

Morphological Processes of Sri Lankan English in Four Sri Lankan Short stories

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Abstract – One of the main devices used to express different feelings and concepts of the users of a new variety of a language is new vocabulary. Sri Lankan English which is identified as a distinct variety of English has a rich vocabulary which resulted from English coming into contact with other languages in Sri Lanka. Literature of a language has always played a significant role in developing and expanding its vocabulary. The production of short stories in English has rendered people in Sri Lanka to represent their ethnic and cultural diversification through literature, and hence their literary works reflect the uniqueness of Sri Lankan English. Sri Lankan English vocabulary has been enriched by the continuous addition of new words formed through a number of morphological processes. The aim of this study is to examine the contribution of the production of Sri Lankan short stories to expand the Sri Lankan English vocabulary. Furthermore, this study investigates the use of different morphological processes of Sri Lankan English used in four Sri Lankan short stories written by authors belonging to the four main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. The study will reveal morphological processes such as borrowing, compounding, semantic creations, loan translations in addition to other identified morphological processes. The results of the study further reveal that the selected Sri Lankan short story writers of English have employed borrowing as a productive morphological process along with other creative strategies of generating new words in their short stories.

Keywords: Sri Lankan English, Short stories, morphological processes

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INTRODUCTION

Production of English short fiction by Sri Lankan writers dates back to the post-colonial period in Sri Lanka. It is generally known that Sri Lanka provides shelter for people from multiple ethnicities which represent different cultures and religions. In a sociolinguistic perspective, it is fair to assume that they have contributed to the development of Sri Lankan English which is defined as “the language used by Sri Lankans who choose to use English for whatever purpose in Sri Lanka” (Gunasekara 2005, p.11). Sri Lankan English is identified as an international variety. Meyler (2009, p.56) states that “Sri Lankan English has established its own quite independent identity”. Both Sri Lankans and foreign nationalists had been inspired by the social, cultural and linguistic diversity exists within the Sri Lankan community. It encouraged them to produce novel literary works which were rich in the depiction of Sri Lankan socio-cultural identity. In discussing the importance of Sri Lankan English literature, Meyler (2009), claims that despite the fact that Sri Lankan English was often considered to be inappropriate in the context of creative writing, there are a number of English language writers who have started to forge a new literary identity in their work and, who have in the process helped to define the identity of Sri Lankan English itself. Goonetilleke (1995) mentions that, Sri Lankan writers of English had excelled in the production of short fiction before the introduction of Sri Lankan novel in English in the 1980s. Moreover, Fonseka (1994) asserts that Sri Lankan short story writers in English have captured the day to day life of the people in different parts of the island. These short story writers include: Chithra Fernando, Alagu Subramaniam, Carl Muller and Ameena Hussein. They have played a pivotal role in the production of short fiction in English. Furthermore, it is important to note that these writers belong to different ethnic groups and their writings have been influenced by their ethnicity and religious background. It should also be pointed out that linguistic analysis of the very literary work of these writers provides an overview of morphological processes unique to Sri Lankan English. The results of previous research conducted on Sri Lankan English morphology provide evidence in support of a number of morphological processes in Sri Lankan English. Gunasekara (2005, p.143), states that “the most productive morphological processes in Sri Lankan English are borrowing, compounding and affixation”. Fernando (2012), affirming the findings of prior research on Sri Lankan English morphology, has identified borrowing as the most prolific morphological process that adds new words to Sri Lankan English vocabulary in comparison with other morphological processes such as compounding, loan translations, affixation, coinage, acronyms, and abbreviations. Interestingly, the availability of number morphological processes in Sri Lankan English literature encapsulates the fact that literature functions as a device of generating new vocabulary items in a language. The present study attempts to examine morphological processes which constantly form and add new words to Sri Lankan English vocabulary in light of the textual evidence provided by the selected literary works of Sri Lankan authors.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Sri Lankan English evolved as a result of the British colonial rule, Coomaraswamy (1975) refers to the influence the British Colonialism had on its colonies as a "withering touch". Moreover, Fonseka (1998) following his study on Sri Lankan English emphasizes on the English-speaking upper class of Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the majority of the English speaking upper and middle class individuals of Sri Lanka have been influenced by British values and ideologies and they supposedly suffered from a sense of "rootlessness and post-colonial power hunger". Moreover, as brought out by Wickremasinghe (1975,) the majority of the English-speaking community of Sri Lanka represented an "alien cultural unit". Fonseka (1998) brings out the fact that these individuals' ideologies were not in favor of the majority of people, accordingly, their attitudes were greatly evident in their objection towards the Nationalization of private schools in 1960. Consequently, the literature produced by these individuals suffered cultural deficiencies. Furthermore, such literary work would in its turn be intended to a similar audience. As brought out by Fernando (1999), only a considerable number of Sri Lankan writers have captured the genuine sociocultural background of Sri Lanka. Goonetilleke (1994) emphasizing on the Sri Lankan short fiction states that despite the fact that the Sri Lankan novel popularized only in the 1980's, Sri Lankan short fiction have been in existence since the post-independence cultural revival which took place in the 1940's. These writers were capable of capturing the everyday life of Sri Lanka, nevertheless they only attempted in portraying the areas which were familiar to them, as a result, most short stories were woven around the middle class society.

Considering the studies related to the structure of Sri Lankan English, Gunasekara (2005) refers to several distinctive Morphological processors which are believed to have resulted in the creation of the unique Sri Lankan English vocabulary. Accordingly, Borrowing, Compounding, Affixation, Double suffixes, Empty morphs, Abbreviations, Coinages, Acronyms, Tags, Duplications, Back formation, Expressions, Semantic change and Semantic shift are the main morphological processes in Sri Lankan English. Moreover, Fernando (2012) emphasizes on the fact that the new words in Sri Lankan English have been generated through significant morphological processes such as clipping, borrowing, syntactic substitution, hybrid compounds, loan translations, semantic loans and semantic creations.

The present article therefore attempts in identifying the common morphological processors of Sri Lankan English employed in Sri Lankan short fiction with relation to four short stories each representing the four ethnic groups in Sri Lanka.

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METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to explain in detail about the research methodology used in this study. Research type and general goal, population and sample, methods and techniques, processing of information are described.

1. Research type and general goal

- The gathered data is presented both quantitatively and qualitatively.
- The main aim is to gather an understanding of the usage of morphological processes of Sri Lankan English with regard to four short stories and to distinguish the most commonly used Morphological process.

2. Population and sample

Random sampling method was used to select four (4) short stories each one representing the four ethnic groups in Sri Lanka: Sinhala community, Tamil community, Muslim community and the Burger community. Four short stories related to authors of the four ethnic groups were selected with the assumption that it might contain terminology and features unique to their ethnic community. Moreover, since all the Sri Lankan ethnic groups have had an influence on the creation of Sri Lankan English, it is vital to utilize short fiction emerging from all four ethnicities when identifying the most common Morphological processes.

- i. Action and Reaction by Chithra Fernando (1984)
- ii. Professional Mourners by Alagu Subramaniam (1964)
- iii. The old folks at home by Carl Muller (1994)
- iv. Now and Again by Ameena Hussein (2003)

3. Methods and techniques

- How Sri Lankan English has influenced these literary works in the morphological aspect and the recognition of the most commonly used Morphological process is among the aims of this research.
- Qualitative data regarding the process of morphological features are categorized as:
 - a. Hybrid Compounds
 - b. Loan words (Borrowings)
 - c. Loan blends
 - d. Loan Translations
 - e. Semantic Creations
 - f. Semantic Extensions
- Quantitative data regarding the usage of morphological processes are analyzed through charts, illustrating the productivity of the mentioned morphological processes.
- The number of times each Morphological process occurred in the short stories were recorded which was then used to calculate the percentage.

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QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Hybrid Compounds

A blended compound, more often termed as a Hybrid compound is used to refer to the blending of two or more stems from two different languages. When considering the compound “*Janthaka stories*” as brought out in the table, the Sinhala term “*Jathaka*” is used to refer to the concepts of birth or reincarnation. Significantly, the term *Jathaka* is combined with the English term “*stories*” to refer the stories related to the reincarnation of Lord Buddha. Similarly, the compounds “*Chief Dayaka*” and “*onion sambal*” are resulted through the combination of terms from two different languages.

Extract	Short story	Term	Meaning	Language of origin
We heard lots of <i>Jathaka stories</i> .	Action and reaction	<i>Jathaka stories</i>	<i>Stories related to the reincarnation of Lord Buddha</i>	Sinhala + English
<i>Loku naenda</i> was the <i>chief dayaka</i> .	Action and reaction	<i>Chief dayaka</i>	The person who is the main contributor in a certain religious ceremony.	<i>English +Sinhala</i>
Roast chicken, <i>onion sambal</i>	Now and Then	<i>Onion sambal</i>	A side dish made of onions.	English + Sinhala/Tamil

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Loan words (Borrowings)

The use of Loan words or the process of “borrowing” is the process in which a lexical item from one language is borrowed by another language. In such occurrences lexical item from one language is used amidst a sentence of another language.

Extract	Short story	Term	Meaning	Language of origin
Tell me about London, <i>putha</i> .	Action and reaction	putha	A term used to refer to one's son.	Sinhala
It was not a special <i>puja</i> .	Action and reaction	puja	A religious ceremony in which offerings are made to god or priests.	Sinhala, Tamil
' <i>Aiyo</i> ' he said	Action and Reaction	Aiyo	A mode of expressing disappointment.	Sinhala, Tamil
The blaring <i>kade</i> music	Now and Then	Kade	A term used to refer to a shop.	Sinhala
I don't know <i>Machaan</i>	Now and Then	Machaan	A form of addressing a man	Sinhala
Hey boss, <i>mitchum</i> thanks	Now and Then	Mitchum	A term used to express high gratitude.	Tamil
<i>Seeya</i> must be sick.	The old forks at home	Seeya	A term used to refer to one's grandfather	Sinhala

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Loan blends

“Loan blending” is the process in which an inflectional suffix from one language is blended into the stem of another language. As brought out by Haugen (1950) the origination of loan blends take place due to the “slip in part or all of a native morpheme for some part of the foreign word”. (p 90). Furthermore, as brought out in the table, the Sinhala and Tamil term “*asura*” is combined with the English pluralization affix which has resulted in the creation of the compounds “*asuras*”.

Extract	Short story	Terms	Meaning	Language of origin
The gods, the <i>asuras</i> and the <i>gandharvas</i> were spellbound.	Action and Reaction	Asuras Asura + s	The gods	Sinhala/ Tamil + Eng. Pluralization affix
Half the <i>kavuns</i> have been eaten!	Action and Reaction	Kavuns Kavun + s	A traditional sweet native to Sri Lankan oil cakes	Sinhala + Eng. Pluralization affix

Loan Translations

Loan translation is a process in which a new compound is created by translating a native language compound. Moreover, as brought out by Dorleijin (2009), Loan translations can be defined as the words or phrases that are produced as literal translations from one language to another. This phenomenon could take place due to the lack of existence of an equivalent word or phrase in the desired language with which the speaker would directly translate a native language word or phrase to serve the purpose. For example, the phrase “*redda saha hattaya*” refers to traditional attire worn by women in the Sri Lankan context. Nevertheless, a term equivalent to this idea does not exist in English, as a result the original phrase has been directly translated into the English phrase “Cloth and jacket”.

Extract	Short story	Term	Meaning	Language of origin
No Colombo for her, no new cloth and jacket.	Action and Reaction	Cloth and jacket	A dual pieced attire worn by women and girls	Sinhala: <i>Redda saha hattaya</i> .

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Semantic Creations

Semantic creation is the process in which a foreign language compound is created to suit the native language context. Furthermore, Haugen (1950) emphasizes the fact that “semantic creations” occur when a language comes in contact with another language and its culture. For example, the phrase “almsgiving” refers to a Buddhist religious ceremony unique to the Sri Lankan context. Significantly, despite the use of English terminology, the word “almsgiving” does not exist in Standard British or Standard American English which reflects the manner with which new compounds are created when a language comes in contact with the sociocultural aspects of another language.

Extract	Short story	Term	Meaning	Language of origin
This instance of <i>loku naenda's</i> generosity was not an <i>almsgiving</i> .	Action and reaction	Almsgiving	A religious ceremony	English + English
He was furious because the professional mourners had not yet arrived.	Professional mourners	Professional mourners	Individuals who are hired for the purpose of exhibiting grief at funerals	English + English

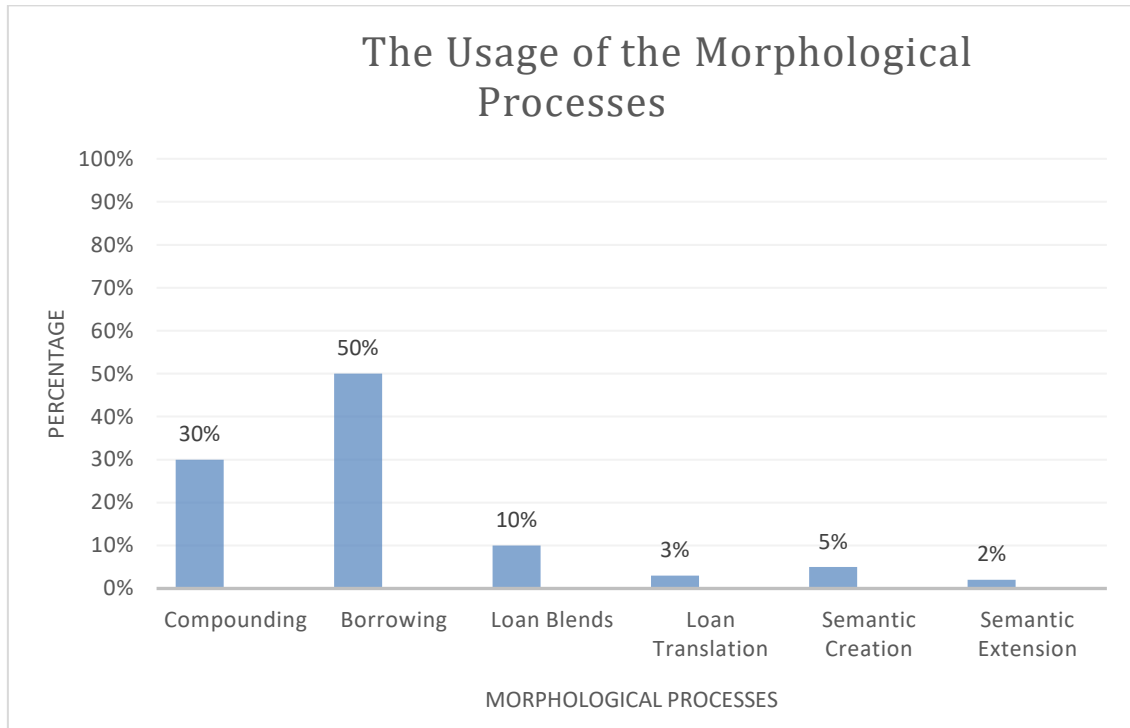
Semantic Extensions

It is a process in which the function of a certain foreign term is expanded to suit the native language context. Furthermore, in such occurrences, a foreign language term which is adopted by another language would prove to have a meaning which is expanded or distinctive from that of its original meaning. For example, in Standard British or American English, the term “lift” is a verb equivalent to the action of picking up a certain object or person. Nevertheless, in Sri Lankan English, the meaning of the term “lift” has been expanded to refer to the device or platform used in buildings to facilitate transportation (the escalator).

Extract	Short story	Term	Meaning	Language of origin.
Then she wouldn't have been in a lift, would she?	Action and reaction	A lift	A device used to facilitate movement within a building: Escalator	English

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QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS



When considering the application of morphological processes in the four selected short stories, Borrowing was found to be the most commonly used morphological process. Furthermore, the number of occasions Borrowing was used was at a comparatively higher rate, which is evident by the fact that 50% of the overall analyzed words being borrowings (loan words) from other languages. Compounding has also been one of the most common strategies of generating new words in Sri Lankan English. Hybrid compounds being the most popular type of compounds identified in Sri Lankan English. The availability of hybrid-compounds in the analyzed texts is proved to be 30%. Moreover, Loan Blends, Semantic Creations, Loan Translations and Semantic Extensions had each achieved 10%, 5%, 3% and 2% rates of usage respectively.

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CONCLUSION

The development and expansion of a vocabulary of a new variety of a language such as Sri Lankan English, has always been shaped by the influence of other languages with which it inevitably come in to contact and hence, short stories used in this study signify the fact that Sri Lankan English vocabulary is no exception. On the other hand, this study which is based on the textual evidence provided by four Sri Lankan short stories, has highlighted the role of literature in forming and adding new words to the Sri Lankan English vocabulary. Moreover, findings of the study reveal that the most commonly used morphological process in the four selected short stories is borrowing and the least used is semantic extension. The modern short story writers, belonging to different ethnic groups of Sri Lanka: Chithra Fernando, Alagu Subramaniam, Carl Muller and Ameena Hussein have emphasized the uniqueness of Sri Lankan English and its vocabulary through their literary work. As evidenced by the selected four short stories, application of morphological processes which continuously create new words in the vocabulary of a language, further highlights the knowledge of a language and the creativity exhibited by the users of a new variety of a language such as Sri Lankan English. It is clearly evident that these writers have employed morphological features unique to Sri Lankan English in their short stories and hence, inspired this study on morphological processes of Sri Lankan English in four Sri Lankan short Stories.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research paper would not have been possible without the guidance and the support from Mrs. Gevani Prahalathan, Department of English language Teaching, University of Kelaniya. We would also like to express our gratitude to the four Sri Lankan Authors mentioned in this study. Lastly, we would like to thank our parents for their massive guidance.