

# **A Contrastive Study of the Word Order of the Compound and Complex Sentences in English and Sinhala**

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## **Abstract**

This study is a comparative analysis of word order of the compound and complex sentences in English and Sinhala. The main objective of the study is to identify and understand the characteristics of the two languages related to the word order thereby facilitating the Sinhala learners of English to easily acquire English. In terms of the methodology of the study, the word order of both languages has been analysed and compared the data. Spoken Sinhala depicted here were taken from several native speakers while the data for English language were drawn from selected sources from native samples. The study enables to identify particular constructions of the two languages respectively. One of the major conclusions drawn is that English and Sinhala share common characteristics. The word order of the both the languages are fixed at the sentence level.

## **Introduction**

The goal of his study is to examine the differences and similarities in the word order in Sinhala and English at the sentence level. Sinhala, considered an Indo Aryan language, is one of the two official languages while it is the mother tongue of the majority (about 70%) in Sri Lanka. **Katre (1964:5)** explains that the term Indo- Aryan is one of the language stream brought in by the invading Aryans in the early half of the second millennium B:C into India. **According to Fairbanks (1968:1)**, Sinhala language belongs to the Indo – Aryan language family and Hindi, Bengali, Barati, Rajasthani, Gujarathi, and Oriya are to name some of other languages of Indo- Aryan family. In forms of English, it is also considered an Indo- European language and is forced back

to the Germanic roots. **Weerakkon (1982:9)** unfolds the two languages as follows.

“Sinhala and English both belong to the same Indo- European language family. Sinhala is a member of an Indo-Iranian sub- family and English a member of the Germanic sub family. Sinhala has two main varieties: literary and spoken, which differ from each other in several ways”

**According to Baugh (1993:4)**, English is the largest of the occidental languages and spoken more than 370 million people as a first language in UK, the USA and Australia. The word order of English SVO with the word order of English constitute subject verb and object while Sinhala language belongs to SVO category.

At the sentence level, there are some peculiarities in addition to the general word order acceptable. Such acceptances and peculiarities are taken into consideration. Many researchers have been taken up with reference to the word order of English and other languages in the world, but there is likely to be a rare instance where a study of this type concerning a contrastive study of word order in Sinhala and English. The word order can be defined as the way of combining constituents in a language and is the arrangement of words. This will make a deep impact on the learners and researchers with the two main advantages. This will be beneficial to the translation process in great extent. Secondly, the language learners and teachers will find this more fruitful in teaching and learning process as the knowledge of two languages facilitates them to acquire any language. Even today, English remains exceptional with many unable to grasp in present.

### **Aims and Objectives**

In this study, it is expected to inquire about the properties of the two languages related to the word order at the sentence level(compound and complex). Furthermore, it enables to identify the similarities and differences of the two languages which will be useful for Sinhala learners of English to overcome their difficulties being faced in the process of learning.

### **Methodology of the Study**

The data for spoken Sinhala described here are taken from several native speakers while examples for English have been drawn from the samples from native speaking sources.

## Research problem

Are there similarities and dissimilarities in Sinhala and English related to the word of Compound and Complex sentences?

The languages in the world can be classified as languages with grammatical word order (GWO) and languages with pragmatic word order (PWO).

—English is a fine example of GWO" (**Rutherford 1998:300-303**) but Sinhala is mostly a language with pragmatic word order (PWO).

**According to Hawkins (1983:21)** Greenberg states that if in a language if the verb follows both the nominal subject and nominal object as the dominant order, the language almost always has a case system. Examples can be drawn from Sinhala since it is one of the inflectional languages in the world. But it is not true with English since instead of inflection, the prepositions are used.

## The Compound Sentences

In a compound sentence too, sentences are joined with a conjunctive and in a complex sentence they are joined with the relative pronouns. A compound sentence in both languages contains two independent clauses joined by a coordinator. The coordinators are as follows: /namuɔ̃ /e:una: ɔ̃/ but /taʋəmə/ yet /me:dakʋa: / till.

maɔ̃ siŋhələ kata:kəraŋə puluʋəŋ e:una:ɔ̃ iŋgri:si kata:kəraŋə bæ

I can speak Sinhala but can't speak English

The coordinators in English are as follows: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, till and so.

- a. I tried to speak Spanish, and my friend tried to speak English
- b. Smith played football, so Mary Smith went shopping
- c. Smith played football, for Mary Smith went shopping

The above three sentences are compound sentences. Each sentence contains two independent clauses, and they are joined by a coordinator with a comma preceding it. The conscious use of coordinators can change the

relationship between the clauses. Sentences b and c, for example, are identical except for the coordinators. In sentence b, Smith *played football* occurs first, and as a consequence, *Mary Smith went shopping*. In sentence c, Mary Smith went shopping first. In sentence c Smith played football because, possibly, he didn't have anything else to do, for or because Mary Smith went shopping.

However, the word order within the two clauses in c is free since the following changes are acceptable only in Sinhala whereas in both languages the word order within the sentence seems rigid as in **a**, **b**, **c** and **d**.

c. ayiya	giya:	game:	a:ve	næ tavəmə
<i>elder brother</i>	<i>go-Past</i>	<i>village-Loc</i>	<i>come</i>	<i>no yet</i>

My elder brother went to the village and hasn't come yet

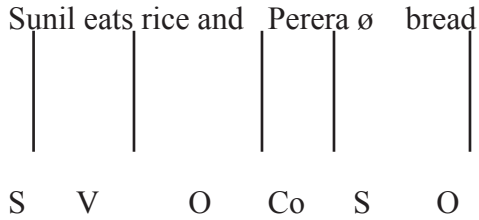
Gapping is predominantly operated in compound sentences in both languages. **Panhuis (1980: 229)** states that gapping is the deletion of identical verbs except for one in conjoined sentences which defer at least two of their constituents.

As formulated by Ross — the order in which —Gapping operates depends on the order of elements at the time that the rule applies; if the identical elements are on left branches, Gapping operates forward; if they are on right branches it operates backward. **(1970: 251)**.

Unlike in English, in Sinhala, when the verb in the first clause is gapped, the assertion marker /yi/ is added to the objects of the two clauses and the object takes the marked form like /**batuyi**/ rice.

sunil	batuyi	pere:ra	pa:njuyi	kanəva
<i>Sunil-S</i>	<i>rice-O</i>	<i>Perera-S</i>	<i>bread-O</i>	<i>eat-V-Pres</i>

Sunil eats rice and Perera bread



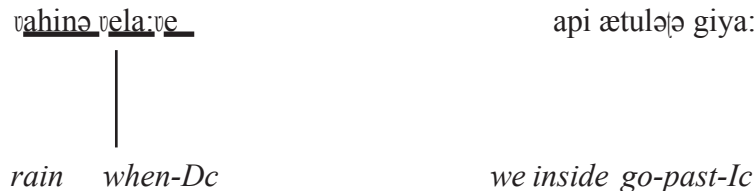
### The Complex Sentence

The complex sentence can be defined as a sentence which contains one or more dependent clauses in addition to its independent clause.

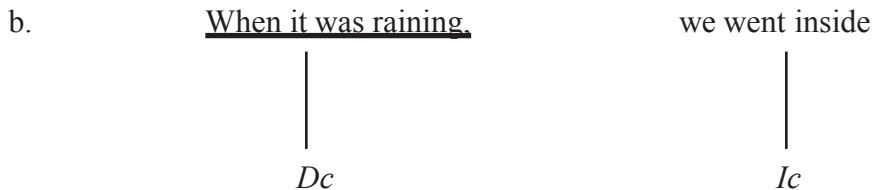
A complex sentence has an independent clause joined by one or more dependent clauses.

A principal, main, or independent clause is one making a statement without the help of any other clause. A subordinate or dependent clause is one which makes a statement depending upon or modifying some word in the principal clause.

A complex sentence always has a subordinator such as /nisa: /hinda/ *because, since/passe/ after /hemə unat/ although, or /vela:ve/ when* or a relative pronoun such as *that, who, or which*. A complex sentence contains one main clause and one or more subordinate clauses. The structure of a complex sentence could be as follows.



When it was raining, we went inside



The constituent order within the Dc in both languages is very rigid but in many complex sentences the order of clauses is flexible.

- a.        api ætuləɔ giya:                                vahinə peɭa:ne  
                                      |     |  
                                      we     inside go-past-Ic         rain     when-Dc

We went inside when it was raining

- b.        When it was raining,                                we went inside  
                                      |     |  
                                      Dc     Ic

- c.        We went inside when it was raining  
                                      |     |  
                                      Ic     Dc

- d.        eva: sindu kivaddi                                api naɭənaɭa: hiɻiya  
                                      |         |         |     |         |         |  
                                      he/she   singing   while-Dc         we dance   keep-Past-Ic

While he/she was singing we danced

- e.        While he was singing,                                we danced  
                                      |     |  
                                      Dc     Ic

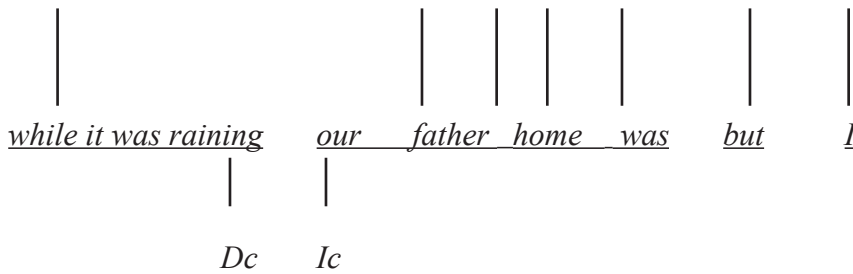
When a complex sentence begins with a subordinator such as sentences b and e, a comma is placed at the end of the dependent clause. When the independent clause begins with subordinators in the middle as in sentences c no comma is required.

f. I danced while he was singing



A complex sentence with one dependent clause and one compound clause:

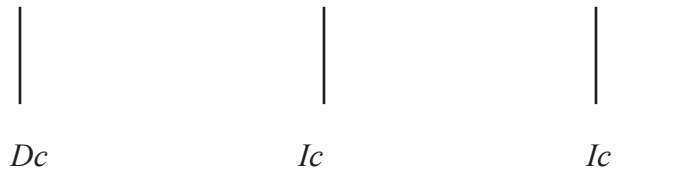
vahid̩di                      ape ta:tta gedəra hitiya e:una:tə mama



isko:le	giya:
<i>school</i>	<i>go-Past</i>

*Ic*

While it was raining. my father was at home but I went to school



The sentences containing adjective clauses [or dependent clauses] are also complex because they contain an independent clause and a dependent clause. Being a head last language the adjectival clause occurs before the H in Sinhala as in **a** whereas in English, the adjectival clause follows the H as in **b**. The dissimilarity of this kind is likely to make some difficulties for the L2 learner to acquire English and also the translator may encounter some difficulty in translating the source to the target language.

a. mage amma kata: kərə kərə hiḷi minihaṭ bisnəs kərənə kenek

<u>my</u>	<u>mother</u>	<u>taking</u>	<u>keep</u>	<u>man</u>	<u>also</u>	<u>business</u>	<u>one</u>

*Dc*

*Ic*

b. The man with whom my mother was talking is a businessman

*Dc*

*Ic*

c. de:viḷ kiyəṭəpu potə ra:kke tiyenəva

<u>Davit</u>	<u>read-Past part</u>	<u>book</u>	<u>self-<i>Loc</i></u>	<u>is</u>
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*Dc*

*Ic*

*The book that Davit read is on the self*

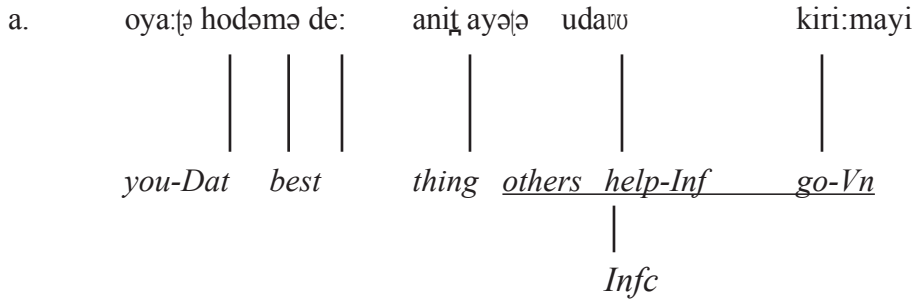
a. The book that Davit read is on the self

*Dc*

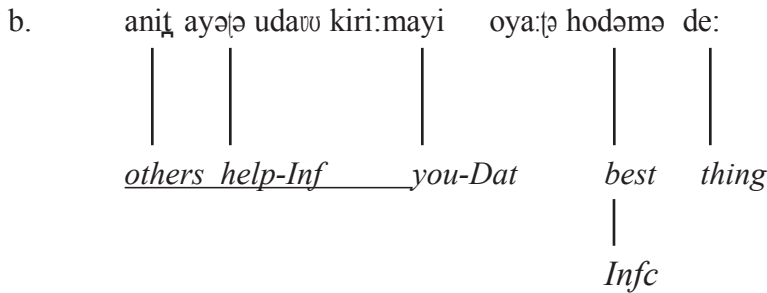
*Ic*

The complex sentences with infinitive have a flexible word order in both languages.

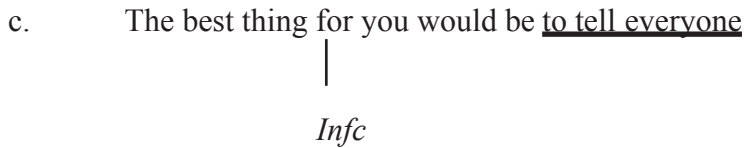




The best thing for you is to help others



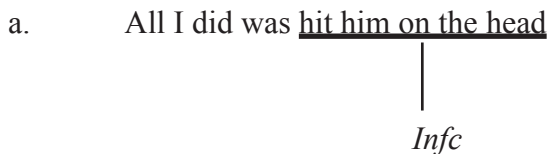
The best thing for you is to help the others



To tell everyone would be the best thing for you.



The infinitive without to and the subject of the sentence also has a free word order in English.



b. Hit him on the head was all I did.

|

*Infrc*

When the subject of adverbial participle clauses is expressed, in Sinhala the postposition */ekka/* is used whereas in English it is often introduced by **with**.

a.           rajəyə    venas   vi:maɪ                            ekka    api   prəyo:ɔnə   ləbuva  
                   |                            |                            |  
                   government change-Part      with-Pop we   benefit get-Past

With the changing of the government, we were benefited

b.           With the changing of the government, we are benefited

|

*Advpc*

c.           We are benefited with the changing of the government

|

*Advpc*

### The Cleft Sentences

The structure of cleft sentences in Sinhala is different from that of English.

#### The structure:

According to Henadeerage (2002: 204) one of the characteristics of constituent focus is that the focus encoding involves morphologically marking the verb and the constituent to be focused. The co-occurrence of these two elements, the verb marking particle *-e* and the focus marker on a constituent, is crucially important.

a.           pere:ra                                   tamavi                            liyuma                            livove  
                   |                                    |                                    |                                    |  
                   Perera -S                            Foc                                    letter -O                            write-Past

It is Perera who wrote the letter

However, in English the “Cleft sentences usually begin with *it* + form of the verb *is*, followed by the element which is being emphasized” (Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics 1985)

–Clefting and passivization are particularly prominent in SVO languages (Verma 1996: 5).

It+ Be form + the element to be focused +clause

It was Mr. Smith who gave Mary a dress

It was a dress that Mr. Smith gave Mary

In Sinhala, no such construction is possible and instead the focus marker /*tamayi*/ is used as in **a**, **whereas** according to the structure of cleft sentence in English, there are two subjects: the anticipatory subject and the postponed subject.

a.

smit̪	tamayi	me:riʈə	potə	dunne
Smith	Foc	Mary-Dat	book	give-Past-Foc It was

Mr. Smith who gave Mary a book

b.

It	was Mr. Smith who gave Mary a book
As	Ps

In a cleft sentence in Sinhala the /*yi*/ copula is attached to the subject NP which is in focus position and the main verb in the clause appears in its special form like /*liyanne*/.

a.

pererayi	liyumə	liyane
Perera-S	letter-O	write -Pres

It is Perera who writes the letter

In sentence of this kind, the focus marker /*tamayi*/ is omitted and the /*yi*/ copula is suffixed to the S.

However, in some sentences the /yi/ copula is attached to the object.

- a.        pere:ra            liyuməyi            liyane  
              |                    |                    |  
              Perera-S            letter-O write -Pres

It is the letter that Perera writes

It is clear that with the change of this kind of the word order of focus marker, the change of the meaning is unavoidable. In discussing the cleft and pseudo cleft sentences in English Arts notes:

Both cleft and pseudo cleft always contain a form of the copular verb be. The position following this copular verb is called the focus position. The elements that occur here receive special prominence (1997: 212).

- a.        It is Mary who writes.  
 b.        It is Honda that she bought.

Depending upon the element which one wants to focus, the order of focus marker can be changed and a simple sentence may have several cleft sentences as follows. Simple sentence:

- De:viṭ    i:ye    pa:ṭiyedi            puṭṭiŋ    kə:və  
               |        |        |                    |        |  
 Davit-s yesterday-Adv in the party-Adv pudding-O eat-Past

Davit ate pudding at the party yesterday can have following cleft forms:

- a.        de:viṭ tamavi i:ye    pa:ṭiyedi            puṭṭiŋ    kə:və  
               |        |        |                    |        |

Davit    Foc yesterday-Adv in the party-Adv pudding-O eat-V-Past

It was Davit who ate pudding at the party yesterday

- b.        de:viṭ i:ye    pa:ṭiyedi            puṭṭiŋ    tamavi kə:və  
               |        |        |                    |        |

Davit-S yesterday-Adv in the party-Adv pudding-O Foc    eat-V-Past

It was pudding that Davit ate at the party yesterday

b.        de:viɿ i:ye        pa:ɿiyedi        tamayi        pudɿŋ        kæ:vɛ  
              |        |        |        |        |        |

Davit-S yesterday-Adv in the party-Adv Foc pudding-O eat-Past

It was at the party yesterday that Davit ate pudding

c.        i:ye        tamayi        De:viɿ pudɿŋ        kæ:vɛ        pa:ɿiyedi  
              |        |        |        |        |        |

yesterday Foc Davit pudding-O eat-Past in the party-Adv

It was at the party yesterday that Davit ate pudding

In English also, depending upon the element, we want to focus; a simple sentence may have several cleft sentences. This can be considered a way of making complex sentences.

Simple sentence: *David had ice cream at the party last night.* Cleft Forms:

- a.        It was David who had ice cream at the party last night.
- b.        It was ice cream that David had at the party last night.
- c.        It was at the party that David had ice cream last night.
- d.        It was last night that David had ice cream at the party.

So, comparatively both in Sinhala and English, the word order within the clause is very rigid. In English, unlike in Sinhala, the order of subject clauses in sentences is also rigid. However, the word order of clauses at the sentence level shows flexibility.

## Conclusions

1.        The word order within the clause in both languages is inflexible whereas the order of some clauses within the sentences is free in English. Spoken Sinhala can be considered a language with some features of mixed branching direction since relative clauses occur left and right to the head whereas English according to **Chomsky & Lasnik (1993:518)** a right-branching language, all heads precede their complements. So, the order in both languages is determined by the setting of the head parameter.

2. Gapping which results the changes in the word order is predominantly operated in compound sentences in both languages.
3. In Sinhala, being a head last language the adjectival clause occurs before the H whereas in English, the adjectival clause follows the H. The dissimilarity of this kind will make difficult for the L<sub>2</sub> learner to acquire English.
4. In a sentence like All I did was hit him on the head, the infinitive without to and the subject of the sentence also has free word order in English since the word order of the same sentence can be changed as Hit him on the head was all I did.
5. In cleft sentences in English, there are two subjects: the anticipatory subject and the postponed subject whereas in Sinhala no such complexities come about and instead the focus marker/tamayi/ is used.
6. Depending upon the element which one wants to focus, the order of focus marker in Sinhala can be changed and as a result a simple sentence may have several cleft sentences.
7. English is considered a non pro -drop language. Nevertheless, subject pronouns are almost always dropped in commands defining a word order in both languages.
8. In both languages, the unmarked word order in a sentence can be changed depending upon the element which one wants to put emphasis on.
9. The right headedness and the left branching nature are dominant in Sinhala while English has left headedness and right branching nature at all levels.

Thus, the present research reveals a number of similarities and dissimilarities in the light of the word order in Sinhala and English at various levels. It is found that the word order typology plays a vital role in predicting syntactic changes. The main argument is that, on the scale of free word order and fixed word order, English leans more towards fixed word order while Sinhala has relatively free word order. However, Sinhala also leans more towards the fixed word order at the phrase level. The insights gained through this research can be utilized in understanding the structures of two languages concerned.

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