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# Trends in Linguistics

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## Editorial Preface

*Annual Review of South Asian Languages and Linguistics (ARSALL)* is devoted to bringing out what is currently being explored in South Asian linguistics and in the study of South Asian languages in general. South Asia is home to a wide variety of languages, structurally and typologically quite diverse, and has often served as a catalyst and testing ground for theories of various kinds.

Although linguists working on South Asia have made significant contributions to our understanding of language, society, and language in society, and their numbers have grown considerably in the recent past, until recently there was no internationally recognized forum for the exchange of ideas amongst them or for the articulation of new ideas and approaches grounded in the study of South Asian languages. *The Yearbook of South Asian Languages and Linguistics*, of which this annual is a direct descendant, played that role during the last decade, but in 2007 we decided to go a bit further and incorporate a slightly modified form of such a forum into *Trends in Linguistics*. This is the fifth issue of *ARSALL* as part of the series *Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs*.

Each volume of this annual generally has five major sections:

- i. **General Contributions**, consisting of selected open submissions that focus on important themes and provide various viewpoints.
- ii. **Special Contributions**, consisting of generally invited single or multiple contributions on important issues, ranging from the narrowly grammatical to the wide-scope socio-linguistic/socio-political. When many contributions are included, the section will in effect constitute a mini-symposium, albeit in the written form, on the issue chosen for a given year. It will serve the function of familiarizing the reader with current thinking on issues seen as salient in the study of South Asian languages.
- iii. **Reports**, consisting of reports from around the world on research on South Asian languages.

iv. **Reviews and Abstracts**, consisting of reviews of important books and monographs and abstracts of doctoral theses.

v. **Dialogue**, consisting of a forum for the discussion of earlier work, preferably previously published in this annual, comments, reports on research activities, and conference announcements.

Other than excellence and non-isolationism, *ARSALL* has no theoretical agenda and no thematic priorities.

The first, general section of this, the fifth, issue of *ARSALL* contains four contributions: Ansaldo's *Metatypy in Sri Lanka Malay*, Bhattacharja's *Benglish Verbs: A Case of Code-mixing in Bengali*, Dasgupta's *Agreement and Non-finite Verbs in Bangla*, and Sharma's *On the Role of Protases in Conditional Statements: Some Evidence from Hindi*. The Special Contributions section is dedicated to the indigenous languages of South Asia. In their contributions to this section, Peterson and Rau carefully examine aspects of Kharia and Gorum.

As India still continues to be a major center for the study of South Asian languages, we thought it was appropriate to have our Regional Reports section publish a report on recent Indian research on South Asian languages in this issue of *ARSALL*.

The Review section of this issue contains reviews of Hasnain and Chaudhary's recent collection on language and the social and cultural matrices in which it is embedded and of Kaul and Aklujkar's compendium on the linguistic traditions of Kashmir.

We regret that this issue of *ARSALL* has no Dialogue section. Hopefully, we will have a substantial one next year.

We are grateful to Prof. Hans Henrich Hock and Mr. Wolfgang Konwitschny for help and support in the preparation of this issue.

*Rajendra Singh and Ghanshyam Sharma*

# General Contributions



# Metatypy in Sri Lanka Malay

*Umberto Ansaldo*

*This paper reviews the notion of metatypy in relation to the genesis of Sri Lanka Malay. Metatypy is a process of typological congruence known to occur in prolonged and intense situations of contact due to wide-spread multilingualism. In this process, contact-induced transfer of predominantly semantic categories leads to the evolution of grammatical patterns that emerge as syntactic compromises between the actual grammars in contact (Ross 2006). In this paper I show that metatypy efficiently explains the evolution of a new language – Sri Lanka Malay – as the outcome of the contact between Sinhala, Lankan Tamil and Trade Malay. The grammar of Sri Lanka Malay shows an extremely high degree of syntactic compromise, due to contact-induced transfer of semantic categories from Sinhala and Lankan Tamil in the everyday usage of Trade Malay. This is first and foremost illustrated in the nominal domain, where Sri Lanka Malay exhibits a typical South Asian case system, though the verbal domain also shows interesting metatypic effects in its Tense and Aspect categories. In explaining a majority of the features of Sri Lanka Malay grammar, metatypy emerges as a more convincing explanation than previous accounts of its genesis (Ansaldo 2009). In addition, it sheds light on the reasons for the evolution of a new language, relying on the principles of second/third language transfer and contact-induced cognitive compromise known to occur in metatypic settings.*

## **1. Introduction**

This paper explores the notion of metatypy in relation to the restructuring that occurs in the case system of Sri Lanka Malay (SLM). The possibility of metatypic effects in SLM grammar was first suggested in Ansaldo (2005) and Bakker (2006) who assume typological convergence in the evolution of SLM. Here I first show that a narrow definition of metatypy as developed in Ross (2006) can indeed be applied to capture *what* happens in the evolution of SLM. I then proceed to spell out the implications this has

for our understanding of *why* this happens in the history of a language. I conclude with some observations on the relationship between metatypic processes and language genesis.

## 2. The narrow definition of Metatypy

Metatypy is a process of typological congruence known to occur in prolonged and intense situations of contact due to widespread bi- or multilingualism. In this process, contact-induced transfer of syntactic and semantic categories leads to the evolution of syntactic patterns that emerge as compromises between the actual grammars in contact. In recent work, Ross (2006, 2007, 2008) narrows down his original definition of metatypy (Ross 1996) to exclude lexical and grammatical calquing. These may be preconditions for metatypy, but not necessarily part of the process. Simply put, metatypy is a change in typological profile that occurs through language contact. In a bilingual – or for that matter multilingual context – speakers may restructure (aspects of) one of the languages in their repertoire using another language of that repertoire as a model. While it is most often the case that the emblematic language in a multilingual context undergoes metatypy under the effect of a dominant language, the opposite can occur, as illustrated by the case of Singlish (Ross 2006: 97, 2007: 131).

Clear examples of metatypic process have been documented in a number of contexts. Ross (2007, 2008) illustrated this process in Takia, an Austronesian language that has undergone metatypy under influence of Papuan languages of Trans-New Guinea type. Other cases of metatypy have been found in in Tariana, an Arawak language restructured on the model of East Tucanoan languages (Aikhenvald 2002); Semitic languages of Ethiopia remodeled on Cushitic grammar (Harris and Campbell 1995); and Arvanitic, the Albanian spoken in Greece, which has shifted towards a Greek type (Sasse 1985). We no longer need to uphold a distinction between metatypy and typical processes involved in language genesis (Ross 2008). Singlish, Mixe Basque (Ross 2007: 124) and Maluku Malay (Bowden 2005) are all examples of recently formed contact languages with clear metatypic processes which show that metatypy is indeed involved in contact language formation. In what follows we will see that we can comfortably add the Malay of Sri Lanka to this list, which has shifted from Austronesian to Lankan type.

Crucial to this paper is an understanding of exactly *why* metatypy should happen. Metatypy has been described as the result of a heavy psychological load that results from intense bilingualism requiring communication in distinct systems (Nadkarni 1975). The work of Sasse (1985, 1990) explains a number of typical outcomes of contact as the result of bilinguals' needs to express the same thought in different languages. I am not subscribing to a general claim that all multilingual situations are inherently unstable and must be resolved through some process of shift, be it convergence, simplification or metatypy. But, as clearly evidenced by the existence of well-documented linguistic areas, speakers of different languages in prolonged and intense situations of contact can affect each other to the point that their linguistic system will become more similar to each other over time. This makes sense in the light of the overwhelming accommodating nature of human communication which results from a wider behavioral coordination characteristic of humans (Trudgill 2010).

### **3. Metatypy in SLM**

The claim that metatypic processes might be at play in the formation of SLM is not new. This was first suggested in Bakker (2006), followed up in Ansaldo (2005, 2008) and Ross (2008). I therefore here briefly review the basis for the claim and focus on explaining the implications of the facts.

The most obvious illustration of metatypy in SLM is to be found in the nominal domain, in particular the case system (see Table 1). The emblematic language, a Malay variety variously referred to as Trade or Vehicular, more correctly a Pidgin-derived Malay variety following the typology of contact Malay varieties put forward in Adelaar (1996, 2005) has, in line with other Austronesian languages of the Malayic subgroup, no morphological marking of case on the Noun. The dominant languages in the multilingual feature pool of SLM, Sinhala and Lankan Tamil, both show typical case systems of the South Asian type. Due to the known congruence between these two languages, there is a certain degree of functional overlap in the two systems (Ansaldo 2009, 2010). What is crucial here is that SLM shows systematic restructuring of its NP to map the case systems of Lankan type, as shown in Table 1 below (synthesized from Ansaldo 2009: 129–131)

*Table 1.* Case in SLM (Sri Lankan Malay), Sinhala and Lankan Tamil.<sup>1</sup> Abbr.: Experiential (Exp), Goal (G), Benefactive (Ben), Possessive (Poss), Tempo-rary possession (Temp. poss), Locative (Loc), Instrumental (Instr).

CASE	FUNCTIONS		
	SLM	SINHALA	TAMIL
DATIVE	Exp, G, Ben, Poss	Exp, G, Ben, Poss	Exp, G, Ben, Poss
NOMINATIVE	Agent	Agent	Agent
ACCUSATIVE	Patient	Patient	Patient
GENITIVE	Possession	Temp.poss, Loc	Temp.poss, Loc
INSTRUMENTAL	Instr. Source	Instr. Source	Source
COMITATIVE	Association	Association	Association

Worth noting for our purposes here are the following points:

- (1) The overwhelming typological restructuring that leads an original Malay variety without morphological case marking (typical for Malayic in general) to develop a case system of the South Asian type, with a dominant, multifunctional and obligatory Dative case and a weak Accusative case mostly used to mark definite objects (Ansaldo 2005, 2008, 2009).
- (2) The complete structural overlap in the first three core cases.
- (3) The particular structural parallel in the SLM and Sinhala Instrumental-Ablative syncretism.
- (4) SLM case markers are reanalyzed PDM prepositions or verbs (Ansaldo 2009: 129).

This overwhelming typological restructuring, I have argued (Ansaldo 2005, 2008, 2009, 2011), can be explained through the typological pressure that Sinhala and Tamil combined exercise over the emblematic original Malay variety, in a typical metatypic scenario. Furthermore, note that there are three noteworthy syntactic-semantic alignments happening here in the emblematic language:

- (a) General VO > OV shift; from Austronesian to Lankan word-order
- (b) Following (a) the grammaticalization of [Prep + N] into [N-Case Marker]
- (c) In parallel with (b) the semantic obligation to express (core) cases.

It is not easy to claim that these changes must occur in the order above. It is highly plausible that (a) is the first step; word-order is extremely susceptible to change in contact situation and in the trilingual pool in which SLM evolves OV is dominant as it is present in both Sinhala and Lankan Tamil. Thus Malayic VO is overruled. It is also quite safe to say that (b) follows (a), since we know that [OV – N-PP] is a robust typological correlation. But this does not necessarily entail that (c) happens only after (b) is completed. In a sense, (c) has to co-occur with (b) if we want to explain how prepositions end up being reanalyzed as case markers. Stage (c) is, crucially, a semantic shift, one in which speakers reorganize cognitively in order to align themselves with a Lankan way of doing things, i.e. by obligatorily expressing a number of thematic roles on the Noun. In that sense, there must be an overlap of (b) and (c) at some point.

It has been pointed out that this is a rather radical restructuring for a number of reasons (Ansaldo 2009):

- (i) What we see is a case of development of morphology, i.e. an increase in morphological complexity not usually associated with contact-induced change (Ansaldo and Nordhoff 2008)
- (ii) The development of case systems is normally a complex gradual process that requires many generations of speakers.

Such radical restructuring leads us to believe that an overwhelming typological pressure must lie behind the changes, which suggests that trilingualism in Malay, Sinhala and Tamil, rather than bilingualism in Malay and one of the dominant languages, is indeed the correct scenario for the evolution of SLM.

Another note-worthy issue is the fact that we do not see the same degree of systematic restructuring in the VP. There are various ways to explain this.

1. Ansaldo (2009) analyzes this situation in terms of type frequency. He notes that there is overwhelming overlap in the two dominant languages in the nominal domain; this creates a ‘gang-up’ effect which results in a nearly complete adherence of the Malay NP to the Lankan type. On the other hand, in the VP, the two dominant languages are more divergent, causing competition in the multilingual pool. This allows for a higher degree of retention of emblematic features.

2. Ross (2006) puts forward a strong hypothesis of metatypy, which implies that, when metatypy happens, it tends to run to completion throughout

the grammar under restructuring. In his view, then, the fact that the SLM VP does not show full metatypic effect is simply a matter of time. Either it is happening, or it has happened but has not been detected yet. In other words, the onus is on us to find metatypy in the verbal domain. Indeed, as shown in Ansaldo (2009: 135), a change that can be seen in the SLM domain is that from a predominantly aspectual system to a mixed Tense-Aspect system, with a past-non-past distinction of the South Asian type.

Be that as it may, what really matters here is the significance of metatypy for the genesis of SLM to which I now turn.

#### 4. Theoretical implications

Let us review the facts:

- SLM is undoubtedly an instance of metatypy, even if the process is not (yet) complete (see also Ross 2008: 153);
- Metatypy is a gradual, ongoing change;
- Metatypy occurs because of bi- or multilingual-induced pressure on the cognitive system.

In relation to the last point, the general idea is that bilinguals lead the way in this restructuring, modelling the grammar of the emblematic language on the more dominant L2 models. As argued in Ansaldo (2005, 2009), in the multilingual context of SLM the socially dominant language is Sinhala, which must be considered a major model for the metatypic change. In addition, the presence of Lankan Tamil in the context further strengthens, at least in the nominal domain, the Lankan type, and it is possibly this combined force that accounts for what appears to be a rather fast pace of restructuring.<sup>2</sup> If it is the case that the strong version of metatypy is correct, we should expect the VP to soon be fully metatypified. If on the other hand issues of frequency play a role, the situation may not change. Other factors enter into this consideration, of course, for example the relative language loss and shift to English observed in a number of Malay communities of Sri Lanka (Ansaldo and Lim 2006; Lim and Ansaldo 2006, 2007).

The study of SLM within a metatypic framework also confirms a number of recent observations on the nature of metatypy. It seems to be safer to say that metatypy is *not* an outcome of contact distinct from shift, pidginization and mixing (Ross 2007: 132), but rather that it cannot be clearly dis-

tinguished from other processes of contact-induced change, and that it must be considered part of them (Ross 2008: 163). More importantly, this paper clearly shows that metatypy is involved in the genesis of new grammar, and can thus in principle not be separated from other processes of contact language formation. At this point it is worth considering what this approach implies for the nature of the bilingual process that underlies grammatical restructuring of this kind.

It seems safe to suggest that metatypy falls, as a contact-induced process of change, under the general, and perhaps often too generic, notion of convergence, in particular radical convergence involving typological shift. The standard view on the evolution of SLM has so far mostly subscribed to an exceptionalist view of restructuring (Ansaldo and Matthews 2007), whereby individuals in multilingual ecologies fail to acquire a linguistic system in its entirety and end up with some kind of approximation. In particular, as discussed in Ansaldo (2009: 141), the tradition of the ‘Tamil bias’ constructs a scenario in which Malay-Tamil bilingual households create the conditions for imperfect transmission leading to the evolution of SLM (see Smith et al. 2004; Slomanson 2006). This tradition appears to fail on two counts: (i) the scanty historical evidence for widespread Malay-Tamil intermarriage, and (ii) the lack of structural evidence to corroborate significant Tamil influence vs. the abundant evidence of Sinhala influence in SLM (Nordhoff 2009). Having already thoroughly illustrated the weakness of the Tamil bias (but see section 5), I here want to focus on the positive lessons to be drawn from a metatypic approach.

In many multilingual communities around the world, where multilingualism is not institutionally supported through schools, education etc., multilingual individuals may experience shifts within their multilingual competence. For example, if one of the codes used becomes limited to the home domain, it typically grows weak, and interference from the more frequently used languages is expected. This essentially is language attrition and also shows the following characteristics (Thomason and Kaufman 1988):

- There is gradual abandonment of ancestral language (AL).
- It is typical for minority groups under (a) colonization and (b) nation-expansion processes.
- It is typical of stigmatized linguistic codes.
- It happens in the transition from monolingualism in AL to multilingualisms in L2/L3.

- L2/L3 take over domains of usage.
- The number of AL speakers gradually decreases and so does competence in AL.
- If AL has vitality, some features survive; if not, death occurs.

In the transition process described here, L2/3 dominant individuals lead the change through intense code-mixing, structural and lexical transfer in which features from the dominant languages interfere with features from the weaker code. As noted in Haugen (1978: 37), the speaker “dismantles and reorders the language he already knows”. One common motivation is the AL speakers’ increasing accommodation to L2/ 3 under strong social and structural pressure through increased multilingual competence (Ansaldo 2006, 2007; Ansaldo and Lim 2006). In rare contexts where AL is vital, a partial maintenance is indeed possible (e.g. Anglo-Romani, Thomason and Kaufman 1988), typically in cases where the change is gradual (Winford 2003).

This is a most plausible scenario for the genesis of SLM, which does not require exceptionalist explanations but relies on well-established sociolinguistic observations. The SLM communities were and are characterized by a solid integration within the larger communities of Sinhala and Tamil speakers, as their high degree of trilingualism to this date shows. At the same time, however, they have a very strong sense of their own SLM identity, as testified by their vital cultural, grass-root organizations as well as the active engagement in their own linguistic practices, seeking to improve the status of their language (Ansaldo and Lim 2006; Lim and Ansaldo 2006, 2007).

As pointed out in Matras (2010: 66), bilingual individuals should be seen as possessing an enriched linguistic system (rather than two or more impoverished ones), which they are capable of appropriately adapting to the context in which they function. In this sense, language contact phenomena can be seen as function-driven choices that speakers make (not necessarily consciously) in goal-oriented communicative interaction. Convergence thus emerges as a process that “offers speakers the opportunity to accommodate and generalize and yet still hold on to a mental demarcation between subsets of word forms within their repertoire.” (Matras 2010: 76).

## 5. Final remarks

Nordhoff (2009: 49) offers a thorough and clear overview of the different theories of genesis put forward in the scholarship on SLM so far. I summarize his observations below:

- (a) Bakker's (1995) rapid convergence hypothesis. The argument here is that SLM would have been created within two generations through a process of rapid convergence. There seems to be no clear historical or sociolinguistic evidence in support of this claim (Nordhoff 2009: 53–54). There is, moreover, some counter-evidence in Ansaldo and Matthews (2007) who argue that case system is known to emerge gradually in language evolution. Whether one agrees with these objections or not, the mechanism involved in this view is one of convergence and thus not incompatible with the metatypic view proposed here. Note however that, as Ross makes it clear, metatypy occurs gradually, not abruptly.
- (b) Smith et al. (2004) Tamil substrate hypothesis. The claim here is that SLM is the product of relexification processes in bilingual Tamil-Malay households. Some putative historical evidence for this is presented in the work of Hussainmiya (1990), but it is disproved in Ansaldo (2008, 2009), based on historical records. Nordhoff (2009: 59–60) shows that a number of features of SLM used in this hypothesis to claim stronger Tamil influence are actually incorrectly analyzed and can be derived from Sinhala, rather than Tamil influence. Finally, it is difficult to reconcile bilingualism as required by relexification with the obvious trilingual ecology in which SLM functions (Ansaldo 2009).
- (c) In my own work (Ansaldo 2005, 2008, 2009, 2011; Aboh and Ansaldo 2007; Ansaldo and Nordhoff 2009) I have argued that SLM evolves in a trilingual ecology and undergoes heavy typological restructuring due to the ganging-up of typologically similar Sinhala and Lankan Tamil. The effects of both languages are evident at the structural level in all domains of grammar; the nature of the ecology is confirmed by socio-historical evidence. For these reasons it seems safe to suggest that metatypy in SLM makes historical and theoretical sense, being supported within typological, sociolinguistic and acquisitional frameworks. Though there is no serious counterevidence, as noted in Nordhoff (2009: 63–64), two aspects of SLM stand out: (i) there is clear Tamil evidence vs. very little Sinhala in the lexicon; (ii) there is clear

Sinhala evidence vs. no Tamil influence in phonology. One possibility here is that the two adstrate languages may have played different roles at different times. According to the Founder Principle, influences that occur in the early days of contact are particularly robust and survive in later stages of evolution (Mufwene 2001). In this view, we could postulate that initially Malay-Tamil contacts may have been more intense, and led to the lexical influence still noticeable today. Clearly though, over time Sinhala became the more dominant language in the trilingual ecology, and ended up dominating in phonology. Be that as it may, metatypy is a framework designed to capture grammatical restructuring due to multilingual competition at the cognitive level, and is not concerned with either lexical or phonological restructuring. These areas thus do not undermine the strong claim of metatypic effects presented here to account for the genesis of SLM.

The hypothesis that Tamil might have played a significant – even dominant – role in the formation of SLM has been criticized in Ansaldo (2008, 2009); the claim that SLM may be the product of bilingual Tamil-Malay interaction has been shown to be historically and grammatically incorrect, and is explained as the result of certain ideological bias I refer to as the ‘Tamil bias’ (Ansaldo 2008). Slomanson (2011: 385 fn.4) appears to take issue with the claim of a Tamil bias in SLM studies, but he falls short on a number of counts. Firstly, while criticizing archival data in support of a Tamil bias, he fails to provide archival evidence in favor of his claim that “Muslim evidence for highly frequent Malay – ‘Mloaish’ (Shonam-speaking) intermarriage is completely clear and unambiguous”. The claim is further weakened by the fact that he does not qualify the nature of obscure varieties such as Shonam or Mloaish which come across as somewhat ad hoc linguistic constructs and are thus impossible to evaluate. Thirdly, he incorrectly attributes claims relating to the role of Shonam to Ansaldo (2008). To the best of my knowledge, this variety had not been ‘uncovered’ at the time and could have not been referred to in any possible way. More important however is the fact that the upholders of the biased Tamil-Malay bilingual genesis scenario have so far not offered any convincing explanation for the abundant presence of Sinhala features in SLM shown in Ansaldo (2008, 2009, 2011) and even more robustly in Nordhoff (2009). A metatypic account of SLM genesis, on the other hand, has no problems with this aspect of SLM grammar. Finally, any claim of bilingual genesis seems to ignore the fact that, contemporary contact linguistics and creolistic

scholarship have welcomed the insight that language genesis is by and large a product of multilingualism, and not mere bilingualism, apart from very few marked cases (see Croft 2000; Mufwene 2011, 2008; Ansaldo 2009; Matras 2010). The bilingual genesis view assumed in the Tamil bias thus remains historically, sociolinguistically, structurally and theoretically unwarranted.

## Notes

1. Based on the variety of SLM spoken in Kirinda, South. For a more detailed account of case in the Upcountry variety of SLM (Kandy) see Nordhoff (2009: 583).
2. Though this could be also due to the size and nature of the community, small and tight-knit (see Trudgill 2001).

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