

### Non-nominative Subjects and the Involitive Construction in Sinhala

Sinhala involitive verb forms (Gair 1970) are typically taken to express various types of non-volitional action, dependent on the subject's morphological case, which may be accusative with intransitives (only overtly marked on animates), ergative and instrumental with transitives, and dative with transitives and intransitives, as in (1). Inman (1993) argues that datives are non-intentional actors, accusatives are non-intentional undergoers, instrumentals are intentional but run counter to speaker expectations (doxastic), and ergatives allow both doxastic and non-intentional readings.

- (1) a. *Putaa atiy/Putaatə wəli kəwenəwa.*  
Son ERG/Son.DAT sand eat.INVOL.PRES  
'The son eats sand.' (ERG = non-intentional actor/doxastic, DAT = non-intentional actor)
- b. *Maətə/Maawə nətuna.*  
I.DAT/I.ACC dance.INVOL.PST  
'I danced.' (DAT = non-intentional actor, ACC = non-intentional undergoer)
- c. *Ammageŋ sinhəla kəæmə hoŋdətə hædenəwa.*  
mother.INST Sinhala food well make.INVOL.PRES  
'Mother happens to make Sinhala food well.' (doxastic)

Taking into account a fuller range of involitives, we argue that these different cases reflect a wider range of operations, including inchoativization and causativization. First, instrumental subjects are exceedingly rare (and in fact unacceptable to our informants; cf. Janý 2005), while transitive dative subjects are restricted to cognition/psych verbs (which are inherently involitive), with only two exceptions (*kənnə* 'eat' and *kiyennə* 'say'; cf. (1a)), suggesting that these represent lexicalized quirky case. Second, seldom discussed in the context of (1) is that some unaccusatives also allow nominative animate subjects:

- (2) *Ohu/Ohuwə hirəwuna/wətuna.*  
He.NOM/He.ACC get.stuck.INVOL.PST/fall.INVOL.PST.  
'He got stuck/fell.' (NOM = inchoative, ACC = externally caused)

Crucially, the reading for the nominative is inchoative, with no commitment regarding a causer. Conversely, an accusative in (2) entails the existence of an external causer (cf. Wunderlich 1997), thus representing an operation of covert causativization, which for some speakers can even apply to manner-of-motion unergatives as in (1b), again with an externally caused reading. Indeed, (2) with accusatives are acceptable with overt ergative causers (though not (1b)). This also explains an interesting property of unaccusatives with inanimate subjects, which must be nominative (there being no overt accusative for inanimates). Such predicates are ambiguous between inchoative and externally caused readings:

- (3) *Piŋgaanə biŋduna.*  
plate.NOM break.INVOL.PST  
'The plate broke.' or 'The plate was broken (by someone).'

This ambiguity follows directly if the morphological nominative in (3) represents either underlying nominative or accusative. Thus instrumental, dative (with transitives), nominative, and accusative subjects do not represent a single productive paradigm, but rather a mixture of lexicalization, inchoativization, and covert causativization, distinguished by subject case-marking. Case-marking for true involitives (i.e. non-intentional actors) is determined simply by valency: ergative for transitives and dative for intransitives (cf. (1a,b)) (ignoring doxastic readings, which our informants were unable to reproduce). What all of these constructions share in common is simply that the subject is somehow non-canonical (cf. Van Valin and Wilkins

1996). This range of functionality is similar to inchoative/reflexive markers across languages (e.g. Spanish *se*, Quechua *-ri-*; Koontz-Garboden 2007), albeit also marking involitivity, suggesting that this analysis has considerable crosslinguistic viability and support.

**Word Count:** 499