

THE CATEGORY OF NUMBER IN SINHALA NOMINALS : A STRUCTURAL INVESTIGATION

*Dr. Tissa Jayawardena **

(The analytical framework for this investigation is mainly the structural analysis of modern linguistics. Consequently the forms of nominals are examined without reference to their meanings. The feature '[+- animate]' has an implication on certain nominals. In this context relevant linguistic material is adequately described thereby achieving predictability.)

1. The nominals of the contemporary Sinhala are divided into three categories Gender I, Gender II and Gender III. Alternatively, the traditional names - Masculine, Feminine and Neuter - can be used for these categories; but necessarily they carry new definitions. So that the nominals which fall in masculine gender do not denote just only persons of male feature. Therefore the term Gender refers only to the formal or 'grammatical gender'. They have following formal features.

Gender I

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|--------|---------|
| (a) | Direct Case Singular ends in | /-ā/ | |
| (b) | Indefinite nominals ends in | /-ek/ | 'a'/an' |
| (c) | Instrumental case form ends in | /-gen/ | 'from' |
| (d) | Possessive case form ends in | /-ge/ | 'of' |

Gender II

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|--------|---------|
| (a) | Direct Case Singular ends in | /-ə/ | |
| (b) | Indefinite nominals ends in | /-ak/ | 'a'/an' |
| (c) | Instrumental case form ends in | /-gen/ | 'from' |
| (d) | Possessive case form ends in | /-ge/ | 'of' |

* Head, Department of Sinhala, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Gender III

- (a) Direct Case Singular ends in /-ə/
- (b) Indefinite nominals ends in /-ak/ 'a/an'
- (c) Instrumental case form ends in /-en~-in/ 'from'
- (d) Possessive case form ends in /-e~-ehi/ 'of'

They are exemplified thus :-

Gender I

/ballə/	'dog'
/ballek/	'dog-a'
/ballagen/	'dog-from'
/ballage/	'dog-of'

Gender II

/katə/	'lady'
/katak/	'lady-a'
/katəgen/	'lady-from'
/katəge/	'lady-of'

Gender III

/potə/	'book'
/potak/	'book-a'
/poten..potin/	'book-from'
/pote, potehi/	'book-of'

1.1 Almost every Sinhala nominal can be divided into two segments, base and suffix. The base is the form which is common to all members of a paradigm. For instance in the paradigm of /balla/ 'dog' the element /ball/ is common to all terms while in the paradigm of /katə/ 'lady' /kat/ is the common form for all terms. /pot/ is the common form in the paradigm /potə/ 'book'.

1.2 The base forms are categorized into two main groups :
 namely I. Base forms which end in consonants
 and II. Base forms which end in vowels.

Further, Group I is divided into two subgroups; base forms with a

IA Short (single) consonant ending.

IB Long (double) consonant ending.

1.2.1 The base forms of the following paradigm ends in a short consonant.

/ <u>kokā</u> /	'stork'
/ <u>kokāgen</u> /	'stork-form'
/ <u>kokāge</u> /	'stork-of'
/ <u>koko</u> /	'stork' (addressing)
/ <u>kokku</u> /	'stork'
/ <u>kokkune</u> /	'storks' (addressing)

The base form of the above paradigm (all terms of the paradigm are not recorded) is /kok/. Another paradigm is given thus:

/ <u>vassa</u> /	'calf'
/ <u>vassagen</u> /	'calf-from'
/ <u>vassage</u> /	'calf-of'
/ <u>vasso</u> /	'calf-(addressing)
/ <u>vassangen</u> /	'calves-from'
/ <u>vassəne</u> /	'calves' (addressing)

The most common form in this paradigm is /vass/ and it is a base form which ends in a long consonant or two homogenic consonants.

1.2.2 The base-form of the following paradigm ends in a vowel.

/el <u>u</u> va/	'goat'
/el <u>u</u> vagen/	'goat-from'
/el <u>u</u> vage/	'goat-of'
/el <u>u</u> vo/'goat'	(addressing)
/el <u>u</u> vangen/	'goats-from'
/el <u>u</u> vane/	'goats' (addressing)

The base form of the above is /el/ and it ends in a back vowel /u/.⁽¹⁾ The base-form of the following paradigm

/al <u>i</u> ya/	'elephants'
/al <u>i</u> yagen/	'elephant-from'
/al <u>i</u> yage/	'elephant-of'
/al <u>i</u> yo/	'elephant' (addressing)
/al <u>i</u> /	'elephants'
/al <u>i</u> ngen/	'elephants -from'
/al <u>i</u> yðne /	'elephants' (addressing)

is /ali/. It ends in the front vowel /i /.

2. The realization of the singular suffix is different in accordance with the Gender. Gender I or the masculine gender takes the /-ā/ suffix. Where as Gender II and III take /-ð/ suffix. Thus-

/kok +a/	/kokā/	'stork' (Gender I)
/kat +ð	/katð	'lady' (Gender II)
/pot +ð/	/potð/	'book' (Gender III)

(1) Sinhala has seven vowels. i.e.æ.a.o. u and ð. They are divided thus:-

Front vowels	Central vowel	Back vowels
i		u
e	ð	o
æ		a

The singular suffix /-a--ð/ is added to the base if it ends either in a short consonant or a long consonant. Nevertheless if the base form ends in a vowel a semivowel-either y or y-should be introduced in between the base and the suffix. Thus /ali/ 'elephant' and /elu/ 'goat' are two bases which end in i and u respectively and they both belong to Gender 1. The description of the words /aliya/ 'elephant' and /eluva/ 'goat' which are direct forms is given below.

/ali + a/

/elu + a/

They both take the singular suffix /-a/. As the base form /ali/ 'elephant' ends in i which is a front vowel and /y/ is introduced in between the base and the generating the form /aliya/ 'elephant' The term /elu/ 'goat' ends in u and it is a back vowel. So that /y/ is introduced in between the base and the suffix thereby generating the term /eluva/ 'goat'.

/kikiliyð/ 'hen'

/kāntāvð/ 'lady' are nominals which belong to Gender II. (They are considered so because they carry the suffix ð)

The nominals /paTiyð/ 'belt'

/puTuvð/ 'chair' are of Gender III.⁽¹⁾ The structure of those words contains y and y they have been introduced in the process of their formation.

The suffixes /-a/ and /-ð/ have an identical meaning. They denote singularity. They both are surface realizations of the same morpheme. They can be represented thus:-

- A. i. { a } → /-a/ in the environment of base forms of Gender I
- ii. { a } → /-ð/ in the environment of base forms of Gender II and III
- B. i. -y- is introduced if the base form ends in a front vowel
- ii. -v- is introduced if the base form ends in a back vowel

1 The information about the gender of nominals must be in the lexicon which is a sine-qua-non of a particular grammar.

2. The plural forms of the nominals given above are

/ballo/	'dogs'
/vasso/	'calves'
/kokku/	'storks'
/eluvo/	'goats'
/aliyo/	'elephants'
/kattu/	'ladies'
/kikiliyo/	'hens'
/pot/	'books'
/paTi/	'belts'
/puTu/	'chairs'

These examples show that nominals have different plural suffixes; namely /-o/, /-u/ and /-ϕ/. They occur in well defined environments. All +animate base forms which end in a short consonant take the suffix /-u/. In such environments the final consonant transforms into a long one if the phonology of Sinhala allows. Therefore the structure of /kokku/ 'storks' is explained thus:

<u>Stem</u>		<u>Plural suffix</u>	
/kok /	+	/u/	
/kokk/	+	/u/	(lengthening of the final consonant of the baseform. It occurs only in the environment of plural suffix /-u/ if only the Sinhala phonology allows.)
= <u>kokku</u>			

If the phonology of Sinhala does not allow such a transformation the plural suffix may realize either as /-u/ or /-o/.

For instance

/mondru/	'peacocks'
/bamðru/	'bees'
/debðru/	'wasps'
/kumðru/	'princes'
/horu/	'robbers'
/koru/	'lame persons'

The base forms of these nominals are /mondɾ/, /bamðɾ/, /debðɾ/, /kumðɾ/, /hor/ and /kor/. As they end in a short consonant, the plural suffix is realized as /-u/. The phonology of Sinhala does not allow the gemination of /r/. Consequently it stays as it is and its result is /mondru/, /bamðru/, /debðru/, /kumðru/, /horu/ and /koru/. It has an exception. If the vowel immediately before /r/is/u/ the plural suffix is realized as /-o/.

Examples:-

/vaduro/	'apes'
/piburo/	'constrictors'
/maguro/	'sheats'
/ūro/	'pigs'
/kūro/	'dragon flies'
/æduro/	'teachers'
/mituro/	'friends'

The base forms of these nouns are /vadur/, /pibur/, /magur/, /ūr/, /kūr/, /ædur/ and /mitur/. The final vowel of these base forms is /u/. Therefore the behaviour of these baseforms is different from /bamðɾ/, /debðɾ/ ¹ etc.

1 The adjectival form of /bamðɾ/ is formed by adding ə to the end of the base. eg. bamðəɾ, debðəɾ etc. but to the bases vadur etc. u is added. eg. yaduru, piburu, ūru, mituru etc. The nominal /ukuna/ 'louse', /makuna/ 'bed bug' /hūna/ 'gecko' are to be examined for their bases and singular/plural suffixes.

If the baseform ends in a vowel the plural suffix is realized as /o/ and /y/ or /v/ is introduced appropriately.

/aliyo/	'elephants'
/eluvo/	'goats'

If the base form ends in /i/ the plural suffix is optionally deleted forming the term /ali/ 'elephants'.²

2.1 In Gender III, the plural suffix is realized /ø/ (zero)

e.g.

/pot/	'books'
/paTi/	'belts'
/puTu/	'chairs'

The base forms of these nominals are /pot/, /paTi/, and /puTu/. If the base form ends in a long consonant, it is necessary to have another set of rules to map them into surface forms.

2.1.1 The nominals

/attø/	'branch'
/ittø/	'bunch'
/pættø/	'side'
/pottø/	'bark/peel'

'are of Gender III and

Their base forms are /att/, /itt/, /pætt/, and /pott/. In the formation of plurals, the relevant plural suffix is /ø/.

stem

att	+	ø
att	+	ø
pætt	+	ø
pott	+	ø

² In this case /i/ is only a phoneme as in /koTi/ 'tigers', /mugøTi/ 'mongooses', but not a morpheme as in /kikili/hen', ræTi 'citizen' In latter forms /i/ is a derivational suffix.

Therefore the form att etc. cannot be pronounced as a long consonant as it does not occur in word final position in Sinhala. So its transformation is essential to make it a concrete term. In order to achieve the purpose two grammatical rules are employed ; namely

- (a) deletion and
- (b) introduction

In these instances where the base forms of Gender III which end in a double or homogeneous consonants the final consonant is deleted in the environment of plural suffix /ø/. The rule of introduction introduces /i/ or /u/ to the place where the consonant is deleted. The selection (i or u) depends upon the preceding vowel in the base form. If it is a front vowel i is introduced. Otherwise it is u.

Example:-

att +ø
 at +ø (a) consonant deletion
 atu +ø (b) introduction (u has been introduced as a in the base is a back vowel.)

= /atu/ 'branches'

itt +ø
 it +ø (a) deletion
 iti +ø (b) introduction (i as i in the base is a front vowel.)
 =/iti/ 'bunches/'

2.1.2 The structure of nominals of following type in somewhat different.

'kīra' 'splinter' kīri 'splinters'
 kūr̄ð 'skewer' kūru 'skewers'

The base forms of those nominals are /kīr/ and /kūr̄/. As these nominals belong to Gender III, the zero suffix occurs in the formation of plural forms.

kīr + ∅

kūr + ∅

Usually, Sinhala nominals do not end in /r/. So the vowels /i/ or /u/ should be introduced there. The base form /kīr/ takes /i/ and the base form /kūr/ takes /u/ on the basis of the vowel which is in the base.

3. Unmarked Nominals

3.1 The nominals which are of the feature [+animate] and end in the suffix /lā/ (plural suffix) are considered as unmarked for gender. This group of nominals includes mainly kingship terms.

/ amma /	'mother'
/ tātta /	'father'
/ nangi /	'younger sister'
/ bāppa /	'uncle'
/ mudḍālāli /	'business person'

They are unmarked for number and gender and are treated as singular. In order to form the plural forms the suffix /-la/ is added to the base. The resulting forms are

/ ammdlā /	'mothers'
/ taattlā /	'fathers'
/ nangilā /	'younger sisters'
/ bāppḍālā /	'uncles'
/ mudḍālāliā /	'business persons'

Some pronominals eyā 'that person' (anaphoric) meyā 'this person' arayā 'that person' (distal) ūḍḍ 'you' are of this type when they take plural forms eyāla 'they' meyāla 'these persons' arḍyalā 'those person (distal).

- 3.2 Those inanimate nouns which are unmarked for the singular take the suffix /-val/ in the plural .

/ kaTə/	'mouth'
/ vətə/	'fence'
/ gedərə/	'home/house'
/ niyərə/	'wier of paddy field'
/ valə/	'pit' etc are of this type.

These nominals are unmarked for singular. Their plural forms are

/ kaTəval /	'mouths'
/ vətəval /	'fences'
/ gedərəval /	'homes/houses'
/ niyərəval /	'weirs of field'
/ valəval /	'pits'

All these nominals which have unmarked singular forms are of Gender III and they take the suffix / val / in the formation of plurals.

4. Exceptions

Sinhalese has a few nominals which do not fall under the general rule. For example, / harak / 'cattle'.

The paradigm of it is/ haraka / 'cattle'

/ harəkəTə/	'cattle-to'
/ harəkəgen /	'cattle-from'
/ harakəge /	'cattle-of'

The base form is /harak/. In order to form the plural, it has to take the suffix /-u /because the end of the base is constituted by a short consonant which has to be geminated under normal circumstances. It has not happened so in the natural language, instead its plural form in Modern Sinhala is /harak/. The other members of the paradigm are of normal nature. / harəkəTə/ 'cattle-to', /harəkəgen/ 'cattle-from', / harakəge/ 'cattle-of' are some of them. They have normal features, but / harak / does not go with them. In classical Sinhala the term /gon / 'cattle' has been recorded. Its behaviour is identical with that of the terms /harak/.

The nominal forms / girav / 'parrots', / rilav / 'monkeys', / lamay / 'children' are of the same type.

Conclusion

The category of number in Sinhala is realized in singular nominals by / -a~ -ə~ / and in plural / -o~, -u~, -ə~ ~ la~val/.

The feature [\pm animate] have implication on nominals unmarked for singular. Those [+animate] nominals unmarked for singular take / -lā/ in plural while unmarked [-animate] take /-val/ (see note 1 and 2).

Note 1.

Rules required for the formation of singular and plural nominals in Sinhala:-

Singular

{A}	{	[-a] /	C ₁
			CC ₁
			V ₁
		[-ə] /	C _{2,3}
			CC _{2,3}
			V _{2,3}
		[-ø] /	Unmarked. B

Plural

{0}	{	[-o] /	CC _{1,2}
			CC _{1,2}
		[-u] /	C _{1,2}
		[-ø] /	C ₃
			CC ₃
		[-lā] /	Unmarked B [+ Animate]
	[val] /	Unmarked B [-Animate]	

Symbols

C	=	Consonants
V	=	Vowel
1	=	Gender I base
2	=	Gender II base
3	=	Gender III base
B	=	base
{A}	=	Singular morpheme
{O}	=	Plural morpheme

Note-2

Sample Lexicon**Base**

/ attð/	'branch'	att III
/ ittð /	'bunch'	itt III
atð	'hand'	at III
alð	'yams'	a1ðIII
ætð	'seeds'	ætðIII
amma	'mother'	amma (Unmarked) +human
akka	'elder sister'	akka (Unmarked) +human
kurulla	'bird'	kurull I
koTuvð	'fort' 'square'	koTu III
miTiyð	'hammer' 'bundle'	miTi III
kūra	'skewer'	kūr III
kīra	'splinter'	kīr II
kaTð	'mouth'	kaīð II
vanitāvð	'lady'	vanitā II
lend	'squirrel'	n I
ōvita	'flat ground'	ōvīT III
bamðra	'bee'	bamð r I
vaðura	'monkey'	vaðurI
vædda	'vedda' (jungle man)	vædd I
sudda	'white man'	sudd I