

PASSIVIZATION IN SINHALESE

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Abstract :

The main purpose of this paper is to present some outlines for formulation of a grammar of the passive sentences in colloquial Sinhalese. In this study I have largely followed the principles that have been laid down by Chomsky and other transformationalists in their early works.

It is our intention in this paper to consider in some detail the relationship between active and passive sentences in colloquial Sinhalese. By postulating certain sentences as basic, we can derive many others by applying grammatical transformations to the basic form of the sentences. Active and passive constructions too are not exceptions to the above fact; they are actually reflections of one underlying entity and one sentence type is derived from the other by a transformational rule.

At the outset let us consider the surface structures of the two types of sentences under study.

Active

1. govīya: vāṭṭa baḍḍināva
The farmer constructs the fence
2. dāriyā potṭa kiyaṅṅa va
The girl reads the book

passive

3. govīya: atin vāṭṭa baḍḍināva
The fence is constructed by the farmer
4. dāriyā atin potṭa kiyaṅṅa va
The book is read by the girl

In the above examples, sentences 3 and 4 are the corresponding passive forms of the sentences 1 and 2. On comparison, one may notice first that these pairs are synonymous. In other words, we can say that S. 3 is a paraphrase of S. 1, and S. 4 is a paraphrase of S. 2. Despite the differences in the phonological shape and in the syntactical properties, it is true that they hold the same meaning.

Superficially, these two sentence types exhibit distinct features in their subject noun and verbal. The surface subject of S. 1, ie govīya: farmer, bears an agentive marker *atin* 'by' (govīya: atin 'by the farmer') in S. 3 and does not remain as the surface subject. Also the verbal *baḍḍināva* 'construct' that was connected with govīya: changes its