

A contrastive study of syntactic patterns in non-volitional expressions in Sinhala and other Asian languages - a linguistic typological perspective

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The existence of both volitional and non-volitional verb forms is a highly outstanding characteristic of the Sinhala Language and it is observed in syntactic as well as morphological aspects. Non-volitional expressions are used more frequently than volitional expressions not only in Sinhala but also in other Eastern Asian languages such as Japanese, Korean and South Asian Languages such as Hindi and Nepalese. This paper analyzes the basic syntactic patterns of Sinhala in contrast with Hindi and Nepalese all of which belong to the same Indo-European language family and makes explicit the uniqueness and richness of Sinhala Non-volitional expressions. Further, this paper clarifies the characteristics of non-volitional expressions in other Asian languages on a typological perspective. The focus will be on spoken language. 6 sentences were analyzed from different areas of non volitional expressions based on Sinhala.

As Sinhala, Hindi and Nepalese belong to the same language family, there are many similarities in syntax. However, this paper shows that, considering the basic syntactic patterns of non-volitional expressions of these languages, Hindi and Nepalese differ from Sinhala and are similar to the eastern Asian languages such as Japanese and Korean even though they are not in the same language family. In the other Asian languages except Sinhala, adverbs and auxiliary verbs are used with infinitive forms of volitional verbs to express non-volitionality.

Even in Sinhala a few number of compound verbs are used to imply non-volitionality, however, Sinhala verbs possess a morphological characteristics in expressing non-volitionality without depending on auxiliary verbs or adverbs like the other Asian languages. Furthermore, in Sinhala, a case particle such as the dative case, accusative case and instrumental case express different grades and different senses of non-volitionality. The dative case is used in Nepalese and Hindi as well. However, this study shows the difference in case marking of these languages and clarifies the uniqueness of Sinhala.

Key words: Contrastive, Syntactic, Non-volitional, Indo-European, Sinhala

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