

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORPHOSYNTAX IN SRI LANKA PORTUGUESE

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0. Introduction

This paper examines the structural processes involved in the development of morphosyntax in Sri Lanka Portuguese (SLP), a creole which arose in the cities and towns of Sri Lanka during the Portuguese colonial period, 1517-1658.

The social context in which SLP developed did not involve the large scale dislocation and mixing of populations characteristic of creolization situations in e.g. the West Indies. Thus the major inputs to the creolization situation in Sri Lanka can be clearly identified.

For the creolist, one advantage of this is that it is possible to study in detail the roles of the various inputs in the emergence of the new language. An examination of how SLP came to have its present grammar may (pace Bickerton) therefore throw light on the general processes involved in pidginization and creolization and in other types of language contact.

1.0 Influence of the substrate languages and the second language learning situation

Since traders, invaders, explorers etc. deal with adults rather than infants, the first individuals in Sri Lanka who learned to communicate with outsiders using Portuguese lexicon were already speakers of one of the indigenous languages - Sinhala or Tamil.¹ Consequently, one area in which we might look for forces acting on the formation of SLP is in the second language learning situation. The affinities between pidginisation, creolisation and second language learning have already been acknowledged (Hall 1966:5, Smith 1972:53-55, Schumann 1974). Indeed one of the most salient aspects of SLP morphosyntax is its resemblance to Tamil and Sinhala. Typologically, apart from its verbal prefixes, the language has a Dravidian look. (Tamil is itself Dravidian; Sinhala is an Indo-Aryan language which has undergone considerable Dravidian influence, but is by no means a thoroughgoing calque on Tamil. Cf. Gair 1976) Smith (1979a) identified the following shared characteristics among the three languages:

1. Nominal inflection is by case suffixes.
2. Verbs inflect for similar categories in SLP and Tamil.²
3. Major constituent order is SOV.
4. Postpositions, rather than prepositions, are found.
5. The adjective invariably precedes the noun.
6. The auxiliary usually follows the verb (SLP has two exceptions).

7. Relative clauses are left-branching and have no relative pronouns.
8. A verb occurs as a past participle when linked to a following, temporally subsequent, verb with which it shares a subject.
9. A phrase final quotative particle is used to mark discourse material which is the object of an overt or implied verb of thinking, naming, speaking, etc.
10. The CONDITIONAL marker is phrase-final. (SLP also has a less commonly used verbal prefix which marks CONDITIONAL).
11. Temporal conjunctions are clause-final.
12. Order in comparative phrases is STANDARD MARKER ADJECTIVE. (e.g. SLP aka dika lo:nji (that than far) 'farther than that'.)
13. Reduplication indicates duration or distribution.
14. Various particles (REPORTATIVE, EMPHATIC, CONJUNCTIVE, TAG QUESTION MARKER, TOPICALISER) occur and are postposed to their arguments.
15. There is a class of verbs (e.g. SLP suwa: 'sweat', te:m 'have') which occur in a [DATIVE NOMINATIVE] case frame, where the DATIVE nominal corresponds to the English subject.

It should be noted that these functions are not found in Standard Portuguese and are absent or rare in other Portuguese-based creoles. Thus a strong case can be made for the influence of substrate languages in the formation of SLP.³ This section attempts to outline some of the mechanisms whereby speakers transfer morphosyntactic elements from one language to another.

1.1. Preliminary definitions

It will be useful to use the following terms:

TL: the 'target language' which one or more of the contact groups is trying to learn.

BL: the 'background (here, substrate) language(s)' of the groups trying to learn the TL.

Language is used here for want of a better term and is not meant to imply a single integrated linguistic system. TL data in particular is doubtless quite heterogeneous. I assume in this case pidginised and semi-pidginised forms of Portuguese spoken by administrators, soldiers and sailors, some of whom may not have been Portuguese, as well as by African slaves. After the initial contact, BL (see below) speakers also produce TL data.

1.2 Abduction: analysis and mapping

It is a well-known phenomenon in second language learning that speakers of the BL try to express existing BL categories in the TL. One

way of accomplishing this involves the direct transfer of BL morphological material into TL speech. There is only one example of this process in SLP: the particle vo: (INDEFINITE) is a direct borrowing of Tamil o: (and/or possibly Sinhala ho:, though this form now exists only in literary usage). The second alternative is to try to express BL functions/categories via TL forms/expressions. Before a form/structure of the TL can be used meaningfully, it must be recognized (analyzed), and a meaning/function must be attached to (mapped onto) it. I refer to this process of analysis and mapping as ABDUCTION, a term adopted from Andersen (1973, 1974), who uses it in connection with morphophonological change.

1.2.1. The term abduction is used to emphasize the primary role of speakers of the BL in establishing their own grammar of the contact language. Speakers of the TL provide the initial data, the analysis comes from speakers of the BL. Obviously, since BL speakers have no direct access to the grammars of TL speakers, the TL grammars which they abduce need not resemble those of TL speakers. Thus for example BL speakers need not ascribe the same grammatical status to the TL items they isolate as do TL speakers.

SLP verb morphology provides many illustrations of this point. The verbal prefixes ja:- (PAST), lo- (FUTURE), nuku- (NEGATIVE) derive from Ptg adverbs ja 'already', logo 'soon', nunca 'never'; ta- (PRESENT) derives from an auxiliary esta (PRESENT PROGRESSIVE); ka:- (PERFECT) and jesa- (OPTATIVE)⁴ derive from verbs acabar 'finish' and deixar 'allow' which could take a clausal object; kan(da)- (CONDITIONAL) derives from a subordinating conjunction quando 'when'. The suffix -ta:m (IMPERFECTIVE PARTICIPLE) derives from the adverb tambem 'also'.

Similar examples are found in noun morphology: the GENITIVE case suffix -su(wa) derives from a Ptg 3rd person possessive pronoun sua, presumably via constructions of the type 'my father his hat'. The LOCATIVE suffix -ntu comes from a participle junto 'joined'. The DATIVE/HUMAN ACCUSATIVE -pa derives from a preposition pera (Mod Ptg para) 'to'.

Finally, some syntactic examples: the QUOTATIVE particle fala: derives from a verb falar; the postposition impa 'from' is from a prepositional phrase em pe 'on foot'; the REPORTATIVE enclitic -ski derives from the Ptg phrase diz que '[someone] says that ...'

1.2.2. Since primary impetus for the abduction process comes from a desire to express existing BL categories in the TL, the TL forms/structures isolated will in large measure depend upon the categories of the BL. Those representing categories not found in the BL will tend to be either assigned to an overlapping BL category or ignored. For example, Tamil and Sinhala do not have relative pronouns. They form left-branching relative clauses built on verbal adjectives. Not surprisingly, this is also the case for SLP, even though Standard Portuguese does not lack relative pronouns. See example (1). Moreover, it seems clear that BL speakers did have access to speech involving TL relative pronouns. They are found in Papia Kristang, the Portuguese-based Creole of Malacca (Hancock 1973:30). Since Papia

Kristang and SLP came into being at approximately the same time, it is unlikely that the Portuguese input was very different in the two situations. In addition, a relative pronoun construction is one likely source of the verbal prefix ki- (DESCRIPTIVE) found in the Batticaloa dialect of SLP (SLP:B). See example (2). (The Ptg conjunction que 'that' is another possible source.) The category DESCRIPTIVE is also found in Sri Lanka Tamil, the dominant language of the Batticaloa area but not found in other dialects of SLP nor in Indian Tamil or Sinhala. The formation of the DESCRIPTIVE is discussed below (1.2.5); it is used to express habitual action, and also functions as a verbal noun.

(1) The person who gave the money hasn't come yet.

SLP diñe:ru ja:-da: pesa:m inda nuku vi:
 Ta calli-yai kuṭu-tt -a a:l innum vaṛa-illai⁴
 Si salli d -unn-ə miñiha ta:mə a:ve nə:

money ACC PAS give PAS ADJ person still NEG come NEG

Cf. Ptg A pessoa que dou o dinheiro ainda não veio.

(2) He is the one who gives money.

SLP:B eli (me:) diñe:ru ki- da: pesa:m
 Ta avan (ta:n) calli kuṭu -kk -r -a a:l

he EMPH money DESC give AUG PRES ADJ person

Cf. Ptg E ele que da dinheiro.

1.2.3. It may be that in some cases BL speakers abduce non-BL categories, if, for example, the TL marks some easily cognizable category, such as animacy. However, I have no clear examples of this possibility in SLP.

1.2.4. On the other hand BL speakers may not try to find TL expressions matching 'redundant' features of BL morphosyntax. For example, no formal distinction between a main clause verb and a verbal adjective was developed in SLP even though both Sinhala and Tamil do distinguish these. They are found in complementary distribution, so that any formal distinction would be redundant.

1.2.5. A comparison of the verb forms found in SLP, Tamil, and Sinhala provides an interesting insight into the details of the abduction and mapping process. (See Smith 1979a for a more detailed comparison of the SLP and Tamil forms. A full outline of the SLP verbal system is found in Smith 1979b.) There is close correspondence between morphologically complex forms. However,

(1) It is often not possible to match corresponding forms on a morpheme-by-morpheme basis. E.g. the SLP negative potential na:-oya: 'won't look' covers the same semantic ground as the Tamil and Sinhala volitive negative pa:-kk-a ma:tt-a:n and bala-n-nə o:nə nə: resp. 'won't look'. However, the forms are internally quite different. The SLP form is composed of prefix plus verb root, while the Tamil and Sinhala forms use infinitive plus auxiliary constructions. Similarly the SLP:B DESCRIPTIVE mentioned above (example (2)) is marked by a category-specific prefix,

while Tamil marks this category by appending a pronoun to the verbal adjective.

(2) Even where a 1-1 correspondence does exist between the constituents of morphologically complex forms, the order of morphemes within these forms is often different. E.g. the past perfective in SLP ja:-ka:-oya: 'has [already] seen' has form PAST-PERFECTIVE-VERB ROOT. The corresponding Tamil form, pa:-tt-if-f-a:n⁴ has the form VERB ROOT-PAST-PERFECTIVE-PAST-CONCORD. The corresponding Sinhala form bale-la is different again, being a participial form (which may be used as a main verb) consisting of stem plus suffix.

These facts suggest that speakers are able to manipulate formally the [productive] morphology of their own or a foreign language without necessarily attaching specific meanings/functions to individual morphemes. Thus Tamil speakers may know that from kuṭu 'give' an optative⁵ kuṭukkattum 'let him give' can be formed though they may not identify the constituent morphemes -kk-a-ttūm as AUGMENT, INFINITIVE, and OPTATIVE, respectively.

Thus the mapping which learners seek to make may begin with the category complexes which are found in morphologically complex forms rather than with simplex categories represented by the individual morphemes of which these forms are composed.

1.2.6. This still leaves unanswered the question of when a BL category/category cluster can be mapped onto a TL expression. The question needs much detailed investigation; however, the following working hypothesis may be formulated:

As a prerequisite for the identification of a BL expression (representing a BL category/category cluster) with a TL expression, there must be some pragmatic overlap of the two expressions, i.e. there must be some situation in which they can both be appropriately used with approximately the same intent.

1.2.7. The abduction process is guided by universals of language contact/language learning situations. Examples:

- the preference for a one-to-one mapping between forms and categories ("one form one meaning").
- the preference for free forms over bound forms.
- the tendency to avoid forms with little phonological bulk.
- the tendency to avoid morphophonemic complexity.

1.3. Calquing

Calquing is the application of BL patterns of expression (collocations as well as constructions) to previously isolated TL units. Again this is a well-known process in second language learning. Note that calquing is LOGICALLY subsequent to abduction, though it may not necessarily be temporally subsequent. Indeed, it is only because of

calquing that the result of abduction is visible.⁶ For only when speakers use TL form X as BL form Y can we conclude that they have identified form X with the category underlying form Y.

Calquing has had a role to play in all the aspects of SLP morphosyntax listed in the introduction. We shall confine discussion here to one example. SLP like Sinhala and Tamil has postpositions rather than prepositions. Many of these derive from Portuguese prepositions, e.g. ri:va 'on top of' from (16th century) Ptg riva de, dæ:ntru 'inside' from Ptg dentro. The mapping of BL categories onto these Portuguese prepositions allowed their use to be calqued on the use of the BL exponents of these categories. Thus they were employed as postpositions. The calquing may even extend to the case which the postposition governs, as illustrated in (3).

(3) 'after that'
 SLP aka -pa dispo:s
 Ta atu -kk appram
 Si i: -tə passe

that DAT after

Cf. Ptg depois d'isso.

1.3.1. The units involved in calquing may themselves be morpho-syntactically complex. For example, one of the SLP conditional formations, illustrated in (4), employs a past tense marked verb followed by the conditional marker se:. This formation is calqued on Sinhala/Tamil formations which also involve past tense verb plus conditional marker (here suffixes). However, the SLP past tense formation itself is NOT a calqued formation since it involves prefixing while Sinhala and Tamil employ suffixation.

(4) 'if [I] look at a book ...'
 SLP um buku ja:-oya: se:
 Ta oru pustakatt -ai pa: -tt -a:l
 Si pot -ak bæł -uw -ot
 a book INDEF ACC PAS look PAS COND

1.3.2. As noted above, some SLP constructions are completely calqued on corresponding Sinhala/Tamil constructions, while others are not calqued or are only partially calqued. In general it would be useful to know under what structural conditions calquing can take place. For example, Weinreich (1953:41) has claimed that 'in the interference of two grammatical systems it is ordinarily the one which uses relatively free and invariant morphemes in its paradigm ... which serves as the model for imitation.' Weinreich probably had in mind situations of relatively stable bilingualism, rather than pidginization and creolization, which involve the relatively rapid creation of new linguistic systems and in which the system of grammatical categories nearly always comes from the BL irrespective of its formal complexity. Thus in pidginization/creolization (and possibly also in the

stable bilingualism) it is necessary to distinguish between formal systems and functional systems. Nevertheless, it is certainly true that loosely bound structures are more amenable than tightly bound structures to alteration. This point is illustrated by the SLP verbal system. There are a number of preverbal elements which may be treated as prefixes: e.g. ta- (PRES), ka:- (PERFECTIVE), pa- (INFINITIVE), se:m- (ABESSIVE PARTICIPLE: 'without V-ing'). These are tightly bound in that they are not free forms and nothing may intervene (except another prefix) between them and the verb root. These forms have resisted being transferred to post-verbal position on analogy with the corresponding markers in Tamil and Sinhala. There is another set of forms which can be classed as auxiliaries - these are more loosely bound than the prefixes as they are free forms. One of these auxiliaries, te:m (ANTERIOR), is preverbal in Ptg, but post-verbal in SLP. The auxiliary po:y 'can' is still used preverbally, but may also be used postverbally in an infinitival construction calqued on Tamil/Sinhala. (Two other auxiliaries, kera 'want' and nikara, (NEGATIVE HABITUAL) are found only in preverbal position. All 'new' auxiliaries (i.e. not tracable to Ptg auxiliaries) are postverbal.)

2. General processes of language change

In addition to the second language learning effects noted above SLP has undergone morphosyntactic developments which are typical of purely language-internal change.

2.1 Phonological reduction

It is well known that grammatical elements are frequently subject to destressing and to idiosyncratic phonological reduction. Since the abduction process outlined above frequently involved the reinterpretation of Portuguese lexical items as SLP grammatical elements, it provided much grist for the mill of phonological reduction. Many of the grammatical particles and clitics of SLP illustrate this; e.g. dika (COMPARATIVE MARKER) from Ptg do que, ta:m (CONJUNCTIVE) from Ptg tambem 'also', -ski (REPORTATIVE) from Ptg diz que 'says that', and me (EMPHATIC) from Ptg mesmo 'even; -self'.

2.2. Affixation and cliticization

Many Portuguese free forms appear as more tightly bound elements in SLP. For example all the SLP verbal prefixes and noun suffixes derive from Ptg free forms. (See examples in 1.2.1). These verbal and nominal affixes are analyzed as such on the grounds that they are bound to words of a particular grammatical class. However, the nominal suffixes and many of the verbal prefixes are also dependent phonologically. The reportative -ski mentioned above is also phonologically dependent, but must be treated as an enclitic rather than as a suffix since it may attach to words of any grammatical category.

2.3. Other purely internal types of change may also have occurred, but these are inaccessible owing to lack of data on earlier forms of SLP.

3. Selection of norms

The above processes take place at the level of the individual and much variation from speaker to speaker must be expected. Selection of norms may take place via social processes (cf. LePage 1977), an understanding of which is crucial to any theory of pidginization and creolization. However, an investigation of such processes is beyond the scope of this paper which is concerned with purely structural considerations in the emergence and development of creole morphosyntax.

We must also entertain the possibility of structural interplay between competing emergent systems, but since I find no examples of such a process in the development of SLP, this possibility can not be considered in detail.

4. Dating

The precise dating of all the developments discussed in this paper is problematical due to the lack of records of SLP prior to the 19th century. There is a modest SLP literature, mainly religious in nature, dating from the 19th century. There are also a few grammatical descriptions, all written by foreign churchmen. The language represented in these texts shows substantially less local influence than the variety described here and is more similar to other forms of Indo-Portuguese, as represented in written records of the same period. For example, it has prepositions rather than postpositions, SVO word order, no quotative construction, right-branching relative clauses with relative pronouns. This literary variety is also found in traditional songs and prayers. One older speaker I knew was able to use (albeit haltingly) some of its features on formal occasions. It can be shown, however, that the variety described in this paper was spoken at least as far back as the middle of the 19th century, i.e. was contemporaneous with the literary variety (Smith 1979a:213-216). It is not clear whether the literary language is representative of an earlier spoken variety or whether it was simply an invention of educated churchmen based on the variety found in songs, the literary representations of other varieties of Indo-Portuguese and some elements of Standard Portuguese. One suspects the latter may be the case, as the literary tradition stems only from the beginning of the 19th century. From 1658 to 1796 the island was in the hands of the Dutch, who officially discouraged the use of the language (while at the same time adopting it for domestic use with their local wives). It seems unlikely that the radical differences between the literary and colloquial languages of the middle of the century could have arisen in a only 50 odd years, especially as the language has been so stable since then. The traditional songs are doubtless much older, and given their secular themes,⁷ of an entirely different origin; however, they may represent a pidgin spoken by the Portuguese, rather than a pidgin/creole of the local people.

Consequently, the developments outlined in section 1 may have been part of the early pidginization/creolization processes, or they may have taken place as part of subsequent convergence. I know of no way of

locating the developments according to their structural effects (cf. Smith 1978). The developments of section 2 are more likely to have taken place after the initial period of contact if the preference for phonological bulk and for free forms rather than bound forms mentioned in 1.2.7 really are universal tendencies.

5. Coda: application of the model to pre-verbal particles

Much has been made of the fact that geographically separated Portuguese-based creoles share certain morphosyntactic features which cannot be traced to Portuguese - the outstanding example is the system of pre-verbal particles - and some elaborate schemes have been devised to account for these. One recent suggestion, put forward by Bickerton (1974, 1977, 1981) involves recourse to very specific genetically programmed linguistic features. In a restricted class of creoles, it is claimed, children were forced to bring the genetic program into play during creolization because they found the language input to which they were exposed inadequate for normal acquisition. Their similarities are thus seen as a reflex of this genetic program. However, there has not been enough detailed work on enough individual creoles to bear out the very specific similarities in morphosyntactic categories which Bickerton claims. Thus we are talking mainly about similarity in SURFACE FORM, and there is no guarantee that this represents similarity in morphosyntactic categories.

In this section I would like to advance an alternative explanation, consistent with the model adopted here, for the surface similarity in preverbal particle systems. It seems likely that as Naro (1978) suggests, the pidginized forms of Portuguese which emerged during the course of the very earliest contacts between the Portuguese and black Africans were then used by the Portuguese in their subsequent explorations as a RECONNAISSANCE LANGUAGE. One of the features of this reconnaissance language was the replacement of the standard Portuguese system of verbal inflection for tense and person, involving three major conjugations, thematic vowels, and many portmanteau morphs with a simplified system of marking tense categories with reduced auxiliaries (ta), or adverbs (ja, logo), (Naro 1978:341-342). This system would have provided part of the TL input to new contact situations. Its formal characteristics are simple enough to be abduced without instruction. However, each individual learner would be likely to ascribe BL categories to these forms. Thus Naro remarks, 'Examination of modern Guiné Crioulo and other modern Portuguese creoles shows conclusively that the African substratum influences there are so massive and penetrating that the grammatical patterning and semantic content of the verbal system are much more African than European.' (1978:342-343). Similarly the fact that in SLP ta-, ja:- and lo- represent PRESENT, PAST and POTENTIAL respectively, is a direct result of the fact that these are categories found in the BLs. The result in SLP is predictable because of the focussing (LePage 1980) in the indigenous peoples' BL systems. In more diffuse situations such as those of the Caribbean creoles, conflicting models would be found initially and social

(and possibly structural) forces would be largely responsible for the eventual outcome.

The advantages of this explanation over one such as Bickerton's are twofold.

1. It does not require recourse to unproven innate universals of linguistic competence.
2. It provides a model which is equally applicable to all the Portuguese-based creoles, rather than only to an arbitrarily defined subgroup.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Sri Lanka has a small number of aboriginal people. Vedda, their ancestral language is now dead, but would still have been spoken during the Portuguese period.
- 2 The paper did not deal with Sinhala verb morphology.
- 3 Of course, to say 'language X has influenced language Y' is to speak metaphorically. Interference and diffusion phenomena are primarily effects produced by individuals and groups of individuals.
- 4 f and t represent apico-alveolar sounds pronounced with the blade of the tongue raised and spread.
- 5 In earlier work I have referred to this form as PERMISSIVE.
- 6 Calquing is thus a DEDUCTIVE development in Andersen's terminology. (Andersen 1974:23).
- 7 Some sample verses:
 1. ga:lu kum gali:ña, ri:va de koke:ra
 cock and hen on top of coconut tree
 ga:lu nun-tem ku:lpa, gali:ña baylde:ra
 cock NEG-has fault hen flirt
 2. papa ja:-vi: bæ:vdu, tira: fa:ka pa-firi:
 father PAST-come drunk took knife INF-cut open
 mama santà: na kusi:ña, kaka:du ja:-ri:
 mother sat in kitchen beshitted PAST-laugh
 3. pentia: kave:lu nō:na, mara: koṇḍa gra:ndi
 comb hair lady tie knot big
 si: falta: aze:ti e:v lo-da: miña sa:ngi
 if lack oil I POT-give my blood

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