

Nominalization in Tamil and Sinhala: A Contrastive Analysis

Subathini Ramesh

1.0 Introduction

There was a need among the linguists for teaching a foreign language in an improved pace. This has urged the linguists to identify the rapid and effective method of teaching a foreign language to the people who have already learned a language. Consequently the linguists developed the contrastive study which in turn formulated certain new language teaching methods and techniques. Apart from this, the contrastive study is needed for understanding and formulating certain general linguistic theories.

This contrastive linguistics study can be viewed in two different perspectives:

- i) Enquiry
- ii) Practice or theoretical and applied

The theoretical aspects of contrastive method is concerned with theory, methods and the overall implication of the finding of contrastive analysis. The applied aspect of contrastive study is concerned with the application of its findings for language teaching, translation method and language typology.

1.1. Importance of Contrastive Study

Contrastive study is an analysis which tries to unearth the typological commonalties found between the language being compared or contrasted. It is needless to mention that there is a subtle difference between comparative study and contrastive study. Comparative study can be made between two genetically related (cognitive) languages of a particular linguistic family. But contrastive study can be undertaken only between any two languages belonging to two different linguistic families. That is, genetically

unrelated languages could be contrasted through contrastive method. It is a common notion that there is a logic behind it. When two sister languages are compared expecting the commonalties, it is quite natural that the two sister languages will share common properties as they have originated from a common source (proto language). But, in one sense, it is illogical and unwise to expect similar linguistic traits between two languages which are believed to have been originated from different sources. Chomsky's insightful assumption that there are linguistic universals exist among languages leads us to expect the shared features between two unrelated languages. Contrastive analysis indirectly helps to frame the theory of linguistic universals, although the contrastive study has basically been made for language teaching purpose. However the contrastive study yields many a fruit in the domain of language teaching.

The Sinhala language is compared and contrasted with Tamil, especially the processes of nominalization in these two languages. This comparison, in turn, helps to frame strategies and methods to impart the linguistic items which underwent the process of nominalization to the learners of the either language (Tamil and Sinhala). The work of contrasting Tamil nominalization process with Sinhala nominalization process aims to unearth the intricacies involved in the nominalization of both the languages for the theoretical understanding and for the pedagogical purposes.

1.2. Similar and Dissimilar Features of Nominalization Process in Tamil and Sinhala

The first step towards contrasting the two languages is to find out the similarities and differences between them. Here we are concerned about the similarities and differences in the process of nominalization. As far as the nominalization process in the two languages are concerned there are some basic similarities at the outset. The nominalization takes place in the two languages on the verb stems which are either relativized or non-relativized. The deverbal nominalization is a very important process of forming nouns from verbs. Verbs form an important resource for forming abstract nouns in these languages. Also deverbal nominalization helps in the two languages to form nominalized clauses and noun phrases. Both languages make use of suffixation as well as the anchoring of nouns for nominalization. Nominalization also involves complementation in these two languages. Let us compare the typology of nominalization

in these two languages to get the better picture of their similarities and differences so that the findings can be further used for language teaching and translation. Deadjectival nominalization is also found in both languages.

1.2.1. Deverbal Nominalization

1.2.1.1. Nominalization on Non-relativized Verb Stems

Both the languages make use non-relativized verb stems to form nouns. The non-relativized verb stems are mostly verb bases without any suffixes. They are not marked for tense or negative. The nominalization takes place by suffixing certain set of suffixes. The suffixes are two types:

- 1) Suffixes which could be added to all the verbs or most of the verbs
- 2) Suffixes which cannot be added to all the verbs or most of the verbs, i.e. the suffixes which are added to a limited number of verbs

The first type of suffixes are regular from the point of view that they can be added to all the verbs or more number of verbs. The morphophonology is also regular with the first set of verbs. The nominals formed by making use of these suffixes are predictable. That is the resultant meaning of these nominals is predictable. So the word formation process involved in forming nominals by making use of these suffixes from verbs is a productive process. On the other hand, the second type of suffixes are irregular from the point of view that they cannot be added all the verbs or more number of verbs. The morphophonology is also irregular with the second set of verbs. The nominals formed by making use of these suffixes are not predictable. That is, the resultant meaning of these nominals is not predictable. So the word formation process involved in forming nominals from the second set of suffixes is unproductive or semi-productive. As far as suffixation process is concerned, the nominalizing suffixes are divided into two types; productive suffixes and non-productive suffixes. In Tamil, *al*, *tal*, *kai* and a negative suffix *aamai* belong to the first set of suffixes as they are regular and productive. In Sinhala, *iim*, *ili*, *um*, and *man* are productive. There is no negative suffix equivalent to Tamil *aamai*. There are many irregular suffixes in Tamil which form nominals of idiosyncratic and unpredictable meanings.. The regular suffixes in both the languages are capable of forming abstract nouns which may

denote the process of the action or the result of the action denoted by the verb. The irregular suffixes are capable of forming both concrete and abstract nouns. These are added directly to the verb stems (which are not relativized) to form deverbal nouns. Apart from suffixation, other processes are also involved in the process of nominalization by derivation; they are stem modification and conversion. These two processes are not productive as the nominals formed by these processes are unpredictable from the point of view of morphophonology and semantics. The regular suffixes perform argument structure preserving nominalization and the irregular suffixes perform argument structure deviating nominalization. The following table will correlate the suffixation in Tamil and Sinhala on non-relativized stems.

Type	Tamil Suffixes	Sinhala Suffixes
Regular Positive	<i>al, tal, kai</i>	<i>iim, ili, um, man</i>
Regular Negative	<i>aamai</i>	There is no negative suffix equivalent to <i>aamai</i> of Tamil.
Irregular	<i>am, i, pu, vu, etc.</i>	<i>m̄ , iim</i> There is no specific irregular suffix in Sinhala at par with Tamil. Only very rarely the regular suffix <i>iim</i> is used for the formation of nominals denoting concrete sense or irregular abstract sense.

1.2.1.2 Nominalization by Regular Suffixes

Though regular sets of suffixes in both Sinhala and Tamil produce morphophonologically regular and semantically predictable nominals. They show contrasting characteristics which keep them apart.

1.2.1.2.2.1 Dissimilar Distribution of Regular Nominals of Tamil and Sinhala

As stated already, in Tamil, there are three regular positive suffixes *al*, *tal*, and *kai* where as in Sinhala there are four, *iim*, *ili*, *um* and *man*. Both the regular set of suffixes in Tamil and Sinhala form nominals by adding them with non-relativized verb stems and both the sets of suffixes form abstract nouns. There are contrasting characteristics between them in their distribution i.e or the context in which they are used. It has been noted elsewhere that though *al*, *tal* and *kai* form abstract nouns denoting the actions of the verbs from which they are formed, their distribution differ. For example *al* nominals occur with the verb *aam* and *kai* nominals occur with the locative *il*.

kaalaiyil ezuntu paTittal nallatu

‘Getting up early in the morning and studying is good’

avan kaalaiyil ezuntu paTikkal aanaan

‘he stated studying having got up early in the morning’

avan kaalaiyil ezuntu paTikkaiyil avanai naan paartteen

‘I saw him while he got up and studying’

This kind of differences shown by the regular positive suffixes of Tamil are not reflected in the selection of the four regular suffixes in Sinhala. For the above mentioned three different contexts Sinhala makes use of only *iim* nominals.

utayaT ð næhinn ð igen ð ganiim ð honday

‘Getting up early in the morning and studying is good’

eyaa utayaT ð næhinn ð igen ð ganiim ð honday

‘he was studying having got up early in the morning’

eyaa næhinn ð igen ð ganiim ð mama bal ð n ð

I saw him while he got up and studying’

The *iim* nominals are carrying out a variety of functions. Structurally they have absolute regular relationship with their corresponding verb forms.

1.2.1.2.2 Two Sets of Functions for the Same Suffixes

There are two types of functions, regular and irregular, for the same suffixes in Tamil. For example, the regular *tal*, *al*, *kai* and *aamai* have both regular and irregular function as reflected in their morphology, syntax and semantics. The regular *tal* forms nominals of regular and predictable meaning; the morphophonemics of the regular *tal* nominals is also regular. The irregular *tal* forms nominals of irregular and unpredictable meaning; the morphophonemics of the irregular *tal* nominals is also irregular. The following table will illustrate this point.

Verb	Suffix	Regular Nominal	Irregular Nominal
alai 'to wander'	tal	alaital 'act of wandering'	alaittal > alaicc 'trouble caused by hectic moving around'
paay 'to leap'	tal	paaytal 'act of leaping'	paayttal > paayccal 'leap'

The same dichotomy is seen in the *kai* nominalization too. The regular *kai* is different from the irregular *kai*. The following table will illustrate this point.

Verb	Suffix	Regular Nominal	Irregular Nominal
vaaz 'to live'	kai	vaazkai 'act of living'	vaazkkai 'life'

But Sinhala nominal suffixes do not show this kind of two divergent functions. Only three instances have been noted by Weerakoon (1988) in which the *iim* nominals show idiosyncratic and unpredictable meaning.

Verb	Suffix	Regular Meaning	Idiosyncratic Meaning
bo 'drink'	iim	biim ∅ 'act of drinking'	Biim 'drinks'
kiy ∅ 'say'	iim	kiim ∅ 'act of saying'	Kiim 'what is said'
ka 'eat'	iim	kææm ∅ 'act of eating'	kææm ∅ 'food'

5.2.1.2.3 Argument Structure Preserving Tendency of the Regular Suffixes

The regular sets of suffixes of Tamil and Sinhala have the tendency to preserve the argument structure when used for nominalizing verbs. The regular sets of suffixes in the two languages produce nominals denoting abstract sense, especially the action or process denoted by the source verb. But this generalization may not hold good always. There are some idiosyncrasies noted in the nominalization process of the *ili*, *iim* and *um* nominal suffixes. So, similar to the Tamil situations there need to posit two types of suffixes for each suffixal form, one is for regular nominalization and another is for irregular nominalization. But this duality is very much pronounced in Tamil. Sinhala does not show this duality regularly, but only sporadically.

The nominalization by suffixes of *ili* and *um* is morphophonologically very regular. These nominals behave like *iim* in such a way that we could replace *ili* nominals with *iim* nominals with no change in meaning. The *ili* nominals have a tendency to be ambiguous in expressing both argument preserving and argument deviating meanings. This problem can be resolved by identifying two *ili* nominalizers: *ili*₁ as a regular nominalizer, marked “+ Argument structure preserving” and *ili*₂ as a irregular nominalizer, marked for “- Argument structure preserving”. But the semantics of *ili* nominalization demands the positing of three types of *ili*. The following illustration will exemplify the point.

- 1) *ili*₁ Nominalization Resulting in Action Denoted the Verb
heedill ∂ ‘act of washing’
- 2) *ili*₂ Nominalization Resulting in Process or Out Come of the Process
sæl ∂ ∂ ill ∂ ‘attention’
- 3) *ili*₃ Nominalization resulting in Something Abstract or Concrete
vævill ∂ ‘crop cultivation’

Among the three types of *ili* nominalization, the first type preserve the argument structure of the source verb and the second and the third do not preserve the argument structure of the source verb. The *ili* nominals share certain characteristics common in both *um* and *iim* nominals, and at the same time they differ from them significantly.

The *um* nominals have the characteristic of lexically derived items. The singular form appears to have acquired new shades of meaning which has to be accounted in the lexicon. Some *um* nominals assume different shades of meaning and others are used only in certain limited contexts. Thus *um* nominals do not preserve the argument structure of the source verb. The deverbal nouns formed by suffixing *man* to verb stems make another small class.

1.2.1.2.4 Nominalization by Negative Suffix

The equivalent for the negative nominal suffix *aamai* present in Tamil is absent in Sinhala. So, the negative suffixal nominalization is not identical. Sinhala has negative prefix *no-* that can be added to a verb stems to yield the corresponding negative meaning. However, this is most frequently used with non-finite verb forms. For example, the deverbal noun form of *viim* 'becoming' is changed into negative form *noviim* 'not becoming', by adding the negative prefix. The negative nominals of the type *noviim* appears to be rare. There are instances in which negative nominals are formed by simply adding the negative prefix *no* to the verb stem. The following table will illustrate this point.

Verb	V+iim	V+ili	no+V	no+V+iim
bal ∂ 'look'	bæliim 'looking'	bælili 'looking'	nobælaa 'not looking'	
mædi 'press'	mædiim 'pressing'	mædili 'pressing'	nomæd ∂ 'not pressing'	
tæN 'know'	tæniim 'knowing'	tænili 'knowing'	notæn ∂ 'not knowing'	notæniim ∂ 'not knowing'
ve 'become'	viim 'becoming'	-	-	Noviim 'not knowing'

The negative nominalization which is prefixal in Sinhala is suffixal in Tamil. No regular negative nominalization process is available in Sinhala. Negative nominalization could be a problematic area of interference for both the speakers.

Language	Verb stem	Negative suffix/prefix	Nominal form
Tamil	aaku 'to become'	aamai	æakaamai 'not becoming'
Sinhala	ve 'to become'	no	noviim 'not becoming'
Tamil	teri 'to know'	aamai	teriyaamai 'not knowing'
Sinhala	tan 'to know'	no	notaniim ∅ 'not knowing'

5.2.1.3 Nominalization by Irregular Suffixes

As said elsewhere there are a number of suffixes used in Tamil for the process of deverbal nominalization. The deverbal nominal formation making use of these set of suffixes is not regular from the point of view of morphology, syntax and semantics. The nominals of these forms are lexicalized and so they get entered in the dictionary. The deverbal nominalization by these set of suffixes appears to be not productive. There are only sporadic instance of new nominals formed from these suffixes. The moment such nominals are formed, they get entered in the dictionary. A number of non-productive suffixes are noted in Tamil. The following table will illustrate the formation of the deverbal nominals by these set of irregular suffixes:

Verb Stem	Suffixes	Nominals
ooTu 'run'	am	ooTTam 'running'
niRu 'weight'	ai	niRai 'weight'
tuNi 'dare'	vu	tuNivu 'courage'
kuzaRu 'shout'	i	kuzaRi 'a person who shouts'

Weerakoon (1988) identifies a handful of deverbal nouns which are commonly used in colloquial Sinhala which need special consideration. They are derived from monosyllabic verb stems. She states that “A detailed morphophonemic analysis of these nominals would be out side the scope of this work. But suffice it to say that they are derived by the addition of the suffix *m̄* to monosyllabic verb stems.” She also states that colloquial Sinhala makes use of three nominals *kææm̄*, *biim̄* and *kiim̄* which are used both as action nominals (product nominals) and common nouns. They are different from *næTiim̄* ‘dancing’ and *diviim̄* ‘giving’ which refer only to actions or process.

Verb Stems	Suffix	Product Nominals	Common Nominals
ya ‘to go’	<i>m̄</i>	<i>yææm̄</i> ‘going’	
ka ‘to eat’	<i>m̄</i>	<i>kææm̄</i> ‘eating’	<i>Kææm̄</i> ‘food’
bo ‘to drink’	<i>m̄</i>	<i>biim̄</i> ‘drinking’	<i>biim̄</i> ‘drinks’
de ‘to give’	<i>m̄</i>	<i>diim̄</i> ‘giving’	
na ‘to bathe’	<i>m̄</i>	<i>nææm̄</i> ‘bathing’	
kiȳ ‘say’	<i>m̄</i>	<i>Kiim̄</i> ‘saying’	<i>kiim̄</i> ‘what is said’

The irregular nominals may not give any problem in the language learning process as they have to be learned as unanalysable lexical items rather than derived items.

1.2.1.3.1 Nominalization on Relativized Verb Stems

Tamil makes use of both suffixation and anchoring of head noun for the process of nominalization where as Sinhala makes use of nominal complementizers and anchoring of head noun for nominalization on relativized verb stems. The suffixes used by Tamil for nominalization are distinguished into two:

- 1) Gerundial nominal suffix *atu*
- 2) Pronominal suffixes, *avan*, *avaL*, *avar*, *atu*, and *avai*

As far as *atu* is concerned, the structurally equivalent forms in Sinhala are *ek̄*, *bav̄* and *vaḡ*, though *ek̄* is a better bet than the other two (*bav̄* and *vaḡ*).

But *iim* which is added directly to the verb stem (non-relativized) is also a competitor for *ek ð*.

1.2.1.3.1.1 *atu/ek ð* Nominalization on Relativized Verb Stems

The complex or complicated contrasting feature of Tamil and Sinhala Nominalization is *atu/ek ð* nominalization. It is a suffixal formation of Tamil but in Sinhala, it is a non-suffixal formation. We find a significant difference between Tamil and Sinhala regarding the *atu* type nominalization. In Tamil, *atu* always occurs after the verb as a suffix. In contrast to this, in Sinhala, *ek ð* always occurs with the verb as a separate unit. For *atu* nominalizer the competitors from Sinhala are *ek ð* and *iim*. There are differences between *iim* nominals and *ek ð* nominals which are discussed elsewhere.



The following examples from Tamil and Sinhala will illustrate this point.

Ta.

avaL neeRRu vantatu enakkut teriyum

‘I know that she came yesterday’

Sin.

iiye eyaa enna ek ð man tann ð va

‘I know that she came yesterday’

1.2.1.3.1.2 Occurrence of Subject both in Nominative and Genitive form in Sinhala

In Sinhala, the subject of *ek ð* nominal can occur in both nominative and genitive form. But in Tamil, the subject of the *atu* nominal cannot occur in genitive form; it can occur only in nominative form.

Sin.

eyaage ehe indiiim ∂ gAn ∂ man virudday

‘I am against his staying there’

eyaa ehe indiiim ∂ gæn ∂ man virudday

‘I am against his staying there’

Ta.

*avanatu ankee tankuvatu enakku viruppamillai

‘I don’t like his staying there’

avan ankee tankuvatu enakku viruppamillai

‘I don’t like his staying there’

1..2.1.3.1.3 Complicated Situation Due to *tal* Nominals

The situation is further complicated by the use of *tal* nominals in the place of *atu* nominals when there is no need of specifying the tense, especially past tense. The suffix *tal*, unlike *atu* is suffixed directly to the verb stem and not through tense suffix/negative suffix. The resultant *tal* nominals indicate universal application or generic meaning with no specific time reference.

tal nominal

naTittal

‘acting’

atu nominal

naTikkiRatu

‘acting’

Hence *naTittal* ‘acting’ differs from *naTikkiRatu* ‘acting’, as the former denotes a universal act, but the latter expresses the present time. The latter may also imply universal habitual act as the present tense suffix gives universal or habitual interpretation. The competition between *tal* nominals and *atu* nominals is lessened as *atu* nominals (with timeless interpretation) are preferred to parallel *tal* nominals.

1.2.1.3.2 Pronominalization

Participial nominalization by pronominal suffixes in Tamil is known as pronominalization. These are formed by adding third person remote demonstrative suffixes to the relativised verb stems which carry tense or negative marker. The pronominal suffix show person, number and gender distinction and so they are shortly abbreviated as PNG marker (i.e. person-number-gender marker). But in Sinhala, there is no such type of pronominalized forms. Even in finite form, the verb does not inflect for agreement marker, i.e. PNG marker is absent in Sinhala. This contrasting feature has to be taken notice by the learners of Tamil and Sinhala. For pronominalized form in Tamil, Sinhala can make use of the noun phrase in which the relativized verb stems are nominalized by the head noun which in argument relation with the relativized verb. For example, for the situation in Tamil given below,

paiyan neeRRu vantaan 'the boy came yesterday'



neeRRu vanta paiyan 'the boy who came yesterday'



neRRu vantavan 'he who came yesterday'

Sinhala makes use of the form in which the nominalization is performed by anchoring a head to the relativized verb stem:

lam $\partial y \partial$ aava 'the boy came'



enna lam $\partial y \partial$ 'the boy who came'

1.2.1.3.3 Nominalization by Anchoring Head Noun

Both Tamil and Sinhala perform nominalization by anchoring head noun after the relativized verb. There are two types of head nouns. One is in argument relation with the relativized verb and another is not in argument relation with the relativized verb.

Head noun in Argument Relation with the Relativized verb

Ta.

neRRu naan vaankina peenai

‘the pen I bought yesterday’

Sin.

iiye mama vuvamaNa mataya peenaav ∂

‘the pen I bought yesterday’

Head noun not in Argument Relation with the Relativized verb

Ta.

neRRu naan peenai vaankina ceysi

‘the news that I bought a pen’

Sin.

iiye mama vuvamana mataya peenaav ∂ kattaav ∂

‘the news that I bought a pen’

As discussed elsewhere both Tamil and Sinhala allow all the argument nouns to be anchored after relativized verb stems.

1.2.2. Deadjectival Nominalization

The next feature of contrastive analysis is concerned with deadjectival nominalization in Tamil and Sinhala. In Tamil and Sinhala, adjectives constitute a grammatical category and function as modifiers of the nouns or NPs. The nominalization in Tamil is effected by the pronominalizers such as *avan*, *avaL*, *avar*, *atu* and *avai*. Sinhala has many deadjectival nominalizer such as *aa*, *m ∂* , *e ∂* , *y ∂* , *k ∂ m ∂* , and *f* which are not pronominalizers as in the case of Tamil.

In Tamil, deadjectival nominals are formed in the following fashion:

adjectival base + suffix + pronominal endings *avan*, *avaL*, *atu*, *avar* and *avai*.

nal + a + *avan* > *nallavan*

‘good’

‘good person’

In Sinhala quite a different type of nominalization takes place on adjectival bases as exemplified in the following illustrations:

Adjectival Base	Suffixes	Nominals
duppat 'poor'	Kəmə	dupatkəmə 'poverty'
kaRədədərə 'troublesome'	Yə	kaRədədərəyə 'trouble'
Ratu 'red'	ə	Ratə 'red colour'
hondə 'good'	f	hondə 'good'

Nominalization on adjectives by suffixation results in the formation of abstract nouns. It is a productive process.

1.3. Conclusion

We find there is a considerable structural similarities between the nominalization process in Tamil and Sinhala. For example in both Tamil and Sinhala nominalization takes place on non-relativized verb stems as well as in relativized verb stems. In both languages nominalization takes on non-relativized verb stems by suffixation. The regular suffixation on both the languages results in the formation of deverbal nominals which retains the argument structure of the underlying verbs. The nominals thus formed are regular from the point of view of morphology, syntax and semantics. The regular nominalization in both languages results in the formation of abstract nouns which are verbal in character. Tamil has many irregular suffixes compared to Sinhala. As the irregular nominals formed by irregular nominals suffixes in Tamil are considered as lexicalized forms due to their unpredictability from the point of view of the resultant nominal meaning, they get entered into the dictionary. Sinhala has only a few number of irregular nominal suffixes, that too from their regular stock. In Tamil the regular nominals suffixes *tal*, *al*, *kai* and *aamai* have their parallel irregular suffixes which are idiosyncratic from the point of view of morphology, syntax and semantics.

Nominalization on relativized verbal stems are performed by suffixation of gerundial *atu* or by pronominalizers or by anchoring a head noun after the relativized verb stems or through complementizers in Tamil. Nominalization by pronominal suffixes and gerundial suffix do not take place in Sinhala. Pronominalized nominals are absent in Sinhala. Sinhala makes use of nominal complementizers and relative complementizers apart from anchoring the head noun after the relativized verb stems. It is hoped that this study will be very helpful for the language teachers as well for the translators.

References

1. Agesthalingam, S. 1967. *A Generative Grammar of Tamil (A fragment of Tamil Syntax)*, Annamalainagar, Annamalai University Publication.
2. ————— 1978. *Verbal Nouns*, Annamalainagar, Annamalai University.
3. Chomsky, Noam 1970. 'Remarks on Nominalization', In Jacobs, R. & Rosenbaum, P, *Readings in English Transformational grammar*, Waltham: Ginn and Co.,
4. Grimshaw, Jane (1991) *Argument Structure*, London, M.I.T Press.
5. Kamakshi, S. 1996. *Productivity and Lexicalization of Deverbal Noun Formation in Tamil (computer aided analysis)*, M.Phil, dissertation (unpublished) Tamil University.
6. Rangan, K. 1972. *A Contrastive Analysis of the Grammatical Structures of Tamil and English*, Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished), University of Delhi.
7. Weerakon, H. 1983. *The Noun Phrase in Sinhala and English- A Contrastive Study*, M.A. Thesis (unpublished), Kelaniya, University of Kelaniya.
8. —————, 1988. *Nominalization in colloquial Sinhala*, Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished), Kelaniya, University of Kelaniya.