The Verbal Noun System in Sri Lanka Tamil

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The Sri Lanka Tamil Community

The Sri Lanka Tamil community is differentiated from the other Tamil-speaking communities, namely, the Indian Tamils, the Indian Moors and the Sri Lanka Moors. Occupationally, culturally and even in the use of the Tamil language, the Sri Lanka Moors, Indian Tamils and Indian Moors do not have much in common with the indigenous Tamil community.

The Sri Lanka Tamils, have been, and still are, scattered in distribution all over Sri Lanka. But they predominate in number in their traditional homelands of the northern and eastern provinces and also in the Colombo and Badulla Districts. Their distribution, however, tends to be markedly urban in the Sinhalese predominant provinces. The Sri Lanka Tamil community constitutes about eleven percent of the total population and ranks as the third largest community.[1]

The Verbal Noun as a Grammatical Category

With the exception of participial nouns, all the nominals that can be derived from verbal roots fall under the category of verbal noun. Like other nominal categories, verbal nouns have the potentiality of taking case suffixes and, functioning as subject or object or qualifier (adjective) in connected speech.

Verbal Nouns taking different Suffixes

A particular verbal stem has the potentiality of occurring or not occurring with more than one suffix and semantically in such instances, subtle nuances in meaning are conveyed. Thus the verbal noun *kuuTu* 'nest', *kuuTe* 'basket',

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1. The particulars about the distribution of the Ceylon Tamil community are taken from: Panditharatne, B. L. "The Geographical Distribution, Demographic Characteristics and Mobility Trends of the Ceylon-Tamil Community with special reference to the Urban Areas of Ceylon". *Proceedings of the First International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies.* Kuala Lumpur: I.A.T.R. Vol. 2, pp. 761 - 70.

THE VERBEL NOUN SYSTEM IN SRI LANKA TAMIL

kuuTTu[2], 'mixture of condiments', *kuTTal* 'adding' and *kuuTTam* 'meeting' are all de.ived from the verbal root *kuuTu* 'to meet'. The verbal nouns in the language singnify either (a) an action or (b) agent of an action or (c) instrument of an action or (d) result of an action. e.g. (a) kulhippu 'bathing' (b) tuRappu'key' (c) verulhi 'a comic person' (d) vaaTal 'that which is withered'

Verbal roots like *ira*, *enju*, *uN*, *uukku*, *cuuzh*, *paku*, *kaval*, *nookku* and *vaku* which occur in nominals, iraval 'borrowing', eccam 'bird droppings,' *uNNi* 'tick on animals', *uukkam* 'perseverence', *cuuTci* 'plot', *pakuti* 'section', *kavale* 'worry', *nookkam* 'object' and *vakuppu* 'class' respectively, do not occur in any of the verbal forms of the colloquial language.[3] But in these nominal forms, one could identify - al, -am, -i, -ci, -e and -pu as verbal noun suffixes which occur with other verbal roots that are found in the colloquial language. Therfore *ira*, *enju*, *uN*, etc., may be considered as verbal roots despite the fact that they do not occur in the colloquial language.

Forms can be attested for the occurrence of the following suffixes in verbal nouns: -i, -e, -am, -al, -pu, -pe, -tu, -le, -ke, -ci, -cu, -me, -ne, -mati, -maanam -vi, -ve, and -vu, Of these, -pu and -al are very productive of forms in the language. -pe, -ke, -me, -ne, -cu and -le are not prodctive of forms and are taken by very few verb stems. The suffixes in the examples cited in the following table are *given in Italics* so that they may be easily distinguished.

Verbal Noun Form	Gloss
maRa-t-*i*[4]	'forgetfulness'
kol-*e*	'murder'
niilh-*am*	'length'
pori-y-*al*	'fried item'

2. Owing to technical difficulties in printing phonetic symbols, a phonetic transcription is not attempted here. Intervocalically, orthographic -p , -t- , -T- and -k- are realized in the writer's speech as bilabial fricative, dental fricative, retroflex flap and glottal fricative respectively. All of them are voiced. KuuTTu is not derived from the verbal root *kuuTu* by the addition of any suffix. The intervocalic flapped retroflex articulation is realized as a long tense retroflex plosive articulation in*kuuTTu*'mixture of condiments'.
3. Kanapathipillai (1965, p. 251) and T. Kandiah (1967, p. 256) recognize the verb *uN* as occuring in Ceylon Tamil. But as far as the writer is aware of *uN* does not occur as a verb in the colloquial language. This is actually a feature of Tamil diglossia. What Ferguson (1959, p. 436) says about Indian Tamil applies to CeylonTamil as well. Halliday (1964) defines 'register,' as a variety of language distinguished according to use. The users of the Tamil language select different expressions as appropriate to different types of situation. Some of the verbal roots like *vaku* and *uN* may have the potentiality of occurences in academic discourses.
4. Traditional grammarians recognize only y and v as junctional elements and segement *maRati* as *maRa* (stem) + *ti* (suffix). But -t- is only a junctional element and -i is the vocalic initial verbal noun suffix in the structure *maRati* 'forgetfulness'.

Verbal Noun Form	Gloss
paTi-p-*pu*[5]	'study'
kilukilu-p-*pe*	'rattle,
curulh-*tu* (curuTTu)	'cigar'
civa-*le*	'a person of fair complexion'
paTu-k-*ke*	'bed'
uNar-*ci*	'feeling'
muTi-c-*cu*	'knot'
poRu-*me*	'patience'
peRu-*mati*	'the worth of an article'
var-u-*maanam*	'income'
cooti-*ne*	'examination'
keelh-*vi*	'question'
poor-*ve*	'blanket'
aRi-*vu*	'knowledge'

Table 1

The Place of Suffixes in Structures

In neuter verbal nouns that occur in the nominative case and cannot be pluralised, the nominalizing suffixes are word-final elements,

e.g. peru-*me*, 'pride', eri-cc-*al*, 'jealousy', mali-*vu* 'cheapness'

In neuter verbal nouns that can be pluralised and in animate (+ human) verbal nouns, the nominalizing suffixes occur between verb stem and number or gender suffixes and therefore they are medial in occurrence.

Neuter Verbal Noun :	alha-*vu*-kalh	'measurements'
,, ,, ,,	pori-y-*al*-kalh	'fried items'
,, ,, ,,	kol-*e*-kalh	'murders'
Animate Verbal Noun:	tay-y-*al*-k-kaar-an	'tailor (masculine)'
,, ,, ,,	viTu-p-*pu*-k-kaar-i	'an inquisitive person (feminine)'
,, ,, ,,	etir-*i*-kalh	'opponents'

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5. T. Kandiah (1967, p. 34) pleads ignorance of the details of the derivational process of this verbal noun which is derived from the verbal stem *paTi* + the verbal noun suffix *-pu*. The internal junction between the stem and suffix is characterized by gemination or g-prosody.

Morphological correspondence with verbs

In the following table, a few types of verbal noun are contrasted with their corresponding verbal roots in the past and future tenses so as to bring out their morphological correspondences.

Verbal Form			Verbal Noun Form	
Past	Future	Gloss		Gloss
*paTi*ccatu	*paTi*kkum	'to study'	*paTi*ppu	'study'
*valhai*yccatu	*valhai*yum	'to bend'	*valhai*yal	'bangle'
			*valhai*yam	'ring'
*veer*ttatu	*veer*kkum	'to sweat'	*veer*ve	'sweat'
*poRu*ttatu	*poRu*kkum	'to bear'	*poRu*me	'patience'
			*poR(u)*aame	'jealousy'
*alhi*yccatu	*alhi*yum	'to dispose of'	*alhi*vu	'destruction'

Table 2

The Major and Minor Methods of Derivation

There are several ways of deriving verbal nouns from corresponding verb stems. The different ways in which verbal nouns are derivable can be classified as follows. The more productive ways of deriving them are listed first and the least productive ways are listed subsequently.

(a)   Suffixation of monosyllabic and disyllabic suffixes.

e.g.   etir-*i* 'an opponent', aRu-t-*al*-i 'a widow', nil-*e* 'position', viTu-t-*ale* 'holiday', eettu-*mati* 'export,' tiir-*maanam* 'decision'

(b)   The verb stem itself being nominalized without any suffixation. In these instances, the stem is common both as a verbal stem and as a nominal stem.

e.g.   caa 'death', tuukku 'hanging', kuTi 'addiction to liquor', muRi 'a piece', kulhampu 'a kind of curry', kumpiTu 'salutation'.

(bi)   The intervocalic alveolar trill or alveolar fricative or retroflex flap (which are represented in the reading transcription by the symbols R, c and T respectively) being realized in the nominalization process as a long tense dental plosive or as a long tense affricate or as a long

32

tense retroflex plosive (which are respectively represented in the reading transcription by the symbols tt, cc and TT) respectively.

e.g. maaRu ⟶ maattu 'change', eeRu ⟶ eettu 'loading',
puucu ⟶ puuccu 'applying as powder, paint, etc',
eecu ⟶ eeccu 'scolding', paaTu ⟶ paaTTu 'song',
vaaTu ⟶ vaaTTu 'scolding or hammering a person'

(bii) Disyllabic or trisyllabic verb stems with light syllables changing into heavy syllables.[6]

e.g. cuTu ⟶ cuuTu 'shot', keTu ⟶ keeTu 'ruin',
olhuku ⟶ olhukku 'leakage', iRuku ⟶ iRukku 'tightening',
elhutu ⟶ elhuttu 'registration of marriage',
karutu ⟶ karuttu 'opinion'

(biii) The -NP- of intransitive verb stems being realized as- PP- in the, nominalization process.

e.g. vilhangku ⟶ vilhakku 'lamp'
maTangku ⟶ maTakku 'defeat a person in contest or argument'
virumpu ⟶ viruppu 'desire'
tirumpu ⟶ tiruppu 'turning back'

A few verbal nouns like *aaloocine* 'council', *eccarikke* 'warning', *paavippu* 'usage', *kaNTippu* 'seriousness', *cikkal* 'entangle', *cootine* 'examination', *cooTine* 'decoration', *calippu* 'grief', *ciiviyam* 'living', *canti* 'junction' and *yoocine* 'thought' are derived from marginal stems.[7] But the suffix and junctional elements found in them are truly native.[8] In the marginal class, there may be verbal nouns which have been bodily borrowed from sanskrit (e.g. *vaakaNam* 'vehicle' from the verbal root *vah* 'to bear' and *tuucaNam* 'obscene' from the verbal root *dus* 'to slander'),. But in this paper no atttempt is made to discuss the derivational prosess of such loanwords.

A few negative verbal noun forms occur in the language. They are derivable from verbal stem + negative particle -aa + verbal noun suffix. Forms could be attested only for the occurrence of the suffix -me which as already mentioned is not productive of forms in the language.

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6. For an elucidation of the terms 'light syllable' and 'heavy syllable', see Allen (1953, pp. 85-87) and Jones (1971, pp. 76 - 78).
7. The term 'marginal' is used to indicate words and morphological elements that are of non-Dravidian origin.
8. The term 'native' is used to indicate words and morphological elements that are of Dravidian origin.

e.g.   poR-aa-*me* jealousy', tiiNT-aa-*me* untouchability'

It should be stated here that the major method of derivation of verbal nouns is by suffixation of certain monosyllable and disyllabic suffixes that are productive of forms in the language.   The suffixation of suffixes that are not productive of forms and all other methods described above are minor methods of derivation.

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