A Contrastive Study of the Word Order of Negation and Question (Sentence Level) in English and Sinhala

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අධ්‍යයනය සිංහල භාෂාවේ හා ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂාවේ නිෂේධාර්ථ හා ප්‍රශ්නාර්ථ මට්ටමේ ඇති සමානතා හා අසමානතා පිළිබඳව සංසන්දනාත්මක අධ්‍යයනයයි. ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂාව මූලික මට්ටමින් ඉගෙන ගන්නා බොහෝ දෙනෙකුගේ අදහස වනුයේ සිංහලවලට හාත්පසින්ම වෙනස් වූ ක්‍රමවේදයන් හා රටාවන් ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂාවේ අන්තර්ගත වන බවයි. එය ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂාව ඉගෙනීම අත්හැරීමට හා ඉංග්‍රීසි පිළිබඳව භීතිය ඇතිවීමට හේතුවේ. ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂාව සාමාන්‍ය මට්ටමින් උගන්වන අය පවා එම මතයම දරන බව නිරීක්ෂණය වේ. එය ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂා ප්‍රගමනය සඳහා අවාසිදායක තත්ත්වයකි. මෙම තත්ත්වය නිසා ඉංග්‍රීසි කතා කිරීම සඳහා ඉගෙන ගැනීමේදී විශාල වශයෙන් බලපෑම් කරනු දක්නට ලැබේ. මෙහි ප්‍රධාන අරමුණ වන්නේ භාෂා දෙකේ පොදු වූ ලක්ෂණ හා වෙනස්කම් පිළිබඳව අධ්‍යයන කිරීමකි. එමගින් ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂා අධ්‍යයනය සඳහා දායක කරගත හැකිවේ. ක්‍රමවේදය වශයෙන් භාෂා දෙකේ නිෂේධාර්ථ හා ප්‍රශ්නාර්ථ පිළිබඳව අධ්‍යයනය භාවිතා කෙරේ. සිංහල ඉගෙනගත් බොහෝ දෙනෙකුට මෙමගින් අධ්‍යයනය කළ හැකිය. මෙහිදී උදාහරණයන් භාෂා දෙකේ මවු භාෂාව වශයෙන් භාවිතා කරන්නන්ගෙන් ලබාගන්නා ලදි. මෙම අධ්‍යයනය මගින් භාෂා දෙකේ වාක්‍යාංශ රටාවන් හා සැකැස්ම පිළිබඳව අවබෝධයක් ලබාගත හැකිය. මෙහිදී මෙම පර්යේෂණය මගින් එළඹිය හැකි වැදගත් කාරණයක් වන්නේ ඉංග්‍රීසි හා සිංහල භාෂා දෙකේ සමානතා පවතින බවත් එමගින් භාෂා අධ්‍යයනය සඳහා අනෝන්‍ය වශයෙන් භාවිත කළ හැකි බවයි. ඊට අමතරව වාක්‍යාංශ මට්ටමින් භාෂා දෙකේ වචන හැසිරෙන ආකාරය ස්ථාවර ආකාරයකට සිදුවේ.

This study is a comparative analysis of word order in English and Sinhala of negation and questions at the sentence level. 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 leaners 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 of questions and negations in Sinhala and English at the sentence level. Sinhala, considered an Indu 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 leaners 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 of negation and question at the sentence level. 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.
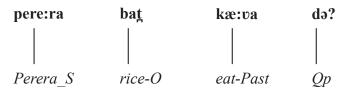
Research problem

Are there similarities and dissimilarities in Sinhala and English related to the word order of questions and negations at the sentence level?

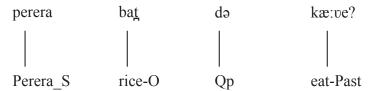## The Word Order in Question

The Yes-No Question

Question in Sinhala generally formed with the use of the question particle /də/.

—The yes-no question differs from the declarative only in that the yes-no question has a clause final /də/(Hagstrom2001:1).

pere:ra	**baʈ**	**kæ:ʋa**	**də?**
Perera_S	*rice-O*	*eat-Past*	*Qp*

Did Perera eat rice?

In case of using the Qp/ də/ internally, the verb is marked with /e/.

perera	baʈ	də	kæ:ʋe?
Perera_S	rice-O	Qp	eat-Past

Is it rice that Perera ate?

The formation of questions in English is more complex than that of Sinhala. In English, the yes- no questions can be formed placing the operator before the subject as in b.

a. He is in the office now.

b. Is he in the office now?

In order to form a question from a statement, first it is required to consider the number of verbs.

★	Sarat is a doctor.	One verb: is [be]
★	Nimal drives a sports car.	One verb: drives
★	Jude played basketball last night.	One verb: played
★	Kamal is eating her dinner.	Two verbs: is eating
★	Malan has rented an apartment.	Two verbs: has rented
★	Sita has been living there since 1969.	Three verbs: has been living

If there is one verb in the statement and the verb is a form of be, the question can be formed changing the positions of the S and V.

Statement	Question
John is a doctor.	Is John a doctor?
They are here.	Are they here?

If there are two verbs, questions are formed changing the positions of the subject and first verb.

Statement	Question
Jani is eating dinner.	Is Jani eating dinner?
Sama has rented an apartment.	Has Sama rented an apartment?
Jeni has been living here since 1969.	Has Jeni been living here since 1969?

1. The auxiliary _do' is placed before the subject and the tense value depends upon the auxiliary verb.

2. If the main verb carries a third person singular s, the s is added as a suffix to the Do, making it Does.

> Jane drives a car.   Does Jane drive a car?

If the main verb carries the past tense, the auxiliary is placed in past tense did.

John played cricket last night- Did John play cricket last night?

As usage of this kind is not found in Sinhala, the English learners of Sinhala tend to ignore the rule restrictions in the question forms and very likely to do mistakes.
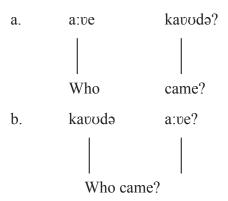
The Wh Question

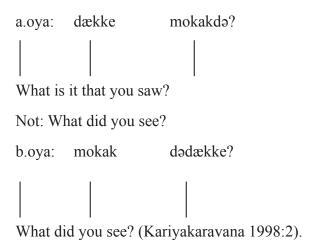The Wh question in Sinhala is formed with Wh form accompanied by the Qp/də/.

a. kaʋʋdə__who

b. moka:də-which

c. mokakdə__-what

d. monəʋadə__-what

e. kohedə-where

f. kaʋədadə/ koyiʋela:ʋedə-When

In Sinhala, unlike in English, the *Wh* word is not obligatorily moved to sentence initial position. However, the *Wh* form accompanied by the Qp

/də/ is used in various orders.

a. a:ʋe   kaʋʊdə?
    | |
    Who   came?

b. kaʋʊdə   a:ʋe?
        | |
        Who came?

According to Kariyakaravana (1998:2) unlike in English in Sinhala if Wh phrases occur post verbally as in example a, it gives a unique focus interpretation and if they occur pre verbally as in example b, it gives both focus and non-focus interpretations.
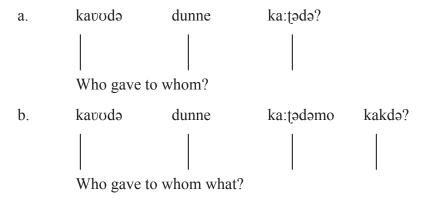
a.oya: dække   mokakdə?
| | |
What is it that you saw?

Not: What did you see?

b.oya: mokak   dədække?
| | |
What did you see? (Kariyakaravana 1998:2).

In this respect,―standard Wh question in English resembles yes-no question which also displays subject-auxiliary inversion(Roberts 1986: 185). The complexity of this kind is a real difficulty for a L2 learner especially in the initial stage of learning English. As a result they are likely to make mistakes like Did You went home? since there is no such complexities in the formation of their mother tongue.

The Wh question formation in English invokes two movement operations: fronting of the Wh– element and subject auxiliary inversion.
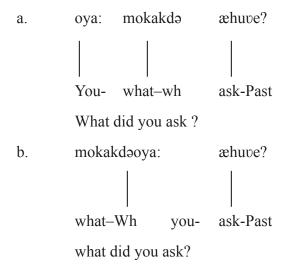
a.   What John can do?- Fronting of the Whelement

b.   Can John read this paper?- Subject Auxiliary inversion

Movement of various kinds plays an important role in English. In the analysis of a sentence like—What did you ask? the question element originated as object of the verb ask moves in its Wh-form to sentence initial position.

In addition, both Sinhala and English allow multiple Wh-questions, where there is more than one Wh- expression in the clause.

a.   kaʊʊdə   dunne   ka:ʈədə?

        | | |

Who gave to whom?

b.   kaʊʊdə   dunne   ka:ʈədəmo   kakdə?

        | | | |

Who gave to whom what?

However, in Sinhala Wh movement is permitted without any condition and the following variations are dominantly used.

a.   oya: mokakdə   æhuʋe?

        | | |

You-   what–wh   ask-Past

What did you ask ?

b.   mokakdəoya: æhuʋe?

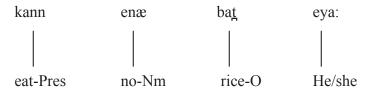 | |

what–Wh   you-   ask-Past

what did you ask?

In English, the constituent order within the Wh-question is rigid.

The Word Order in Negation

Sinhala has different types of negative markers (Nm). According to Kariyakarawana (1988:49) most common non-prefixing negators are /næ/ and /neʋe/neʋeyi/ have a number of dialectical variations including nemey/neʋi/ neme:/.

But in English the negative marker is postponed the auxiliary verb which is followed by the main verb.

The verb with Nm has a free word order at the sentence level which is dominant in Sinhala. However, the following construction of negation is less dominant in Sinhala.

kann	enæ	baṯ	eya:
eat-Pres	no-Nm	rice-O	He/she

Nimal does not eat rice

As a result of the influence of the free word order in this kind, the Sinhala students who study English simply tend to transfer Sinhala sentence structure in which the word order is not fixed into English and make the erroneous statement as follows.

There are two types of negation:

i.   The modal negation

ii.   The non-modal negation

The modal negation

The structure of modal negation in English is:

S + Mo + Npart + V

a.	He	may	not	come
	S	Mo	Npart	V

In the translation of this sentence into spoken Sinhala, the structure would be:

b.   eya: enəekak   næ

He/she-S   may come-V   Nm-Aux

He may not come

In a structure of this kind in Sinhala, the auxiliary is not used similar to English.

According to Gair (1970: 129) in the transform, the verb appears in the emphatic form, with the tense retained, and / næ/ is added as Aux.

In the above example the verb / kanne/ eat is in an emphatic form and the Nm / næ/ is in the verb final position.

According to Kariyakarawana (1998: 49) /næ/ is limited to [+v] predicates.

The Nm / næ/ occurs as an Aux as in b above as well as a full verb as in a and below. The noteworthy difference in the structure of negative sentence is that since be verbs are not used in Sinhala , in the following constructions the Nm functions as a full verb.

According to Gair and Paolillo (1988:49) /næ/ is also the negator of existential /locative verb /tiyenəʋa/ be/have/available exist in animate and / innʋəa/ be, have or available exist in animate.

―Special rules apply where V is a stative verb innəva or tiyenəva in the non-past tense: these verbs are deleted in the transform‖ (Gair 1970: 129).

In English the Nm "No is used as a full verb and "not" is postponed to the auxiliary verb.
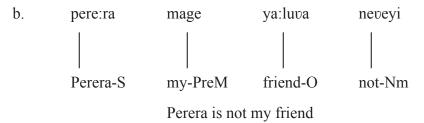
A: Does Peter Smith live here?

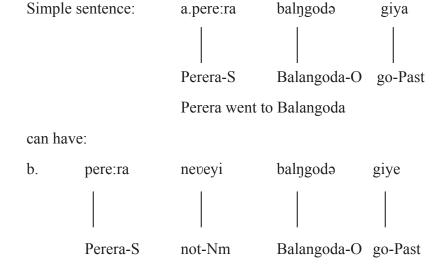B: No, he doesn't

A   Do you live here?

B.   No. I don't live here

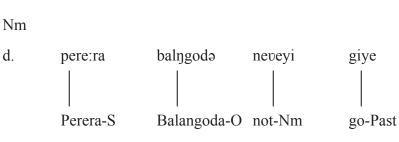The Nm / neveyi/ occurs at the end position of the non verbal sentence but in English Nm is postposed the Aux.

b.   pere:ra   mage   ya:luʋa   neʋeyi

        | | | |

        Perera-S   my-PreM   friend-O   not-Nm

        Perera is not my friend

Depending upon the element focused, the order of Nm /neʋeyi/ marker can be changed as follows.

Simple sentence: a.pere:ra   balŋgodə   giya

                      | | |

                      Perera-S   Balangoda-O   go-Past

                      Perera went to Balangoda

can have:

b.   pere:ra   neʋeyi   balŋgodə   giye

        | | | |

        Perera-S   not-Nm   Balangoda-O   go-Past

It is not Perea who went to Balangoda But in English, the order of the Nm is not changed .

c.   It is not   Smith who went to London

Nm

d.   pere:ra   balŋgodə   neʋeyi   giye

        | | | |

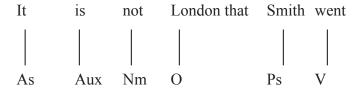   Perera-S   Balangoda-O   not-Nm   go-Past

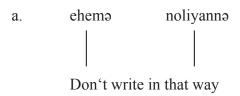It is not Balangoda that Perera went

e.   It is not   London that Smith went

As shown in these examples; when the Nm /neʋeyi/ takes the focus position, the verbs take special form like /giye/. However, the Nm is in the focus position and occurs as an Aux at the end position of the sentence and the verb does not change its normal present or past form but in English in the focus position the Cleft construction is used as below.

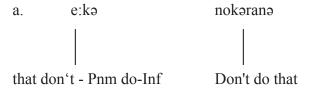| It	is	not	London that	Smith	went
As	Aux	Nm	O	Ps	V

Sinhala has Prefixing Negative marker (Pnm)/no/.

―Prefixing negator /no/ is limited to infinitival and adverbial clauses in the Colloquial Sinhala‖ (Kariyakarawana 1998: 50)

a.   ehemə   noliyannə

Don't write in that way

In English, in the All … not…construction, the Nm not occurs at the initial position of the sentence.

Not all that glitters is gold

The Pnm in Sinhala is used in imperative construction but in English the Nm is postposed to the Aux.
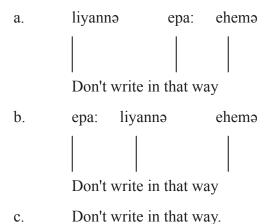
a.   e:kə   nokəranə

that don't - Pnm do-Inf   Don't do that

b.   Don't write in that way

The Nm /epa:/don‟tis used as a modal auxiliary and denotes a meaning similar to the prefixing negative marker /no/.
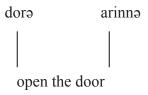
a.   ehemə liyannə epa:

Don't write in that way.

The word order of this sentence can be changed without changing the meaning in Sinhala but in English the word order is fixed.

a.   liyannə   epa: ehemə

| | |

Don't write in that way

b.   epa: liyannə   ehemə

| | |

Don't write in that way
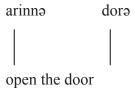
c.   Don't write in that way.

The Word Order in Imperative Construction

According to Van Valin (1997: 41) in both languages in the imperative construction, the second person subject is normally omitted and is interpreted as the addressee, and the verb is in a special, usually tenseless form.

dorə   arinnə

| |

open the door

The word order of a can be changed as:

arinnə   dorə

| |

open the door

But in English, the constituent order is not changed in an imperative construction. In both languages the subject of imperative construction is implied.

This example shows that though Sinhala is considered as a verb final language, it has Head moved to the left making it verb medial.

Conclusions

1. One of the significant differences between two languages concerned is that when the word order changes in Sinhala there are changes in the inflections used. This does not apply in English since there is no inflection. Being an inflectional language, the word order of Sinhala is flexible, does not mean that the same is applicable to any strings of words. A sentence may have many variations but some of them are dominant while the others would be optional.

2. According to Greenberg (1966:79) languages having dominant SOV order are post positional. Sinhala is in accordance with this principle whereas English is considered a prepositional language. However, the word order in both prepositional and post positional phrases is rigid. In English, the prepositional stranding is acceptable only at the sentence level.

3. The order of prepositional phrases in English in a sentence decides its function. That is when the prepositional phrase functions as an adjectival phrase it follows the noun and that order is fixed but when it functions as an adverbial phrase the order is free. As a result it occurs at the initial position or the end.

4. 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.

5. 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 L2 learner to acquire English.

6. The word order in interrogative form in Sinhala is simpler than that of in English.

7. It is difficult to decide the unmarked word order in negation in Sinhala but in English mostly it is largely pre-verbal.

8. English is considered a non pro -drop language. Nevertheless, subject pronouns are almost always dropped in commands defining a word order in both languages.

9. In both languages, the unmarked word order in a sentence can be changed depending upon the element which one wants to put emphasis on.

10. The right head edness and the left branching nature are dominant in Sinhala while English has left head edness 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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