Light Verb Stubbornness (*put* and *show* in Sinhala)

The origin and historical development of light verb constructions [VVs] in Indo-Aryan has long been the subject of investigation and debate (e.g., Hook 1991, 1993; Butt & Lahiri 2002, 2013; Butt 2010; Slade 2013, 2016, 2020, 2021).

Notably, Butt & Lahiri argue against a view of VV constructions as grammaticalising towards aspectual auxiliaries. Further, they point to evidence for light verbs as being historical "pertinacious", that is, stable and resistant to certain types of change. This "strong pertinacity hypothesis" has been questioned (Hook & Pardeshi 2005; Slade 2013; Ittzés 2022), and here I try to sort out some areas of consensus and disagreement.

Slade (2013), while, like Butt, rejecting the view of light verbs as an intermediate position on a grammaticalisation cline, argues against the "strong pertinacity hypothesis", largely on four points: (a) difficulties in the evidence for a picture of an unbroken legacy of VV constructions from Vedic to New Indo-Aryan [NIA]; (b) the wide variation in light verb inventories across NIA; (c) significant differences in the morphosyntactic properties of such systems; (d) cases which appear to be counterexamples to the claim that light verbs cannot (sometimes) develop into auxiliaries.

Point (c) can probably be set aside here, as morphosyntactic instability involving VVs could be compatible with the lexical sort of pertinacity suggested by Butt. (a) is not insignificant, but absence is a trickier basis to argue from than presence. (b) complicates the notion of a stable set of light verbs whose VV uses are fairly straight-forwardly derivable synchronically from their full verb meanings, and (d) seems the most contentious issue.

Addressing points of consensus and disagreement, and the empirical bases for both, I focus my discussion here on Sinhala VVs, as these are attested from at least the 8th century and two of these (GO *ya-*, TAKE *gan-*) are still found in modern Sinhala: which seems supporting empirical evidence for at least a "weak" pertinacity hypothesis of light verbs.

However, there is some change: three new light verbs (GIVE *denəvā*, COME *enəvā*, OPEN *arinəvā/ærenəvā*) appear in modern Sinhala. Further, and more crucially, two verbs (PLACE/PUT *la-* and SHOW *pa-*) which appeared in early Sinhala with clearly light verb—not auxiliary—functions now lack any light verb uses in modern Sinhala, and we find in modern Sinhala two auxiliaries (a "new" overt conjunctive participle marker and an imperative marker, respectively) etymologically from the same two full verbs, occuring in the same syntactic positions occupied by their light verb counterparts in Old Sinhala. And the full verbs themselves did not disappear – *lanəvā* continues as the default verb for "put/place" and *pännəvā* for "show" – just their light verb uses.

These data have traditionally (Paranavitana 1956) been analysed as grammaticalisation of these two light verbs into auxiliaries; given the particulars, I argue that they indeed should be, and walk carefully through the pieces involved. At the same time, the other aspects of these data do support an understanding of light verbs as sometimes very tenacious, though not universally pertinacious.

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