

### INTRODUCTION

- **Sinhala:** Indo-European, Sri Lanka; SOV
- **Argument focus constructions in Sinhala:**
  - The verb ends with the suffix -e
  - **A focus constituent is optionally marked by two different strategies or their combinations**
    - **focus particles:** =*yi*, *tamai*, *tamaa*
    - **word order:** postV
  - Each strategy disambiguates which constituent is in focus
- **Combinations of the two marking strategies:**

	preV	postV
<b>Zero-marking</b>	(1)	(3)
<b>Marked by focus particles</b>	(2)	(4)

TABLE 1. Combinations of the two marking strategies

#### (1) Zero-marking & preV word order

mamə **gamə-ʈə** yann-e  
 1SG village-DAT go.NPST-E  
 'It is to the village that I go' (Slade 2011: 49)

#### (2) Focus particles & preV word order

mamə **gamə-ʈə{=yi/tamai/tamaa}** yann-e  
 1SG village-DAT{=FOC/FOC/FOC} go.NPST-E  
 'It is to the village that I go' (Slade 2011: 49)

#### (3) Zero-marking & postV word order

mamə yann-e **gamə-ʈə**  
 1SG go.NPST-E village-DAT  
 'It is to the village that I go' (Slade 2011: 49)

#### (4) Focus particles & postV word order

mamə yann-e **gamə-ʈə{=yi/tamai/tamaa}**  
 1SG go.NPST-E village-DAT{=FOC/FOC/FOC}  
 'It is to the village that I go' (Slade 2011: 49)

- **Knowledge Gap:** The actual usage of this focus marking in Sinhala is almost unknown
- **Question: Which patterns of focus marking are used more often?**
- **Prediction: The marking patterns in (2) and (3) are preferable** because focus interpretation is disambiguated, and marking is not redundant

	preV	postV
<b>Zero-marking</b>	(1) Ambiguous	(3) Preferable?
<b>Marked by focus particles</b>	(2) Preferable?	(4) Redundant

TABLE 2. Prediction about preferable marking of focus

### METHODOLOGY

#### Colloquial Sinhala vs. Literary Sinhala

- Sinhala exhibits diglossia
  - Colloquial Sinhala and Literary Sinhala
- The two varieties differ in their grammar
- In focus construction of Literary Sinhala,
  - focal constituents always appear post-verbally
  - the copula *ya* follows focal constituents (Discussion 2)
- This study investigates Colloquial Sinhala

#### Corpus

- Data are collected from BBC Sinhala.
- They are tagged using TEI XML markup to distinguish the two varieties

#### Corpus search

- **Target clauses:** Colloquial Sinhala clauses where the present verb takes -e and argument focus is marked by zero, =*yi*, *tamai*, or *tamaa*

### RESULTS

- Overall, 303 clauses were collected
- Focal constituents appear in postV positions in 207 clauses (68.3%), while they appear in preV positions in 96 clauses (31.7%)
  - This results confirm Herring & Paolillo's (1995) observation that postV order is preferred

Formal marking	preV	postV	postV ratio
<b>Zero-marking</b>	24	173	87.8%
<b>=yi</b>	15	30	66.7%
<b>tamai</b>	51	4	7.3%
<b>tamaa</b>	6	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	96	207	68.3%

TABLE 3. Focus particles and position of focal constituents  
 Constituents marked by zero or =*yi* tend to appear post-verbally; Constituents marked by *tamai* or *tamaa* tend to appear pre-verbally

- **The position of focal constituents differs depending on the focus particles**
- Most of zero-marked focal constituents appear post-verbally (87.8%)
- Focal constituents with different focus particles tend to appear in different positions
  - On the one hand, focal constituents with *tamai* and *tamaa* tend to appear pre-verbally
  - On the other hand, focal constituents with =*yi* tend to appear post-verbally

### DISCUSSION 1

#### Disambiguation of focal constituents and avoidance of redundant marking

- In most instances, **focus was marked only once:**
  - *tamai* / *tamaa* & preV order = (2), (5)
  - zero marking & **postV order** = (3), (6)
- Thus, the prediction in introduction is confirmed for zero-marking and the particles *tamai*, *tamaa*
  - but not for =*yi* (⇒ Discussion 2)
- Examples from the corpus:
  - In (5), the focus on *sallikaarəyo* is only indicated by the focus particle *tamai* but not by the word order

(5) *sallikaarəyo tamai meewaa kərə-wə-nn-e*  
 rich\_people FOC these do-CAUS-NPST-E  
 'It is the rich who makes them to do these.'

- In (6), the focus on *geem gahanə ekə* is only indicated by the postV word order but not by the particles

(6) *wədiapuramə kərənn-e geem gahanə ekə*  
 most do.NPST-E game play.NPST.NMLZ  
 'It is playing games that most of them do.'

- In these patterns, **focal constituents are disambiguated by being explicitly marked without being redundantly marked**
- These preferred patterns can be seen as **an interplay of the principles of distinctiveness and economy**, which are discussed for argument marking (Kittilä 2005, Kurumada & Jaeger 2015)
- Future topic: Which of the strategies is primary? What are other factors which affect the usage?

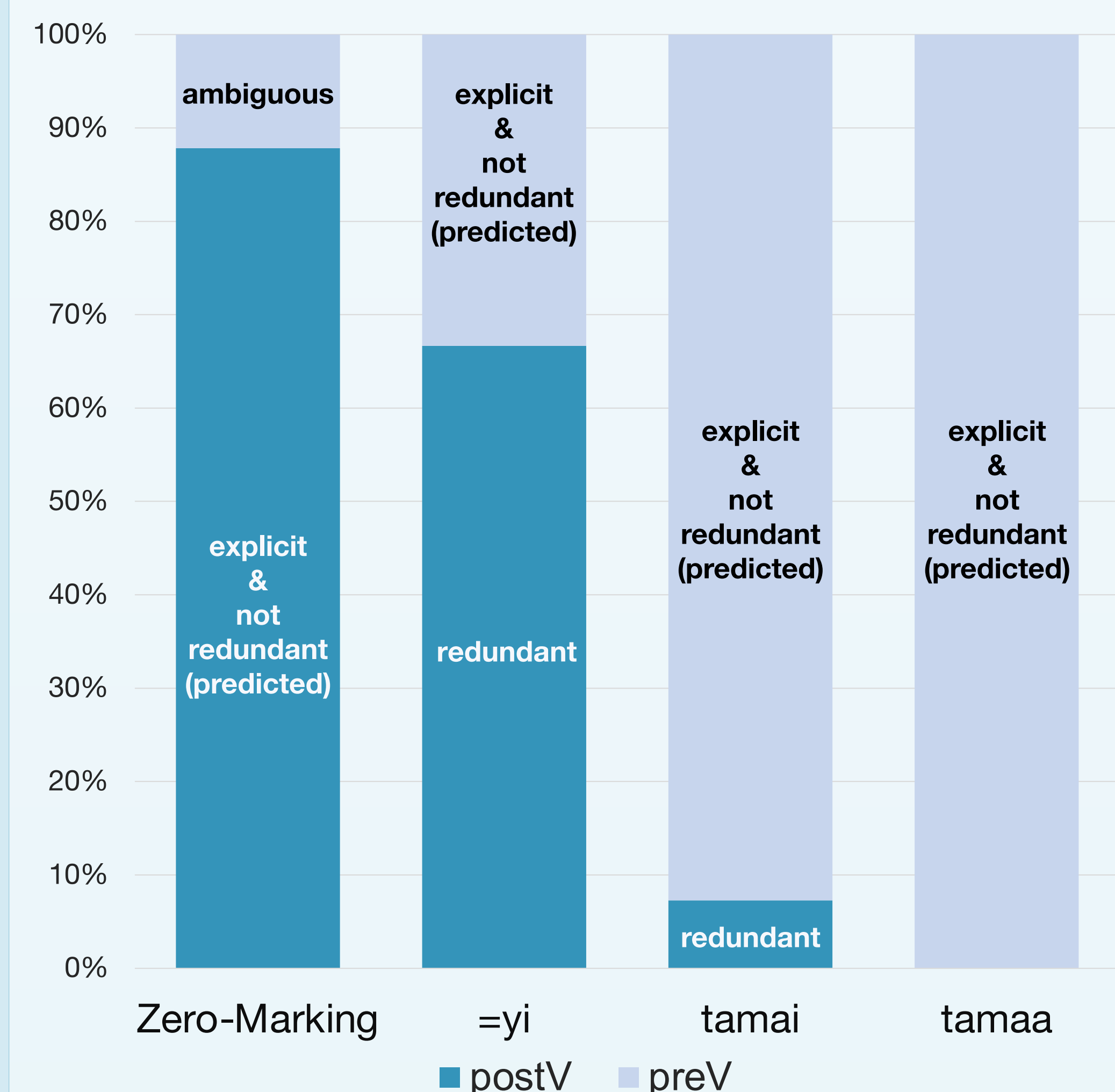


FIGURE 1. Focus particles and position of focal constituents

### DISCUSSION 2

#### Influence from Literary Sinhala

- Marking with =*yi* is often used with postV order
- I suggest that **the distribution of =*yi* is influenced by the copula *ya* in Literary Sinhala**
- In Literary Sinhala, a focal constituent appears post-verbally followed by the copula *ya* as in (7)
- The copula *ya* has evolved into the particle =*yi*
- =*yi* can appear in the same surface position with the copula *ya* as in (7) and (8)
- It is possible that the particle =*yi* is influenced by the copula *ya* in terms of the position

#### (7) Colloquial Sinhala (Slade 2018: 3)

*mamə kiyewwe ee potə(-yi)*  
 1SG.NOM read.PST.E that book(-FOC)  
 'It is that book that I read.'

#### (8) Literary Sinhala (Slade 2018: 3)

*maa kiyevuvee ema pota ya*  
 1SG.ACC read.PST.3SG that book COP.3SG  
 'It is that book that I read'

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Poster