speakers to use the proper forms.

III. CONCLUSION

Hope this research work done on Auxiliaries would facilitate the teachers' task of preparing teaching materials and to identify students' difficulties in learning a second language. Further it will reduce the students' burden of learning a second language.

This research study of this kind can be a source for implementing trilingualism at the University level. Furthermore, this study will encourage other scholars to undertake more research work in this field in order to contribute to human knowledge and communal harmony.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Karunatilake. W. and Suseendrarajah, S., "Phonology of Sinhalese and Sri Lanka Tamil – A study in contrast and interference" in Indian Linguistics, No. 3, pp. 130-190, 1973.
- [2]. Karunatilake. W.S., "Introduction to spoken Sinhala", M.D. Gunasena, Colombo, 1990.
- [3]. Nhuman, M.A., "A Contrastive Grammar of Tamil and Sinhala Noun phrases", University of Peradeniya, University publication, 2003.
- [4]. Wickramasinghe, D.M., "A study in the Syntax and Phonology of modern colloquial Sinhalese", unpublished PhD thesis, University of Exacter, 1973.