CHAPTER TWO

A Survey of Literature

2.0. Preliminaries

This chapter is a survey of literature related to the present research in word order in Sinhala and English. There is hardly any research on the comparison of word order in Sinhala and English though some books do discuss their grammar. Some of books and studies which have significant bearings on the present study have been discussed briefly according to the alphabetical order of the last name of the author.


This is aimed at providing an intensive introduction to recent work in syntactic theory (more particularly, to key concepts which are presupposed in works written within the broad frame work of the minimalist program in the version outlined in Chomsky (1997:1). In the discussion of the parameters in the first chapter, the author describes the range of grammatical variation found across language and highlights “a more familiar aspect of grammatical structure which is obviously parameterized relates to word order, in that different types of language have different word order in specific type of construction (1997:18). The author illustrates with the comparison of word order in English and Chinese. The detailed discussion of Wh parameter and the relative position of heads and complement within a phrase is directly related to the present study. The detailed discussion of the syntactic evidence for assigning words to categories essentially relates to the fact that different categories of words have different distribution. (i.e. occupy a different range of position within phases or sentences) (1997:40).
This book is alongside and abridged version called syntax: a minimalist introduction. The two books cover roughly the same range of topics: the abridged version is intended for use as a no intensive introduction on short syntax courses.


This is a detailed linguistic study of the clause structure in colloquial Sinhala based on notion of generative transformational grammar. He has mentioned it in the introduction as:

I think it is fair to say that a significant number of the basic criteria for determining constituent structure are actually transformational. The general principle is that: if we have a transformation that simplifies the grammar and leads from sentences to sentences in a large number of cases (1970:21).

This work is considered as a key study to have a comprehensive knowledge on colloquial Sinhala since it covers almost all the features of the said language in its contents of six chapters.

Gair discusses various clause formation in Sinhala based on transformational syntax. The classification of clauses as Independent and Dependent Clauses, Basic and Emphatic Clauses, Nominal Clauses, Verbal clauses, Transitive Active Clauses, Volative and Involative Clauses, Non-Verbal Clauses etc paves way to the researcher to analyze the word order in Sinhala at the clause level in particular.

In the discussion of linear order of constituents Gair (1970:54) highlights a number of variant linear orders. He emphasizes that while all clauses do not involve as much freedom of order, the majority is susceptible of at least two, and commonly more different orders.

In his study, clauses are treated as composed of constituents arranged in a construction without fixed order implied saves in a few cases where
order differences appear quite clearly to signal constructional differences.
Thus, though Gair discusses some aspects of constituent order at the clause, he does not pay attention to elucidate the rigid word order of Sinhala at the phrase level in particular.


It is as mentioned in the preface by the author, a comprehensive work to fill the vacuum of the absence of a comprehensive grammar of Sinhala suited to the requirements of English readers. With all these ideas the author deals with the following topics in order to give a comprehensive account of the grammatical structure of the language. Some of the items from the book are alphabet, transliteration, etymology, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunction, interjection and particles etc. The discussion which has utmost relevance to the present study deals with syntax, classification of sentences, cases, order of words in sentences, colloquial Sinhala and a comparison of classical and colloquial Sinhala.


In this Ph D thesis, the author argues for recognizing of two major subtypes of passive structure: agentive and non-agentive passive. The agentive type is a non-basic and derived structure and corresponds to active clauses through syntactic transformation, while the non-agentive type, also called semantic passive, is basic and intransitive, and does not have the same active/passive derivation that the agentive passive has.
For this semantically based cross-linguistic analysis of passive, Gunasinghe discusses three languages: English, Nayngumarda (Pama-Nyungan-Australia) and Sinhala (both literary and colloquial). The psycholinguistic dimension of the passive voice is also considered as evidence for the two types of passive.

Gunasinghe states that in colloquial Sinhala the subject is optional, and is not an obligatory surface category. What she means by not obligatorily surfacing is that the subject of a clause may be ellipse (i.e. null subject) or totally absent (i.e. subjectless) as Gunasinghe pointed out.

Gunasinghe’s claim that “subject” is not a surface category in colloquial Sinhala (1985:126) is based on such examples in (1). She further assumes that these constructions with omitted subjects are the results of a subject deletion operation as in example (2).

(1)  
bilipu:ja:vato Ō mucan-œ maeruœ

Sacrificing offering-DAT Ō deer.PL.ACC kill-VOL.PST

The deer were killed as a sacrificial offering.

Lit: [someone] killed deer (as a sacrificial offering) (Gunasinghe 1985: 17)

(2)  

(1985:1180)

Gunasinghe also states that once the subject is thus deleted the subjectivising operation (i.e. to promote the object to subject position as in passive) has not taken place, hence the subjectlessness.

But Heenadearage (2002:32) argues that subject is not deleted from the structure as a formal operation (as Gunasinghe has assumed) but rather that these are examples of an occasional omission of the subject NP during the speech. However, as we observe the deletion of subject is a common practice in colloquial Sinhala.

This study is based on a language sample of some 350 languages taken from all the major language families of the globe. This sample has incorporated Greenberg’s samples as a starting point and has considerably expanded them. The particular emphasis within these languages is on approximately one dozen word orders consisting of pairs of modifiers + head, adjective and noun, genitive and noun, preposition/postposition and noun phrase, object and verb and subject and verb). In the study, Hawkins is primarily interested in “basic word orders” and in most cases there is no problem in recognizing these, but sometimes there is.

Hawkins (1983:10) describes the typological methodology which will contribute to the theory of universal Grammar in ways that single language analysis cannot. According to Hawkins, there are two variables in cross-language data which can inform theory construction. The first involves the possible and impossible combination of properties (here word orders): A single language can attest to the possibility of some combination, but only large language samples can motivate its possibility. The second involves language numbers.

Throughout the book, Hawkins is going to assume the viability of a notion of “basic word order” drawing examples from various languages. According to him (1983: 11) the basic verb position in English is SVO; the basic adjective position of Japanese is Adj N.

According to the author, the biggest problem for a notion of basic word order is to be found in the ordering of the arguments of the verb at the sentence level.

Hawkins has used the term “doubling” to describe the situation in which one and the same modifier category (e.g. the adjective) can occur both before and after its head in a given language.
According Hawkins (1983: 10) Greenberg’s word order universals is a comprehensive study which contains details which creates a base to analyze the word order factor in languages in the world. In the present study the Greenberg’s word order universals are used in order to analyze the word order in Sinhala and in English.


This PhD thesis is a detailed investigation of a number of issues in colloquial Sinhala morpho syntax. These issues primarily concern grammatical relations, argument structure, phrase structure and focus constructions. The theoretical framework of this study is lexical functional grammar. The author’s comprehensive elucidation of grammatical relation, argument structure and clause structure in colloquial Sinhala throws some light to our study. The main focus lies in establishing the subject grammatical relation in terms of various subjecthood diagnostics.

The structure of the non verbal sentences in Sinhala in terms of a number of morphosyntactic phenomena is highlighted. It was previously argued that verbal sentences and non verbal sentences in colloquial Sinhala differ in terms of clause structure. This study shows to the contrary.

Author discusses the phrase structure in Sinhala and highlights some functional projection to account for word order freedom in Sinhala. He shows (2002:256) that unmarked constituent order of a main clause with verbal predicate is SOV.

Under the topic “The Word Order Freezing” he argues that sometimes grammatical functions cannot be identified on the basis of case marking, they are based on word order. He further argues that under some circumstances the free word order becomes fixed. To illustrate his points brought up in the study he has given two examples as follows.
Heenadeerage in his suggestions for the area of future research highlights that the fixed word order phenomena should be studied comprehensively.


The author’s doctoral dissertation deals with the focus constructions and Wh- question in the theoretical framework of Government and Binding theory.

In this study, the author argues to have in Sinhala two basic clause structure types based on verbal sentences and non-verbal sentences, i.e. those with adjective, postpositional and adverbial predicates. Kariyakarawana claims that this distinction is made on the basis of a number of syntactic process that these constructions can or cannot participate in.

Kariyakarawana (1998:52) provides a discussion of verbal and non verbal sentences. On the basis of a number of tests to be reviewed below, he argues that verbal sentences differ structurally from nonverbal sentences. These claimed differences have led him to draw a number of important conclusions regarding the clause structure of these verbal and non-verbal predicates.
Kariyakarawana (1998: 61) highlights the complement extraction of Sinhala as follows.

a. seːnə sriya gænə liyum liuva
   Sena- NOM sriya –NOM about a letter write-Past
   Sena wrote a letter about Sriya

b. kauru gænə da [seːnə ðØ lum liuce]?
   Who about Q [sena-NOM ð a letter wrote –PST
   Who did Sena write a letter about?

According to Heenadeerage (2002:178) there is an important difference between the Sinhala sentence in (b) and the corresponding English sentence given in the gloss. In the Sinhala sentence, it is the whole prepositional phrase not just the complement of prepositional phrase which has moved to the sentence initial position, and to which the question marker is assigned. Thus, the sentence literally means “About whom did Sena write a letter? This kind of pied-piping is obligatory in Sinhala, and the complement of prepositional phrase cannot be moved though it is possible in English. However, Kariyakarawana treats the sentence (b) as subject extraction. He deals with a detailed discussion of relativisation in Sinhala which is related to the word order of Sinhala. He argues that only verbal sentences can be relativised but not non- verbal ones.

In the process of relativisation in Sinhala, the verb takes the form of a verbal adjective and functions as a modifier to the following relativised noun.

[guruʋərəyə laməya[ə dunə] potə
   teacher child given book
   The book [which the teacher gave to the child].
Contrary to Kariyakaravana’s statement that only the verbal sentences can be relativised, Heenadeerage (1998:184) states that adjectival clauses can naturally participate in this process as illustrated by the following example.

\[
\text{potə kiyəvanna ama:ruyi → [kiyəvanna ama:ru]}
\]

\[
\text{book read difficult read difficult book}
\]

The book which is difficult to read

Though Kariyakarawana has not mentioned about the adjectival clauses, the above argument of Heenadeerage is acceptable since in Sinhala the adjectival clauses can naturally be relativised.

In the survey of Sinhala syntax the author highlights the head –final nature of Sinhala where the complements and modifiers appear to the left of the head. This discussion helps researcher to analyze the constituent order of Sinhala.

Kariyakarawana (1998:29) argues that though Sinhala seems to have free word order, it is not that free. He highlights that the free word order facts, however, do not mean that any element in Sinhala can be freely scrambled out. Auxiliary verbs, sentential focus; negative elements are among those which cannot be scrambled out. Though Kariyakarawana discusses some features of word order in Sinhala in relation to its syntax he doesn’t deal with a comparative study of Sinhala and English in the light of word order which the researcher elucidates in the present study.


This journal contents some of the selected papers presented in a national seminar on “word order in Indian languages” organized by The Center of Advanced study in Linguistics at Osmania University in Hyderabad in India. Of a total number of sixteen articles in the journal, only two
were considered in the present study. This can be considered as the only
publication directly on word order in Indian languages with several
articles containing comprehensive details of the topic.
Subbarao (1996:9-27) in his keynote address touches upon the
synchronic and diachronic aspects of word order and also comments on
its connection with child language acquisition. The last three decades
have seen intensive and high quality research on word order universals
particularly in the Transformational Generative framework. While
pointing out how Greenberg’s word order universals have led to further
research in historical linguistics and Transformational Generative
Grammar ,Subbarao also gives serious consideration to Mithun’s (1992)
claim that word order is governed only by pragmatic considerations and
there is nothing like basic word order.
He also discusses theoretical questions like whether surface word order
coincides with the underline word order. The discussion on
controversies related to configurational languages related directly to the
present study. He observes that considering the relative flexibility of
word order in Indian languages as follows.

It would be interesting to see whether a typology of Indian
languages could be arrived at in terms of configurationality

He stresses that one point to keep in mind, however, is that the word
order flexibility varies from language to language and language family.
Subbarao finds that Japanese and Sinhalese as left branching languages,
English and Arabic as right branching and Hindi as a mixed branching
language. Sinhala as we find in our study also has some mixed
branching features as for example in spoken Sinhala, the relative clauses
occur left and right to the head.
In the article titled “Word Order in Translation” H. Laksmi discusses the
role of word order in translation with special attention to the word order
in English and Telugu. In the course of the discussion, the author deals with similarities and dissimilarities in word order between English and Telugu.

The discussion of clause structure in English and Telugu throws some light to our study.

According to the discussion, it is very interesting to observe that a language like Telugu, having a free word order is rigid in its clause order while a language like English, having fixed word order is flexible in the arrangements of the clause. So, the author emphasizes a need of a research in order to investigate whether it is a linguistic universal that languages with free word order would have restrictions on clause order, and languages with fixed word order would have flexibility in clause order. This kind of comparison will definitely throw some light on the present study since it also deals with a comparison in respect of the word order in Sinhala and English.


This Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of London deals with the syntax of complex sentences in Sinhala within the framework of generative transformational theory of grammar as outlined by Chomsky (1957) and developed by him and others specifies the particular variety of Sinhala and gives an account of its linguistic investigation.

The discussion on principle mechanisms of complex sentence formation and relativisation will contribute to examine the word order in complex sentences in Sinhala.

Several types of complement constructions are discussed, and the majority is shown to be NP complements. A few types appear to be VP complements, but conditions are suggested under which they could be considered NP complements.
All except one are shown to be derived from complex underlying structures, and it is demonstrated that the general principles of complementation can handle all these. It is argued that pseudo-cleft sentences however, are derived from underlying simple sentences.

The discussion on different type of complex sentences and comparative construction has direct relevance to examine the word order in Sinhala at the sentence level in particular. However, Fernado does not directly discuss the word order in Sinhala at its various levels.


Noel Burton’s book is with full of details on English syntax which covers almost all the structures of sentences in English. In this book, the author deals with the sentence structure: constituents, sentence structure function, sentence structure categories, the verb phrases, modifiers in the verb phrase, the verb group, more on noun phrases, sentences within sentences, Wh clause, non finite clauses etc. Though the author directly does not name even one of these chapters as word order, the factor he elaborates in his work is related to the word order particularly in English. This book therefore is used as one of the key references in the present study.

2.11. Quirk et al. (1985). A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language

“A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language” is considered a key study to have a comprehensive knowledge on English grammar since it covers almost all the features of the said language in its contents of nineteen chapters.
The authors herewith discuss the English language, a survey of English grammar, verbs and auxiliaries, the semantics of the verb phrase, nouns and determiners, pronouns and numerals, adjectives and adverbs, the semantics and grammar of adverbials, preposition and prepositional phrases, the simple sentence, sentence types and discourse functions, pro-forms and ellipsis, coordination, the complex sentences, the syntactic and semantic functions of subordinate clauses, complementation of verbs and adjectives and the noun phrase, the complex sentences in English etc.

The first chapter gives the researcher knowledge of the importance of English language and its varieties, the international character of English etc.

The second chapter of the book has an utmost relevance to the present study. The detailed discussion of “constituents, clause structure, the fixed word order language, clause types, phrases, phrases as clause elements, verb phrases and noun phrases, variations on the basic sentence pattern directly throw some lights to the present study. The classification of clause in English into seven types as $SV$, $SVO$, $SVC$, $SVA$, $SVOO$, $SVOC$ and $SVOA$ and the elaboration of them is very extensive. This detailed discussion of seven clause types in English is largely used by the researcher to compare and contrast them with that of Sinhala language.

The third chapter and fourth chapters are a detailed elucidation of verbs and auxiliaries. They touch upon the structure of the verb phrase in detail. The elaboration of simple and complex verb phrase in the third chapter is very significant in order to understand the structure of verb phrases in English, the constituent order of them in particular.

The fifth chapter and sixth chapters contribute immensely to identify nouns, determiners, classification of noun phrase in English.

The seventh chapter deals with the characteristics of the adjective, syntactic functions of adjectives, ordering of adjectives in
premodification. The four zones of the ordering of adjectives in premodification such as *precentral, central, postcentral, prehead* and very exhaustive discussion of adverbs and their syntactic functions have utmost relevance to understand the word order at the phrase level in English.

The eighth chapter is about the semantics and grammar of adverbials while the ninth chapter deals with prepositions and prepositional phrases in English, syntactic functions of prepositional phrases. The author highlights the usage of prepositional chiefly in complementation of verbs and adjectives.

The clause pattern of English is discussed extensively. The syntactic functions of clause elements and order of clause elements are elaborated. The sentence types and discourse function in chapter eleven extensively contribute understand the word order at the clause level and the sentence level in English as well.

The exposition of the complex sentences in English is indeed very effective in order to understand the constituent order at the sentence level.

The researcher as a model for analysis in the present study uses the detail classification of grammatical categories discussed in *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language (1985)* since it is comprehensive.


In an article titled “Function of Word Order in English and Serbian, Linguistics and Literature” the author argues though most of the grammarians would say that Serbian word order is free, while the English one is fixed both share some properties.
The author highlights that English is an analytical language whereas Serbian is a syntactic language. The description of the analytical features of English is very much related to the present study. The main argument of the article is that while it is relatively easy to find some rules related to the word order in English language, it is rather difficult to establish any definite rules for that in Serbian since its word order is free.


Benjamin Weeler in his article titled “Complementation in Colloquial Sinhala: Observation on the Binding Hierarchy” briefly examines the relationship between complementation system of Sinhala and Givon’s (1980) Binding Hierarchy and in what ways does it diverge from it? In his work he will adopt Noona’s definition of complementation as:

“the syntactic situation that arises when a notional sentence or predication is an argument of a predicate. When a predicate can take a complement clause as an argument, it is termed a complement taking predicate” (Noona 1985:41).

The author is analyzing examples of complementation in which the complement clause acts as the object of the predicate. He observes that according to his data, Sinhala generally conforms to the Binding Hierarchy but certain complement taking predicates exhibit behavior that deviates from it.

The important facts relevant to the present study are the categorization of complement types in Sinhala. According to him there are five different complement types.

01. Juxtaposed-clause complement
02. / kiyəla/ complement
03. /baʋə/ complement
04. /eka/ complement

05. Infinitive complement

The first one is the complement type simply involves the juxtaposition of two clauses: the matrix clause and the complement clause.

\[ \text{laməya kukulavə marənəva} \quad \text{mamə dækka} \]
\[ \downarrow \quad \downarrow \]
\[ \text{Complement clause} \quad \text{matrix clause} \]

He notes this order as C+M order (Complement clause+ Matrix clause). However, in spoken Sinhala, as we observe this order can be changed as Matrix clause + Complement clause (M+C).

\[ \text{mamə dækka} \quad + \quad \text{laməya kukulavə marənəva} \]
\[ \downarrow \quad \downarrow \]
\[ \text{Matrix clause (M+C)} \quad \text{Complement clause(C+C)} \]

He observes that the / kiyaəla/ complement appeared in all three word order: C+M, M+C and embedded (Matrix clause+ Complement clause +predicate).

The author has given following examples in order to prove his above observation.

a. \text{laməya kukulavə marənəva kiyəla mamə dækka} \\
   \text{Child chicken kills I See-Past} \\
   \text{I saw that the child kills the chicken}

b. \text{mamə dækka laməya kukulavə marənəva kiyəla} \\
   \text{I See-Past Child chicken kill} \\
   \text{I saw that the child kills the chicken}

c. \text{rosini redi hoədənəva kiyəla matə æhuna} \\
   \text{roshini clothes wash COM I -DAT hear-Past}
I heared that Roshini was washing cloths

As in the juxtaposed –clause complement, the matrix clause and the complement clause are clearly distinguishable.

2.14. Summary

Several pilot studies dealing with syntax in Sinhala and English which have close affinity to the present study are discussed above. Though they have touched upon the various aspects of word order in Sinhala and English separately, no study deals comprehensively with a comparative study of word order in Sinhala and English. The present study, therefore, highlights the similarities and dissimilarities of Sinhala and English in respect of their word order.