

# Contrastive study of Tamil and Sinhala Modal Auxiliaries

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## 1.1 Introduction

The aim of this article is to explain briefly the contrastive analysis of the modal auxiliary verbs of Sinhala and Tamil on a structural basis and to describe and point out the areas of difficulty that the speakers come across in Sinhala & Tamil learning; from the point of view of a teacher. It is imperative that an attempt of this nature will enhance in preparing teaching materials and to identify students problems in learning a second language.

In recent times, the government of Sri Lanka declared Sinhala and Tamil as the official languages of the country. Earlier Sinhala was the only official language. Today the government of Sri Lanka is encouraging both the major communities to learn each others language. The Education Ministry is encouraging the teaching and learning of Sinhala and Tamil as second languages in Schools through out the country. If this programme is to be a success, priority should be given to the preparation of effective materials for teaching these languages as second languages. Modern methods and approaches should be adopted. It is in this context that a contrastive study of the two languages as done in this article becomes useful and helpful for the purpose of preparing learning and teaching materials in both languages..

Sinhala, a member of the Indo-Aryan family of languages, is spoken only in Sri Lanka. Most Sinhala migrants in other countries like Great Britain, U.S.A and Australia continue to speak Sinhala. In day today life Sinhala is spoken through out the island except the greater part of the Northern Province and the coastal areas of the eastern province. Modern Sinhala has two standards the literary and the colloquial. The latter has a variety of dialects both regional and social. Sinhala has been open to the influence of several languages such as Tamil, Sanskrit, Pali, Malayalam., Tehugu,

Arabic, Indonesia, Malay, Dutch, Portuguese and English. These languages belong to difficult language families.

Tamil language belongs to the Dravidian family of Languages and is mainly spoken in Tamil Nadu in South India, a part from other countries such as Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma, Indonesia, East and South Africa, Fiji islands Mauritius and the Malagasy Republic. Tamil has a great number of dialects both regional and social in countries where it is spoken.

In this paper the Colombo variety of Sinhalese is being compared with the Jaffna variety of Tamil with emphasis on modal auxiliaries .

In describing the morphological structures of the auxiliary verbs on the basis of the spoken Jaffna Tamil and spoken Sinhala, we get the following two major groups namely:

- Modals
- Aspectuals

### 1.2 Formal contrasts and similarities of modals in Tamil and Sinhala

Modals	Tamil auxiliary forms and meanings conveyed	Sinhala auxiliary forms and meanings conveyed
1. Obligative	veeNum (obligation/need/ necessity)	oon ð (obligation/need/ necessity)
2. Negative obligation	veeNTaam (don't/need not/ should not/must not)	eppaa (don't/must not/ Should not) n æ æ (don't/need not)
3. Prohibitive	paTaatu/kuuTaatu (should not/must not)	epaa (Should not/ must not)

<b>Modals</b>	<b>Tamil auxiliary forms and meanings conveyed</b>	<b>Sinhala auxiliary forms and meanings conveyed</b>
4. Potential	muTiyum laam eelum (physical ability/ can/possible able)	puluva η / h æki (ability/can/ possible/able)
5. Negative potential	muTiyaatu eelaatu maaTT – (not able to/ inability)	b æ æ (not able to/ inability)
6. Probability	- laam (may possibility/ probability)	æti/puluva η (possibility/ probability)
7. Permissive	- laam- aTTum (let)	- aave (let)

Tamil has a total set of eleven modal auxiliaries constituted of five affirmatives with the corresponding six negatives, whereas Sinhala presents a total set of modals of which five are affirmatives and three are negatives.

No two languages are identical in structures, verb patterns and other grammatical categories. Certain linguistic items in one language need not necessarily denote the same in another. So also with auxiliaries. There are some formal, syntactic, semantic similarities and differences between Tamil and Sinhala.

The first striking contrast that can be easily noticed by any learner, is that whereas in Sinhala, the main verbs and auxiliaries (whether modals or aspectual) are realized

separately, in Tamil, they are generally agglutinated so that one cannot distinguish the main verb and the auxiliaries easily.

Consider the following examples :

TL (a) makaL ammaakkup puu puTuKkikkuTukkiRaa

SL (b) duv  $\partial$  ammaT  $\partial$  mal kad  $\partial$  la den  $\partial$  va  
'The daughter picks flowers for her mother'

TL (a) piLLayaL viLayaaTikkoNTirukkalaam

SL (b) lamay sella  $\eta$  k  $\partial$  r  $\partial$  n  $\partial$  va  $\text{\ae}$ ti  
'The children may be playing'

TL (a) piLLayaL viLayaaTikkoNTiruntirukkalaam

SL (b) lamay sella  $\eta$  k  $\partial$  r  $\partial$  n  $\partial$   $\text{\ae}$ ti  
'The children would have been playing'

In TL(a)s are the Tamil examples. The modals, aspectuals and the main verbs are agglutinated that it is hard to distinguish them. In SL (b)s are the Sinhala examples. The auxiliaries and main verbs kept separately.

The other important contrast is that in Tamil, the same idea can be expressed by more than one modal auxiliaries, whereas in Sinhala the modals are limited. Consider the following examples:

TL (a) tampi kooyilukkup pookalaam.  
tampi kooyilukkup pooka muTiyum  
tampi kooyilukkup pooka eelum  
'Younger brother can go to the temple'

SL (a) malliT  $\partial$  koovil  $\partial$  T  $\partial$  yann  $\partial$  puluva  $\eta$ .  
malliT  $\partial$  kovil  $\partial$  T  $\partial$  giy  $\partial$  h $\text{\ae}$ ki  
'Younger brother can go to the temple'

TL (a) ennaalay peepar vaacikka eelaatu.  
(b) ennaalay peepar vaacikka muTiyaatu.

- (c) naan peepar vaacikka maaTTen.  
'I cannot read the paper.'

SL (a) maT  $\partial$  patt  $\partial$  ree kiyavann  $\partial$  bææ  
'I cannot read the paper'.

TL (a) nii  $\eta$  kaL miin caapiTa veeNTaam.  
nii  $\eta$  kaL miin caapiTakkuuTaatu.

- (c) nii  $\eta$  kaL miin caapiTappaTaatu.  
'You should not eat fish'.

SL (a) oyaa maalu kann  $\partial$  epaa.  
'You should not / don't eat fish'.

Huddleston (1976, 333) explains the English modals, in general, by the so – called "NICE PROPERTIES", Negation, Inversion, Code, Emphasis. As in many natural languages, Tamil and Sinhala languages can be analysed according to the above "NICE PROPERTIES".

## 2.1 Negation

There are sets of modal verbs in Tamil and Sinhala with negative counterparts. Evidently the Tamil language does not have negative forms for – *laam* and – *aTTum*, where as in Sinhala *hæki* and *æti* do not have parallel negative forms.

The following Tamil modals display their formal negative patterns.

<i>veeNum</i> – 'must'	-	<i>veeNTaam</i> – 'must not'
<i>muTiyum</i> – 'can'	-	<i>muTiyaatu</i> – 'cannot'
<i>eelum</i> – 'can'	-	<i>eelaatu</i> – 'cannot'
<i>kuuTum</i> ' 'probability'	-	<i>kuuTaatu</i> – 'should not'

- \* See 1 *kuuTum* – The positive form of *kuuTaatu* is used in the literary Tamil, but rarely in colloquial Tamil too.

Consider the following Tamil examples :

- (a) *tampi paTikka veeNum*.  
'Younger brother must study'

- (b) *tampi paTikka veeNTaam.*  
'Younger brother must not study.'
- (a) *avarukku ci η kaLam paTikka muTiyum*  
'He can study Sinhala'
- (b) *avarukku ci η kaLam paTikka muTiyaatu*  
'He cannot study Sinhala'
- (a) *avarukku vaacikka eelum*  
'He can read'
- (b) *avarukku vaacikka eelaatu.*  
'He cannot read'
- (a) *avar viittay varakkuTum*  
'He may come home.'
- (b) *avar viiTtay varakkuTaatu*  
'He should not come home.'

It must be noted that in Tamil the modals do get contracted but not in a regular systematic way. Thus, modals like *veeNum*, *veeNTaam* get contracted like.

*veeNum* – *ooNum* and *veeNTaam* – *veeNam*

Similarly

*PookaveeNum* – *pookooNum* and *pookaveeNTaam* – *pookaveeNaam*.

Usually in some context of the speech many adjustments can take place like this. This type of contraction occurs for the preceding or following verbs. There is variation at different levels of speech delivery.

Consider the following Tamil examples :

*avar caappiTakkuuTaatu* ~ *avar caappiTakkuuTaa*  
'He should not eat'

*avarukku caamaan vaa η ka mutiyaatu.*  
~ *avarukku caamaan vaa η ka muTiyaa*  
'He can't buy things'



The question markers such as Tamil 'aa' and 'oo', Sinhala 'dð' are added to the modals or any other verbs at the end of the sentences to make them questions.

The following examples are for Tamil.

ennkku ooTa mutiyum.

'I can run'

enakku ooTa muTiyumaa?

'can I run?'

enakku ooTa mutiyumoo?

'can I run?'

(a) naan paTikka veeNum.

'I must study'

naan paTikka veeNumaa ?.

'should I study?'

naan paTikka veeNumoo?

'should I study?'

The following examples are for Sinhala.

maTð duvð nnð puluvaη

'I can run'

maTð duvð nnð puluvandð ?

'can I run?'

(a) mamð kolð mbð yannð oonð

'I must go to Colombo'

mamð kolð mbð yannð oonð dð?

'shall I go to Colombo?'

### 2.3 Code

Both languages have the same tendency to repeat the main verb and the modal verbs in the so – called code sentences.

Consider the following examples for Tamil and Sinhala.

- TL (a) naan ci η KaLam paTikka veeNum. enray ta η kacciyum  
paTikka veenum  
'I must study Sinhala and so must my sister'
- SL (b) mam θ sinh θ l θ igen θ gann θ oon θ . mage nagit  
igen θ gann θ oon θ  
'I must study Sinhala and so must my sister'.
- TL (a) enakkup paaTa muTiyum avarukkum muTiyum.  
'I can sing and he can also sing'
- SL (b) maT θ sindu kiy θ vann θ puluva η, eyaaT θ t puluva η.  
'I can sing and he can also sing'

## 2.4 Emphasis

Usually the emphasized modal forms give the stressed meaning. But this kind of emphasis is absent in Tamil and Sinhala. Both languages have the emphatic particles and those are inserted between the main verbs and the modals.

Consider the following Tamil examples.

nii η kaL varattaan veeNum.

'You must (certainly) come'

avan viiTTay varavee veeNTaam.

'That person should not come here at all'

nii η kal paTikkavum veeNum.

'You should study also'

Consider the following Sinhala examples.

oyaa enn θ m θ oon θ

'you should come'

oyaa enn  $\partial$  tamay oon  $\partial$  .

'you should (definitely) come'

oyaa ennat oon  $\partial$  .

'you should come also'

### 3.1 Syntactic Features

#### 3.1.1 Formal Similarities

Sinhala modals do not inflect according to person, number, gender. 'No-agreement' is a general feature of Sinhala verb inflection.

Consider the following Sinhala examples :

maT  $\partial$  enn  $\partial$  puluva  $\eta$  .

'I can come'

apiT  $\partial$  enn  $\partial$  puluva  $\eta$  .

'We can come'

malliT  $\partial$  enn  $\partial$  puluva  $\eta$  .

'younger brother can come'

In Sinhala, however, unlike in Tamil, there are some modal inflections that show a kind of agreement in a very marginal sense. The so called optative marker *vi/yi* as in *yayi-yaavi* 'might go'. Usually go with third person; -*naK* as in *yannaK-1*/we shall go. o.k. occurs with first person, and -*mu* 'let us' - *yamu* - 'let us go', occurs with first person plural only.

Consider the following Sinhala examples :

lam  $\partial$  ya irida kol  $\partial$  mb  $\partial$  T  $\partial$  yaavi

'It is likely that the boy will go to Colombo on Sunday'

lam  $\partial$  ya irida kol  $\partial$  mb  $\partial$  T  $\partial$  yayi

'The child might go to Colombo on Sunday'

mam  $\partial$  pahaT  $\partial$  enna .

'I will come at five'

api phaT  $\partial$  enna  $\eta$ .

'We will come at five'

api yamu

'let us go'

Tamil modals also do not inflect with PNG markers, except *maaTT*– Consider the following;

Tamil examples :

naan vara muTiyum

'I can come'

naa  $\partial$  kaL varamuTiyum

'We can come'

avar vara mutiyum.

'He can come'

avay vara muTiyam.

'They can come'

In Tamil and Sinhala some modals take the subject in the nominative or the dative case.

The following are the Tamil examples :

naan pooka veeNum.

'I want to go'

enakkup pooka veeNum.

'I must go'

It is just the opposite case in Sinhala. The following are the Sinhala examples :

maT  $\partial$  yann  $\partial$  oon  $\partial$

'I want to go'

mam  $\partial$  yann  $\partial$  oon  $\partial$

'I must go'

Sinhala and Tamil modals are defective verbs. They do not inflect for tenses except the Tamil modal *maaTT* – and *muTi* -. In Tamil, the modal auxiliary *maaTT* – takes PNG markers and the future tense. *muTi* – takes only the past tense.

Examples :

enakku kaNakkuc ceyyamuTiñcutu.

‘I could do the sum’

(a) naan pookamaatten.

‘I won’t go’

(b) naa ηkaL pookamaaTTam.

‘We won’t go’

(c) nii pooka maaTTaay.

‘You won’t go’

(d) niir pooka maaTTiir

‘You (singular polite) won’t go’

(e) nii ηkaL pookamaaTTii ηkaL.

‘You (plural) won’t go’

(f) avar pooka maaTTaar.

‘He won’t go’

(g) avaa pookamaaTTaa.

‘She won’t go’

(h) avay pooka maaTTinam

‘They won’t go’

### 3.1.2 The Occurrence of Modals

In both languages, the modals always occur at the end of the verb phrase, the main verb occurring first. The following are the Tamil examples.

enakkuc camaykka eelum.

‘I can cook’

avarukkuc camaykka eelaatu.  
'He cannot cook'

The Sinhala examples are  
maTθ uyannθ puluvaη.  
'I can cook'

eyaaTθ ævidinnθ bææ.  
'He cannot walk'

However in Sinhala, for emphasis the order can be reversal. Examples are;

maTθ puluvaη uyannθ.  
maTθ bææ ævidinnθ.

This type of order rarely occurs in Tamil speech. Consider these Examples.

enakku eelum camaykka.  
enakku eelaatu camaykka.

### 3.1.3 Independent Meaning

Usually the modals in Tamil and Sinhala have meanings only when they occur along with a main verb. It must be noted here that specially in speech, the Tamil and Sinhala modals have meanings even when they occur without main verbs. But they do not always imply a bondage with a main verb.

Example for Tamil :

unakku itayc ceyya muTiyumaa ? or  
unakku muTiyumaa ?  
'Can you do this ?

Example for Sinhala :

oyyaTθ meeva kθrθnnθ puluvandθ ? or  
oyaaTθ puluvandθ ?  
'can you do this?'

gears is Rs 30,000 – Rs 38,000, compared with a new one costing Rs 99,000 – 115,000. The Hatton National Bank in Jaffna reported that it had requests from fishermen to borrow money to buy second-hand vessels, but due to lack of documentation of the registration of the boats, the bank was not in the position to lend money.

### ***Fishing harbours***

Fishing harbours at Kytes, KKS, Point Pedro and Myliddy in the Jaffna District have been occupied for security purposes for long time, there were under the high security zones. Consequently fishers are facing several problems in protecting and maintaining their boats.

### **Institutional situations**

The Dept. of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Jaffna, is functioning in a private building with branch offices with inadequate facilities such as furniture equipment and vehicles. Its service to the people and the sectors are to manage and develop the fishing industry for the better nutrition for the public and income for the fishing community.

Fisheries Department ran short of staff who are proficient and well versed in fishing profession, further, they do not have any access for scholarship. Facilities to go abroad for training programs and similar other programs that may update their knowledge.

In the northern region, there is no institution other than the Center for Development of Fisheries of the university of Jaffna to conduct research and promote fisheries production and development of the industry. There is an urgent need for the setting up of a fisheries research institute in the North Region.

Arrangements should be made to re-organize the fishermen's co-operative societies which have been defunct and obtain optimum service out of them. Further action should be taken to protect the coastal environment.

### **Suggestions / or Action needed**

In order to revive this important sector and improve the living conditions of the fishermen the following actions are necessary.

- 'I really will not' derives from *maaTTen* - 'I will not', *muTiyavee muTiyaaTu* - 'I really cannot' derives from *muTiyaaTu* - 'I cannot', It always gives the negative meaning.

Consider these Tamil examples :

naan paTikka maaTTavee maaTTen

'I really will not study'

(i.e. I don't like to study)

enakku kaacu veeNTavee veeNTaam

'I really do not want money'

avaakku naTakka eelavee eelaatu

'She really cannot walk'

nii η kal paal kuTikkak kuuTavee kuuTaatu.

'You really should not drink milk'

But in Sinhala the reduplication of modals are limited.

Examples :

maT θ oyaagen udav epaam θ epaa.

'I don't won't any help from you'

malkuTu paaviccū k θ r θ nn θ giyaam θ minissu nætt θ T θ m θ nætivenYva.

'People get ruined (themselves) when they get addicted to drugs'

Though Tamil and Sinhala come under two different language families, they share certain syntactic features. More or less, the same word-order is maintained in Tamil and Sinhala.

Consider the following Tamil examples ;

\* itu enakku muTiyum eelum.

'I can able to do this'

- \* naan paTam paakkaḥ pookalaam eelum.  
'I may can go to see film'

Consider the following Sinhala examples :

- \* oyaa meeka kḍ rḍ nn ḍ puluva ŋ oon ḍ.  
'This can must do this'
- \* mam ḍ film bal ḍ nn ḍ æti oon ḍ.  
'I may must see film'

#### 4.1 Semantic Features:

At the semantic level, some of the Tamil modals have their counterparts in Sinhala and some don't.

Consider the examples :

<u>Tamil</u>		<u>Sinhala</u>
veeNum	-	oon ḍ
veeNTaam	-	epaa
muTiyum	-	puluva ŋ / hæki
muTiyaatu	-	bææ
eelum	-	puluva ŋ
eelaatu	-	bææ
paTaatu	-	-
- laam	-	æti
maaTT-	-	-
-aTTum	-	aave

##### 4.1.1 Modal of ability

As auxiliary of ability 'be able to', 'can', 'can be' is expressed by Tamil '*muTiyum*' and Sinhala '*puluva ŋ*' 'be able to' 'can be' also expressed by *-laam*, *eelum*, and *muTiyum* in Tamil. Both modals can take the subjects in the direct or dative case.

Example for Tamil :

enakku ooTa mutiyum.

'I can run'

Example for Sinhala :

maTð yann ð puluva η.

'I can go'

#### 4.1.2 Modal of Permission

As auxiliary of permission 'may' / 'let' finds its parallel in *-laam* / *-aTTum* in Tamil, and *puluva η* in Sinhala.

Example for Tamil :

nii pookalaam.

'You may go'

Example for Sinhala :

oyaaTð yann ð puluva η.

'You may go'

Permission in Tamil is expressed by adding either *-aTTum* or *-laam* to the infinitive of a main verb. Usually *-aTTum* occurs with third person subject. It may occur with first person pronouns also, but only in the question.

Examples for Tamil :

avar pookaTTum.

'Let him go'

avayaL pookaTTum.

'Let them go'

naan pookaTTumaa ?

'Shall I go'

#### 4.1.3 Modal Possibility :

'May' as auxiliary of possibility has its counter-parts *-laam* in Tamil and *æti* in Sinhala.

Example for Tamil :

appaa naaLaykku kolumpukkup pookalaam.

‘Father may go to Colombo tomorrow?’

Example for Sinhala :

taatta het  $\partial$  yan  $\partial$  va  $\text{\ae}$ ti.

‘Father may go tomorrow’

Auxiliaries of possibility (epistemic modals) have their pairs *-laam* in Tamil and *\text{\ae}ti* in Sinhala. Some times in Tamil and Sinhala, the notion of possibility can be expressed by several modals.

Example for Tamil :

iNTaykku maLay peyyalaam.

‘It may rain today’

iNTaykku maLay peyyakkuTum.

‘It may rain today’

Examples for Sinhala :

ad  $\partial$  vahin  $\partial$  va  $\text{\ae}$ ti.

‘It may rain today’

ad  $\partial$  vahinn  $\partial$  puluva  $\eta$ .

or

ad  $\partial$  vahiya                      ‘It is possible that it may rain today’

ad  $\partial$  vahiivi

Example for Tamil :

tampikku kaNakkuc ceyya muTiyum.

or tampikku kaNakuc ceyya eelum

‘It is possible that younger brother can do maths’

Example for Sinhala :

maliT  $\partial$  gana  $\eta$  hond  $\partial$  T  $\partial$  had  $\partial$  nn  $\partial$  puluva  $\eta$ .

‘It is possible that younger brother can do maths’

#### 4.1.4 Modal of Obligation

Modal of obligation can be expressed by 'veeNum' in Tamil and 'oon ð' in Sinhala. There is no distinction between *veeNum* and *oon ð*. Both languages use the obligative words for the same purpose.

Example for Tamil :

nii η kaL TamiL paTikka veeNum  
'You must learn Tamil' (Compulsion)

Example for Sinhala

oyya dem ð l ð igen ð gann ð oon ð .  
'You must learn Tamil'

Modals of obligation must, should, have to, in English have subtle distinctions where as Tamil and Sinhala the degree of distinctions can be expressed by only one word. However, to bring out the English notions of compulsion, obligation and moral advice etc, the emphatic particles *ee*, *taan* (in Tamil) *m ð* and *tamay* (in Sinhala) must be added to the main verb.

Example for Tamil :

nii η kaL ellaarukkum utavi ceyyattaan veeNum.  
'You should help all'

Example for Sinhala :

oyaa okkoT ð m ð udav k ð r ð nn ð m ð oon ð .  
'You should help all'

#### 5.1 Conclusion:

The fact that Tamil and Sinhala languages belong to two different language families. One could see that the similarities are more than the dissimilarities. It is my earnest hope that this article will enhance the language learners in their search for knowledge.

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