

Sinhala Influence on the Morphosyntax of Deontic Modality in Colombo and Kirinda Malay
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Cross-dialectally, Sri Lankan Malay (SLM) displays limited syntactic variation, for example in permitting pragmatically-unmarked alternation between VO and (more frequent) OV orders in finite declarative clauses, due to grammatical competition between residual Malay and Tamil/Sinhala-derived properties of nouns.

I have found *regional* variation in the syntax of deontic modal elements. The elements in question are the modal of ability *bole*, the modal of volition *mau*, and the modals of obligation *məs(t)* and *mau*. The distribution of the first two of these elements is variable in relation to the verb, however their phonological shape does not vary. For debitive modality or obligation, the same syntactic variation is present, yet each of two positions is also associated with a different form, with *mau* (which is homophonous with volitive *mau*) restricted to post-verbal position.

I present Colombo Malay data which exhibits modal variation not found in the Kirinda Malay data presented in Smith & Paauw (2004). The syntax of tense and negation differs in SLM from Tamil and Sinhala, particularly in the pre-verbal distribution of those elements. There are several points of agreement though as well, including but not limited to the affixal relationship of aspect to the verb as in Tamil, and the presence of a non-finite nominalization construction which closely resembles an analogous construction in spoken Sinhala.

The persistence of a pre-verbal modal variant for each of the three major deontic modal subtypes in Colombo Malay demonstrates an earlier stage in the convergence process than is found in Kirinda/Hambantota Malay. The Sinhala-like post-verbal deontic modal construction in SLM (optional in Colombo, obligatory in Kirinda and Hambantota) in which modal elements can be analyzed as predicate adjectives, represents a striking example of convergence with a non-Malay Lankan vernacular, given the comparable distribution of analogous Sinhala modals. The grammatical convergence with Sinhala represented by the predicate adjective modal construction is motivated by a constraint in the syntax of the complex SLM verb, which prevents simultaneous pre-verbal negation and modality-marking. Sinhala modals are free-standing, share the distribution of predicate adjectives, and are marked for negation. Tamil modals, while tonic, cannot be separated from inflected main verbs by adverbial material.

Farida vi:tt-ukku po:-k(a) (*ippo) o:Num.
 Farida house-DAT go-INFIN now MOD
 "Farida must go home now."

MOORISH (MUSLIM) TAMIL
 (modal obligatorily adjacent to verb)

Farida gedərə ya-nnə dəŋ o:nə.
 Farida home go-INF now MOD
 "Farida must go home now."

SINHALA
 (modal separable from verb)

Farida ruma na(ŋ) mə pi na(ŋ) (s)karaŋ mau.
 Farida house P NONFIN go P now MOD
 "Farida must go home now."

SRI LANKAN MALAY
 (modal separable from verb)

The Sinhala-based option can be regarded as a grammatical escape hatch in an otherwise heavily Tamil-influenced grammar. Resorting to a pragmatic solution of this type is predictable in the development of a variety spoken by a historically trilingual linguistic minority whose members are now much more likely to be fluent in Sinhala than in Tamil. The post-verbal modal construction retains the dative-experiencer marking of NPs associated with particular predicate (semantic) types in the major Sri Lankan languages. For example the debitive predicate takes an unmarked NP, whereas the volitive predicate frequently takes a dative-marked NP.