

Phi-feature Agreement in Sinhala

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Recent research on Phi-feature agreement has often attempted to incorporate discourse phenomena such as topic, focus, and modality into the discussion. Miyagawa, S (2010) argues in relation to Japanese that in discourse configurational languages, topic/focus establishes an Agree relation in the same way as Phi-feature agreement in agreement languages. Aygen, G (2006), with empirical evidence from Turkic languages Tuvan and Kazakh and European Portuguese, Hungarian, and French, proposes that agreement on C(omplementizer) is involved in licensing Nominative subjects only in the presence of Epistemic modality on the T(ense) head.

The phi-agreement in Sinhala is manifested only with respect to some speech act moods such as imperative, interrogative, permissive, and hortative. However, when a particle indicating evaluative, epistemic, or evidential modality occurs immediately after a DP, the verb takes –e suffix, manifesting some agree relation (a).

- a) Nimal/api/mama/eya – **lu** – gaha – kaepuw-**E**
N(Nom)/we/I/he (she) – **Md Evid** – tree – cut-**E**
Nimal/we/I/he/she, it is said, cut the tree

This paper argues that the Phi-feature agreement in Sinhala (Indo-Aryan, spoken in Sri Lanka) is executed jointly by T(ense) and a MoodP located between T and C. T has the interpretable Tense feature to value the Case feature of subject DP. MoodP is the locus of mood and modal features. Both T and MoodP inherit their respective features from C. The modal features that are inherited by MoodP are epistemic, evaluative, and evidential, whose respective heads are located higher than T and lower than C, as in Cinque (1999) hierarchy. It is argued that, by establishing a functional relation between T/MoodP and a functional category, a reasonable explanation for Sinhala verb agreement can be formulated. As for methodology, the data will consist of natural speech and grammatical judgments of native Sinhala speakers. The theoretical basis is the Minimalism (Chomsky 1995-), and Cinque (1999). Analysis and findings will be in line with the native speaker judgments and cross linguistic facts and observations.

Key words: *Phi-feature, Modal, Phase, Agreement*