

## COLLOQUIAL SINHALESE CLAUSE STRUCTURES

# JANUA LINGUARUM

STUDIA MEMORIAE  
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# COLLOQUIAL SINHALESE CLAUSE STRUCTURES

*by*

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*TO SYLVIA AND BARBIE*



## PREFACE

The materials on which this study is based were collected for the most part while the author was working as assistant to Professor Gordon H. Fairbanks on a project carried out at Cornell University under contract to the U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. That project had as its aim the compilation of a textbook for Colloquial and Literary Sinhalese, but only that part of the work dealing with the former is reflected in this study; Literary Sinhalese, which differs sharply and in fundamental respects from the Colloquial variety, is left out of consideration here. The Colloquial materials that constituted the basic corpus for this study were collected over a period of about fourteen months from the third member of the project, Mr. M.W.S. De Silva, then of the University of Ceylon, a linguist as well as native speaker of Sinhalese. Subsequent field work in Ceylon in 1964-1965 under an NDEA-related Fulbright-Hays grant has confirmed the authenticity of that data as a reasonably representative sample of current Colloquial Sinhalese, lacking for the most part features that mark some specific regional rural varieties as well as those that characterize hyper-careful or artificial speech. Some revisions and expansions have, however, been carried out on the basis of that fieldwork as well as other work at Cornell, primarily in the direction of incorporating variant forms from other educated speakers, but retaining the restriction to colloquial and, as far as possible, informal speech. The most important of these changes will be noted.

I would like to express my appreciation to the two men who served at various times as chairman of my doctoral committee and who read this study in an earlier form: Professors C. F. Hockett and Gordon H. Fairbanks. Whatever insights I have gained into human language behavior I owe in great measure to them, and it was the latter who first stimulated my interest in Indic languages. Special thanks are due to M. W. S. De Silva, a valued colleague as well as informant, who went far beyond the ordinary functions of the latter in helping to gather and organize data and discuss and test hypotheses. Mr. D. D. De Saram and Mr. W. S. Karunatilake have been of great assistance both at Cornell and in Ceylon at different times in providing further data and helping to check doubtful points. Needless to say, errors of fact and interpretation are entirely my responsibility.

I would like to take this opportunity to make public my appreciation for the grant

through the Office of Education that made my fieldwork in Ceylon possible, as well as to the personnel of the U.S. Educational Foundation in Ceylon who extended themselves to the limit to make it easier for me to carry it out.

Those who, true to the tradition of that country, extended me help and kindness in Ceylon are too numerous to be listed, but among them, Professor D.E. Hettiaratchi of the University of Ceylon and Mr. K.D. Somadasa its Librarian may be singled out. Among the many who contributed further language data, I wish to mention my two young assistants from Uda Peradeniya village, Messrs. K.M.D. Kulasekara and W.M.R.A. Wijesundara, who helped out from sheer interest and eagerness to learn, and Messrs. Upasena De Silva and Anuradha Senaviratne. Mr. Kamal De Abrew very graciously made available a copy of his London M.A. dissertation, and I have profited therefrom, as indicated at several points, even though there was insufficient opportunity to make use of all the new leads that it offered.

Mrs. Hazel Neigh, Mrs. Mary Mines, and Mrs. Carole An Perrin typed various drafts of this work, and deserve appreciation for their patience and accuracy.

The publication of this work has been made possible by the generosity of the Hull Fund of Cornell University, who provided a subvention for that purpose.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to my wife for her patience and encouragement and her amazing tolerance during several difficult periods in the writing of this work.

Cornell University

September, 1965



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## INDEX OF SYMBOLS

V	Verb (including phrasal verbs 3.3). Symbols for verbal inflection are given in 2.22.
V <sup>A</sup> , V <sup>P</sup> , V <sup>C</sup>	Respectively: A, P, and C verbs. 2.212.
N	Nominal. 3.1.
-d	Dative case. 2.1.
-g	Genitive case. 2.1.
-i	Instrumental case. 2.1.
-k(-)	Indefinite. 2.1.
-p(-)	Plural. 2.1.
A	Adjectival. 3.2.
Pr	Predicator of a base clause in a transformation. 6.11.
pr	Pr of a base clause as it appears in a transform of that clause. 6.11.
X	All constituents other than the predicator in a clause, or the forms derived from them in a transform of that clause. 6.11.
-Y	The assertion marker. 2.461.
-(conj)Y	The conjunction -Y. 2.464.
(-Y) <i>kiāla</i>	The quotation marker. 2.45.
1P, 2P, D, Aph	Respectively: proximal, first person; proximal, second person; distal; anaphoric. 2.13.

In addition to those listed above, there are a few symbols of more limited relevance that have been defined in the sections to which they pertain. See also "Conventions in Presentation" 1.4.





## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCOPE

This study is an attempt to describe predicative clauses in colloquial Sinhalese through the presentation of a number of clause construction types together with some transformations that operate upon them to produce still other types. Some general characteristics of Sinhalese predicative clauses will be set forth in section 3, but ultimately their definition rests on and is implicit in the statements of constructions and transformations themselves.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.2 THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

This study is aimed at producing an initial description of certain basic syntactic features in colloquial Sinhalese, and not at arriving at any novel theoretical statements relating to the description of languages in general. Thus, free use has been made of whatever current descriptive models and techniques appeared most helpful in terms of their ability to reveal and describe those features at this comparatively early stage in the analysis of Sinhalese. In essence, two general approaches to syntax, which may be characterized as the “constructional” and the “transformational” have been combined here. Although both are familiar ones in current linguistic studies, some general statements about each of them and the manner in which they have been utilized and combined would appear to be in order. It will also be necessary to state some terms and concepts relating specifically to the analysis of Sinhalese clauses, but this may be done more clearly after the presentation of phonology and essential inflectional and distributional classes and is thus deferred until section 4.

#### 1.21 *Constructions*

A *construction* is essentially a pattern according to which forms are put together into

<sup>1</sup> The simplest definition of a predicative clause in Sinhalese is “a form that has a predicator as nuclear constituent” but the definition of “predicator” is in turn dependent on the characteristics of the form in which it occurs, particularly with relation to the transformations to which it is subject or by which it is derived. While we cannot point to any one transformational characteristic shared by all predicative clauses, there are transformations that pertain to large numbers of them, across types, and these are part of a network of transformations into which every predicative clause appears to enter at least one point.