

The argument structure of inactive clauses in Sinhala: A semantic analysis*

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Abstract

This paper examines the argument structure of intransitive clauses in Sinhala from a semantic point of view. Particular attention is paid to ‘inactive clauses’, revealing their structural aspects that includes adjustments in verb morphology and case marking patterns. The logical basis of active/inactive opposition which serves as the semantic determinant of active typology, as pointed out by Klimov 1979, is shown to remain a pervasive feature of the grammar. It is also shown that contextual/functional property need not be an inherent property of the syntactic unit. Finally, the question how Sinhala has developed these grammatical constructions is speculated.

Keywords: Nominative, Accusative, Dative, Actor, Undergoer, Experiencer

1. Introduction

Sinhala has a morphosyntactic and semantic-pragmatic domain called inactive clauses. These constructions referred to in the literature as ‘passive’, ‘medio-passive’, ‘reflexive’, ‘inactive’, ‘impersonal’ and ‘involitive’ are directly related to some important aspects of grammar such as valency relations, argument structure, case marking, grammatical relations, and transitivity. Their behavior has received wide attention in the literature (Gair 1971 and 1990, Gair and Paolillo 1988, Gunasinghe 1985, Gunasinghe and Kess 1989, Wijayawardhana et al. 1991, Inman 1993, Chandralal 1993, Henadeerage 2002). Nevertheless, we believe that there are some aspects that deserve further examination. Are the generalizations of volitive/involitive dichotomy as reflected in surface manifestations supported by valid evidence? What is the grammatical status of the single arguments of these intransitive clauses? How can the ambiguities of verbs be constrained? Can the constructions be accounted for in a unified way? How can they be motivated? Such questions remain to be answered.

This paper assumes that the phenomenon of Split Intransitivity plays a fundamental role in the grammatical organization and the underlying semantic role structure of these clause-types. The functional approach towards semantic change adopted by Traugott and Dasher 2002 helps us to understand the dynamics that gave rise to the morphological dichotomy.

There are three types of constructions pertinent to the discussion: (a) intransitive clauses with agentive S(ubject), (b) derived intransitive clauses with variable case marking, agentive S or non-agentive S, and (c) involuntary experience constructions

with dative-marked S. Agentive S is encoded in the same way as A(gent) and non-agentive S in the same way as P(atient); involuntary S is encoded in the same way as G(oal). Central to the discussion is a morpholexical process that turns a verb of one valency type into a verb of another and also is capable of eliminating or neutralizing the agency of event structures.

By analyzing these facts, I will attempt to show that the animacy hierarchy combined with Actor/Undergoer hierarchy is crucial to understand the argument structure in Sinhala. Also to be revealed is the fact that the ambiguity of verbs must be resolved not just by decoding their lexical semantics but also retrieving pragmatic factors underlying them. I will suggest that given the explicitness of semantic categories in Sinhala, semantics-based approaches are more appropriate for revealing the linguistic character of the language, contrary to English.

2. Colloquial Sinhala: Background information

Sinhala is a SOV language. However, its word order is relatively free and depends on the intended organization of information.

(1) *lamə ya duwə-nə-wa* (intransitive)
child run-NPT-IND
'The child is running.'

(2) *lamai pot gatta* (transitive)
children book.PL buy.PAST
'The children bought books.'

(3) *Ranjit Chitra-Tə pot-ak dunna* (ditransitive)
(name) (name)-DAT book-INDF give.PAST
'Ranjit gave Chitra a book.'

(4) *Ranjit potə Chitra-Tə dunna* (ditransitive)
(name) book (name)-DAT give.PAST
'Ranjit gave the book to Chitra.'

Sinhala does not distinguish surface object from surface subject. However, there is an optional accusative marker.

(5) *balla puusa(wə) dəkkə*
dog cat saw
'The dog saw the cat.'

Apart from the direct case implying subject and object relations, there are some other important cases:

	ANIMATE	INANIMATE
Instrumental/ablative:	- <i>gen/-atin</i>	- <i>en/-in</i> (sg.)/- <i>wəlin</i> (pl.)
Genitive/locative:	- <i>gee</i>	- <i>ee</i> (sg.)/- <i>wələ</i> (pl.)
Dative:	- <i>Tə</i>	- <i>Tə</i> (sg.)/ <i>wələTə</i> (pl.)

There are two classes of verbs distinguished on morphological grounds, in which a productive lexical process is involved¹:

	VOLITIVE	INVOLITIVE	
	- <i>ə/i/e-</i>	- <i>e-</i>	
'cut'	<i>kapə-nəwa</i>	<i>kəpe-nəwa</i>	(a > ə)
'brush'	<i>madi-nəwa</i>	<i>məde-nəwa</i>	(a > ə)
'run'	<i>duwə-nəwa</i>	<i>diwe-nəwa</i>	(u > i)
'grind'	<i>koTə-nəwa</i>	<i>keTe-nəwa</i>	(o > e)
'tear'	<i>irə-nəwa</i>	<i>ire-nəwa</i>	
'divide'	<i>bedə-nəwa</i>	<i>bede-nəwa</i>	

Involitive verbs thus derived fill the intransitive slot of a three-aspect verbal paradigm²:

	TR/INTR	INTR	CAUSATIVE
'cut'	<i>kapənəwa</i>	<i>kəpenəwa</i>	<i>kapwənəwa/kappənəwa</i>
'run'	<i>duwənəwa</i>	<i>diwenəwa</i>	<i>duwəwənəwa</i>

3. Intransitive clauses

Sinhala exhibits a kind of Split Intransitivity with case marking mostly determined in terms of lexical semantics in line with Dixon's (1979) "split S-marking" or "fluid S-marking". Following the lexical semantic theory developed by Foley and Van Valin (1984), we can show this split as a contrast between unergative and unaccusative roots obtained in intransitive verbs, former having Actor as the single core argument and the latter having Undergoer as the single core argument. Actor=subject relation and Undergoer=patient relation seem neither obligatory nor consistent in Sinhala. Deviating from the traditional transitive subject/object relations, a single argument of an intransitive clause can have the macrorole of Actor, Undergoer, or both, while syntactically remaining in the position of subject. This variable case marking pattern with subjects taking either nominative or accusative marking alternatively offers a contrast with the behavior of intransitive verbs whose subjects take only nominative marking. Besides, there is a third pattern with intransitive subjects taking dative marking. Taken together, the core argument of an intransitive verb can be agent, patient, or recipient and occur sentence-initially, i.e. in normal subject position.

3.1 Intransitives with only nominative marking

Mainly, in this group are verbs whose single argument is actor (typically volitional

agent). They include unergative verb roots, a kind of primitive predicates sharing the common feature of non-derived status and some complex predicates. Examples given below are from the largest six classes representing unergative roots. They are distinguished as volitional actions by virtue of unergative roots and therefore their subjects appear only in the actor form.

(a) Verbs of voluntary physical activity:

kanəwa 'eat', *bonəwa* 'drink', *nidənəwa* 'sleep', *nəlgitənəwa* 'get up', *naanəwa* 'bathe', *naTənəwa* 'dance', *wəDə kərənəwa* 'work', *sellam kərənəwa* 'play'

(b) Verbs of locomotion:

yanəwa 'go', *enəwa* 'come', *duwənəwa* 'run', *əwidənəwa* 'walk', *naginəwa* 'climb', *bahinəwa* 'descend', *piyaambənəwa* 'fly', *gaman kərənəwa* 'walk', *sakman kərənəwa* 'stroll'

(c) Verbs of utterance:

kataa kərənəwa 'talk/speak', *baninəwa* 'scold', *kəəgahanəwa* 'shout/scream', *sindu kiyənəwa* 'sing', *wihilu kərənəwa* 'tease/joke'

(d) Verbs of bodily function:

kahinəwa 'cough', *paDinəwa* 'fart', *renəwa* 'defecate', *gorəwənəwa* 'roar' or 'snore', *hujjə kərənəwa* 'urinate'

(e) *gannəwa* 'take' verbs (various change-of-states):

Change in body posture: *hiTə gannəwa* 'stand up', *ində gannəwa* 'sit down', *nidaa gannəwa* 'go to sleep'

Bodily functions: *husmə gannəwa* 'breathe'

Cognition: *hitaa gannəwa* 'think/imagine'

Emotion: *taraha gannəwa* 'get angry'

Members of these verb classes take their subjects only in the nominative.

(6) a. *lamaya uDə pani-nə-wa*

child up jump-NPT-IND

'The child is jumping up.'

b. **lamyawə uDə pani-nə-wa*

child-ACC up jump-NPT-IND

'The child is jumping up.'

(7) a. *siiya sakman kərənə-wa*

grand father stroll-NPT-IND

'Grand father is strolling.'

b. **siiyawə sakman kərənə-wa*

grand father-ACC stroll-NPT-IND

‘Grand father is strolling.’

Certain syntactic and semantic criteria can be applied to confirm the identity of verbs of this category. The verbs can be modified by adverbs like *kəmaetten* ‘willingly’, *oonəkaamen* ‘attentively’ or *hitəla* ‘intentionally’. They are compatible with imperatives. They can be used in an agentive construction like [V-*nnə* *ussaahə kərənəwa* ‘try to V’].

As far as this conceptual set-up works, their subjects are to be treated as agent/actor of ordinary transitive verbs, and cannot take undergoer forms, that is, subjects of these verbs remain nominative as far as their only argument is construed as an actor. If one wants to render involuntary readings, there are different clause-types available for that purpose, with non-volitional forms derived from the primitive predicates and corresponding non-nominative case markers.

However, there are cases in which this conceptual set-up does not work well. The diagnostics for identifying volitional actions apply to the above sentences as they are used in volitional contexts. But this does not prevent the same (homophonous) sentences from occurring in non-volitional contexts, which is the case, in fact. The given tests cannot be applied to the sentences arising from particular non-volitional circumstances. Such circumstances do not allow us to unambiguously distinguish unergative verbs as denoting volitional actions initiated by actors/agents.

A fact hitherto unnoticed or unmentioned by many including myself is that an active verb with an actor subject does not always express a fully fledged volitional or intentional action.³

- (8) a. *taatta həmədaamə naməyə-Tə nidaa gan-nə-wa* (intentional)

father everyday nine-DAT sleep-NPT-IND

‘Father goes to bed at nine everyday.’ or

‘Father makes it a rule to go to bed at nine.’

- b. *chitrəpaTiyə bala-addi man nidaa gatta* (intentional)

movie see-TEMP I sleep.PAST

‘I slept while seeing the movie.’

- c. *Ranjit adə dawal wenə kan nidaa gatta* (unspecific)

(name) today day become till sleep.PAST

‘Ranjit slept until later than usual today.’

- (9) a. *Ranjit həmə maase-mə amma-Tə liyum-ak daa-nə-wa* (intentional)

(name) every month-EMPH mother-DAT letter-INDF send-NPT-IND

‘Ranjit sends a letter to his mother every month.’

- b. *Ranjit Chitra-Tə liyəpu liyumə amma-Tə daa-la*

(name) (name)-DAT write-GRND letter mother-DAT send-PP
 'Ranjit has sent the letter he wrote to Chitra to his mother (by mistake).'

To retrieve information encoded in an active clause correctly, one has to delve into the context of the utterance and be sensitive to the constraints of animacy hierarchy and tense/aspectual distinctions. The crucial point is that volitional meanings of unergative verbs are canceled contextually, not morphosyntactically; their non-volitional meanings are only pragmatically generated.

Compare the Japanese pair *kobosu/koboreru*. Transitive/intransitive pattern is *miruku o kobosu/miruku ga koboreru*. ('sombody spills the milk/the milk is spilt.')

(10) a. *kare ga miruku o wazato koboshita*
 'He slopped the milk on purpose.'

b. *kare ga miruku o ayamatte koboshita*
 'He spilt the milk by mistake.'

Pragmatic inferences and contextual information play a crucial role in determining interpretations of active or inactive verbs. All pragmatic meanings do not get grammaticalized to appear on surface structures. On the other hand, we should not undermine the importance of the linguistic context. Intentional readings are dominant in active clauses while unintentional interpretations remain backgrounded. For inactive clauses, it is contrariwise: unintentional readings become salient and intentional meanings remain to be determined by context. These facts will be examined in the following sections.

3.2 Intransitives with variable case marking

All the verbs in this category are secondarily derived from other kinds of roots such as transitive, intransitive and stative (adjectival) predicates. This derivation transforms the original root into an inchoative verb, a change of state or process verb. The resultant forms are intransitive verb-stems which can have only one core argument. These derived verbs will have as their single core argument an Actor with the semantic role of agent or an Undergoer with the semantic role of patient. The largest class covers verb stems derived from transitive or intransitive verb roots, introduced earlier as a productive lexical process. However, mere morphological derivation does not help us understand semantic intricacies involved in this type of verbs. Instead, we have to turn to some finer-grained categories whose members behave with different semantic and pragmatic constraints.

3.2.1 *Absolutive class*

This class, also known as reflexive verbs, includes inchoative verbs with no external agency or causation involved. Examples: *kəpenəwa* 'cut' , *kəDenəwa* 'break' ,

bindenəwa ‘break’, *pəlenəwa* ‘split’, *perəlenəwa* ‘roll’, *həlenəwa* ‘spill’, *hellenəwa* ‘shake’, *idirenəwa* ‘be uprooted’, *niwenəwa* ‘put out’, *picchenəwa* ‘burn’, *mərenəwa* ‘die’, *weelenəwa* ‘dry.’

- (11) *Lankaa-we hondəTə tee həde-nə-wa*
 Lanka-LOC well tea make.INV.-NPT-IND
 ‘Tea grows well in Sri Lanka.’

- (12) *pīhiyə hondəTə kəpe-nə-wa*
 knife well cut.INV.-NPT-IND
 ‘The knife cuts well.’

- (13) *annə, redi teme-nə-wa*
 hey clothes wet.INV.-NPT-IND
 ‘Hey, cloths are getting wet.’

Comrie (1985) introduced derivation of intransitives (S_iV^{intr}) from transitives ($S_iV^{tr}DO_i$) as the commonest type of derivational process indicating valency decrease, terming the derivative as ‘anticausative’. Under this characterization in which the direct object of the transitive verb is coindexed with the subject of the intransitive verb, the transfer of semantic roles is not clear. In fact, the object relation of the transitive counterpart is not bound to remain as the patient or undergoer after derivation, though it occurs as the subject of the derived verb. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the single argument of the verbs in this class is susceptible to reanalysis, and their morphosyntax is determined by some, more complex semantic and pragmatic factors.

Consequences of the lexical process involved can be delineated along the following lines. Stem verbs with the thematic vowel -e require that the overall clause structure be intransitive. However, the remaining transitive root requires two arguments, Actor and Undergoer. As to satisfy both requirements, the resultant structure turns to be a reflexive which has a single participant simultaneously serving as Actor and Undergoer.

The fact that the subject of the intransitive clauses of this class appears as a double-role argument is confirmed by its dual behavior: in some situations the participant acts as an Actor and in some other situations the participant is seen as affectee of the action. This double behavior becomes apparent when an animate participant is selected as subject. Accordingly, each verb in the following list can denote a volitional action or a spontaneous happenstance.

- (14) *wə Tenəwa* ‘fall’, *kəṛəkenəwa* ‘turn’, *perəlenəwa* ‘roll down’, *gilenəwa* ‘sink, drown or dive’, *ellenəwa*, ‘hang’, *issenəwa* ‘be lifted’, *həppenəwa* ‘bump into’, *wəhenəwa* ‘get covered’, *beerenəwa* ‘be saved’, *gəḷəwenəwa* ‘be saved’, *nəmenəwa* ‘bend’

With respect to these verbs, the inherent lexical content of the single argument, to be

specific, animacy, plays a vital role in determining the interpretation of actor-undergoer relation. While the overall structure is interpreted as depicting a non-volitional event by virtue of the involitive verb form, the verb can be interpreted as denoting a volitional action if the subject NP takes an animate noun, indicating that the referent/participant is inherently capable of instigating an event. Look at the following examples.

- (15) *bootəlee perəl-un-a*
 bottle roll-PAST-IND
 'The bottle rolled down.'
- (16) a. *lamaya perəl-un-a* (unspecific)
 child roll-PAST-IND
 'The child rolled.'
- b. *lamaya ahamben perəl-un-a* (non-volitional)
 child accidentally roll-PAST-IND
 'The child rolled down accidentally.'
- c. *lamaya-wə perəl-un-a* (non-volitional)
 child-ACC roll-PAST-IND
 'The child rolled down (accidentally).'
- d. *lamaya hitəla perəl-un-a* (volitional)
 child intentionally roll-PAST-IND
 'The child rolled over intentionally.'
- e. **lamaya-wə hitəla perəl-un-a*
 child-ACC intentionally roll-PAST-IND

Look at a similar situation that obtains in Japanese: an intransitive/involitive verb can be used to denote an intentional action.

- (17) *kare ga wazato taoreta* 'He fell on purpose.'

Recall that the prototypical transitive event is volitional causation with a mental initiator acting upon a physical object through his mental capacity, a fact first pointed out by Talmy (1972) and investigated by many linguists (e.g. Delancy (1985), Langacker (1987)) and further developed into an overall model of causal structure by Croft (1991). Then the binary distinction between MENTAL and PHYSICAL reflecting animacy and control can be taken as the underlying criteria for the split of Actor/Undergoer. Thus the apparently unitary character of the unmarked subject NP is disunited into the dualist ontology of agent and patient which will account for volitionality split of these

verbs.

We can also describe why the subject in (16c) is in a marked form, by invoking animacy hierarchy. According to the animacy hierarchy (Silverstein 1976 and Dixon 1979), a participant is naturally ‘marked’ “when it is in an unaccustomed role”. While an NP from the leftmost end of the animacy hierarchy is more likely to occur in agent position, the candidate in (16c) has not taken its natural course as agent despite its control potential as a MENTAL entity. Instead, it is in an unaccustomed role, hence the marker for Undergoer.

3.2.2 “*Wenəwa*” ‘become’ class

With respect to verbs of “absolutive” class, it was shown that valency alternation has motivated the lexical process. Next, we will see how the transfer of pragmatic inferences has been influential in activating verbal derivations.

Members of this class represent complex predicates derived from adjectives expressing a state or a quality of an entity. Inchoative verbs can be formed from such stative predicates by adding the lexical connective *wenəwa* ‘become’, as shown below, which is a very productive lexical process in Sinhala.

Examples: *loku* > *loku wenəwa* ‘become big/grow’

hondə > *hondə wenəwa* ‘become good/recover’

Further examples are given in (18):

- (18) a. *taraha wenəwa* ‘get angry’
- b. *ləjja wenəwa* ‘become shy’
- c. *bayə wenəwa* ‘be afraid’
- d. *satutu wenəwa* ‘feel happy’
- e. *piTə wenəwa* ‘go out’
- f. *ətul wenəwa* ‘enter’

With this derivation which turns an adjectival predicate into a verbal predicate, the semantic role, i.e. Theme, of the original predicate will acquire the macrorole status as Actor or Undergoer. When the subject appears in nominative in a *wenəwa* clause, it may denote Actor or unmarked thematic role:

- (19) *mamə oyaage dinumə gəlnə satutu we-nə-wa*
 I your victory about be happy-NPT-IND
 ‘I feel happy about your victory.’

- (20) *oyaa ee gəlnə ləjja we-nnə oonə*
 you that about be ashamed-INF must
 ‘You must feel ashamed about it.’

- (21) *mamə bayə we-nne nəəəə*
 I be afraid-EMPH no
 'I will not be scared.'

- (22) *eyaa heminsəree pitə we-nnə həəduwa*
 he stealthily go out-INF try.PAST
 'He tried to get out stealthily.'

All the manifestations of Actor relation attested with activity verbs are compatible with the above occurrences of *wenəwa* verbs. For instance, they can be modified by adverbs of volition, can occur with imperatives and can be used in other agentive constructions. None of them can occur with accusative marker in the above contexts in which action is construed of as intentionally initiated or controlled by the participant involved. They are treated as 'activities' initiated by animate participants.

However, some of these verbs can be used in different contexts accompanying different semantic roles. The single core argument of the new verb may appear in Undergoer form. When the subject is an inanimate noun, i.e. a PHYSICAL entity, it remains in unmarked, nominative form. If the NP is an animate noun, its MENTAL dimension is cancelled and Undergoer character is reinforced by the accusative marker *-wə*. Compare the following sentences with (21).

- (23) a. *mamə bayə una* (unspecific)
 I be afraid.PAST
 'I was afraid.'
- b. *maa-wə bayə una* (non-volitional)
 I-ACC be afraid.PAST
 'I was afraid.'

In (23a), though the subject is in nominative, it does not necessarily encode Actor, but presents an unmarked situation allowing the interpretation of semantic Undergoer. (23b), on the other hand, is clearly marked for Undergoer which presents the participant as an affected entity. These examples prove my argument that for understanding these intransitive clauses we need to consider split-intransitivity facts and context-induced information. Here is another example:

- (24) a. *miniha tallu una* (unspecific)
 man be pushed.PAST
 'The man pushed himself' or 'The man got pushed.'
- b. *miniha-wə tallu una* (non-volitional)
 man-ACC be pushed.PAST

‘The man was pushed away.’

(24a) is somewhat underdetermined with respect to the macrorole of the subject argument: It can be a reflexive sentence with the single argument bearing both semantic roles, Actor and Undergoer or bearing the single case role of Undergoer. (24 b), on the other hand, lays bare the lack of volition on the part of participant through the Undergoer form which marks the participant as an affected entity.

On the other end of the line, there are some *wenəwa* verbs for which Undergoer role is more salient.

(25) *maa-wə ratu una*
I-ACC become red.PAST
‘I blushed.’

(26) *lamaya-wə nəti una*
child-ACC become lost.PAST
‘The child was ruined.’

The undergoer form used for the single argument expresses that the events are out of control; the participants are not capable of controlling the events denoted by the verbs. Some other verbs that mark their single argument positively for Undergoer are *sauttu wenəwa* ‘be shamed’, *wiisi wenəwa* ‘be thrown’ and *ahu wenəwa* ‘be caught’. All these verbs with their single argument as Undergoer unequivocally demonstrate a common semantic feature termed as affectedness in the literature (Anderson 1971 and Foley and Van valin 1984). It is understandable that unfavorable-type events denoted by the verbs impose Undergoer role on their participants.

Summary of § 3.1 and § 3.2

Activity verbs with primitive predicates and *gannəwa*-class verbal compounds easily assimilate into prototypical transitive pattern acquiring the values ⟨MENTAL, initiator, Actor⟩, that is, they are treated morphosyntactically in the same way as transitive verbs with respect to selection of subject relation. On the other hand, absolutive- and *wenəwa*-class verbs which have gone through the lexical processes involved in productive alternations, valency reduction, etc. cannot be treated in a single fashion as surfacing in a uniform grammatical relation with respect to subject selection. Even when they appear in the same Actor form, the subject NPs cannot be taken as unambiguously representing values ⟨MENTAL, initiator, Actor⟩. The inconsistency in assigning thematic roles is to be understood as a context-dependent variability motivated by lexical semantics of verbs.

3.3 Involuntary experience construction

Sinhala has another inactive clause-type known as Dative Subject Construction (DSC).⁴

Verbs occurring in this construction appear with derived, inchoative/inactive forms, or stative predicates, mostly of adjectival type. They can appear in predicate forms without surface nominal arguments. But there is a salient animate participant involved, whether it appears overtly or not. In terms of thematic roles, the single argument is assigned the role of experiencer. The experiencer does not perform as an initiator, though it is a MENTAL entity in the real world semantics; the present morphosyntactic context has turned it into an endpoint marked by the obligatory presence of the dative marker *-Tə*. There can be another argument denoting the stimulus of experience or the possessed, depending on the predicate.

DSC may appear with predicates derived from transitive verbs:

- (27) a. *lamaya puusa-wə pəɬəgu-wa* (transitive)
 child cat-ACC step on.PAST-IND
 'The child stepped on the cat.'

- b. *lamaya-Tə puusa-wə pəɬəg-un-a* (semi-transitive)
 child-DAT cat-ACC step on.INV-PAST-IND
 'The child accidentally stepped on the cat.'

Note the demotion of agent, compared with their transitive counterparts; however, this should not be confused with suppression of the subject. For one thing, there is no promotion of the complement: the object remains in the same status, as indicated by the accusative marker. Moreover, these sentences take the typical order of constituents allocated for subject, object and verb. Experiencer nominal appears in sentence-initial position, i.e. in subject position, and stimulus nominal occurs pre-verbally, i.e. in normal object position.

When an experiencer noun occurs with verbs derived from intransitive roots, as there is no complement, the only nominal constituent appears in the dative, indicating the role of involuntary participant (28b and 29b). This can be contrasted with the active construction, which has the subject appearing in nominative, denoting a voluntary participant, as shown in (28a), or presents a statement in a non-committed way, i.e. unmarked with respect to the participant, as shown in (29a).

- (28) a. *Chitra naTə-nə-wa*
 (name) dance-NPT-IND
 'Chitra is dancing.'

- b. *Chitra-Tə nəte-nə-wa*
 (name)-DAT dance.INV-NPT-IND
 'Chitra gets to dancing (impulsively).'

(29) a. *Ranjit anDə-nə-wa*
 (name) cry-NPT-IND
 'Ranjit is crying.'

b. *Ranjit-Tə ənDe-nə-wa*
 (name)-DAT cry.INV-NPT-IND
 'Ranjit cannot help but cry.'

It should be added that for a large number of predicates in this class there is no alternative possibility to denote the participant except in dative. The absence of an alternative form to mark the animate participant of such predicates suggests that they have fossilized with stative aspect and cannot return to eventive aspect. That is, they cannot undergo any derivation or lexical operation so as to change into 'activity' or to convey volitional meaning (see Chandralal 2005 for a detailed description).

4. Finding functional motivations

Given the relatively high frequency of these impersonal constructions in Sinhala, it is interesting to speculate why the language should have such constructions. One important functional motivation comes from semantics. We have already shown that defocusing agent/Actor is one of the main functions of these inactive clauses. The morpholexical process eliminates or otherwise neutralizes agency of event structures. This can also have the effect of reducing valency in some cases such as absolutive-class verbs. Agent demotion does not lead to valency reduction automatically in Sinhala since object is not expected to be promoted to subject, or simply there is no object to be promoted. Given that Sinhala does not need a device for promoting objects to subject position, one cannot anticipate that syntax provides functional motivation for the derivation of inactive clauses.

Unable to find syntactic motivation, now we should turn to consider context-sensitivity of these expressions and their capacity to absorb pragmatic inferences. I will show how these inactive-type clauses have gained such pragmatic meanings including modal senses of potentiality and possibility. I see this as a process of semanticization that occurred in Sinhala. This also shows how some primary meanings became attributes of distinctive clause-types, intentional meaning being the semantic prototype of the active clause and unintentional meaning that of the inactive clause.

In the history of Sinhala that extends over two millennia, there were no inactive clauses recorded in its initial period. Inactive verbs represent a later development in Sinhala, born, as a form-meaning category, around 4th century⁵. This development shows that Sinhala community during this period was engaged in a linguistic innovative attempt seeking a new linguistic form, a new type of clause, to conventionalize pragmatic meanings and context-dependent information accompanied by the active clause. The purpose was foregrounding all the backgrounded information regarding inactive, involuntary, impulsive state-of-affairs through a fully fledged process verb

appearing in what I have collectively called ‘inactive clause.’ With this innovation, active and inactive clauses were established as containing disparate semantic domains.

	ACTIVE VERB	INACTIVE VERB
Lexical verb:	V...ə/i/e-nəwa	→ V...e-nəwa
Conceptual structure:	actor-do/make	→ undergoer-be/become
Semantic interpretation:	intentional action	→ unintentional process

5. Conclusion

Taken together, intransitive clauses can be considered as including a set of forms in which the subject is acting with his own intention (active) or the subject is acted upon in some way, whether of its own accord (reflexive), being denied MENTAL capacity to control the occurrence (unaccusative), or by turning into an endpoint rather than a starting point (dative experiencer). However, it is impossible to predict whether a given verb turns out to be unergative or unaccusative from the verb’s lexical form alone; its volitionality split should be taken into consideration.

The process of semanticization is not only diachronic but also synchronic. Sinhala speakers choose the appropriate clause type to express their intended meanings, declarative, modal, volitional vs. involitive, impersonal or spontaneous, subjective vs. objective and polite refusals or excuses and evasions, etc. Considering the semantic explicitness and context-sensitivity of these constructions, a contextualist analysis, rather than a formalist approach, would do justice to them.

My analysis suggests that active typology (Klimov, 1979, Delancy 1985, Langacker 1987, Croft 1991) provides a convincing conceptual tool in accounting for data in Sinhala. However, we should not come to a hasty conclusion as to create an ‘either-or’ -type dichotomy in terms of active/inactive distinction. Semantic interpretations regarding the respective structures may have become the default way of using verbs; other interpretations are not negated but to be negotiated depending on the context. The semantic division does not work as an ‘anti-ambiguity’ factor since pragmatics cannot be expected to remain mute.

Notes

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1 See Gair 1970 for details.

2 cf. De Silva 1960.

3 The fact was pointed out by Inman 1992.

4 Gair, J. 1970, Masica 1976, Sridhar 1979, Klaiman 1980, Verma and Mohanan. 1990 and Chandralal 2002

5 cf. Paravitana 1956: cxxxi and Prematane 1986:124

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シンハラ語の非能動文の意味構造について

ディリープ チャンドララル

要 約

この論文は、シンハラ語の自動文の意味構造を分析するものである。特に、動詞形態と格標示の調整を伴う構成的要素を持つ、いわゆる「非能動文」を扱い、「能動型」対「非能動型」という対立の論理的基盤がシンハラ語の文法の著しい特色をなすことを論じる。文脈的・機能的意味要素が形態・統語的単位の中で表れない場合があることも明らかにする。最後に、シンハラ語にこのような文法構文ができた動機付けを考察する。

キーワード： 能格、対格、与格、能動者、受動者、経験者