

The Expediency Hypothesis and modes of secondary term formation in ICT terminology in Sinhala: A bilingual corpus analysis

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Abstract: This study investigates the formation typology of borrowings within the genre of information and communication technology (ICT) in Sri Lanka utilizing a corpus of Sinhala secondary terms. The main instrument of analysis is the *Glossary of Computer Terms- Sinhala Dictionary Resources*¹ a bilingual corpus of 5,086 ICT terms in English with their equivalent terminology provided in Sinhala. Data collection utilized random and then selective sampling procedures and shortlisted the final terminology (n=500) which underwent typological identification and term analysis to discern the borrowing procedures. Formulating and applying the Expediency Hypothesis this study theorizes that preference for importation is due to convenience and sociolinguistic laziness. Coinage formation especially loan creations, though cognitively challenging, has painstakingly generated Sinhala terms with unwieldy pronunciation which do not trigger any associated schemata to the ICT concept. Evidence for trends in ICT terms borrowed from English is scaffolded through a brief lexical analysis of the *G.C.E. (O/L) IT Teacher Instructional Manual of Sri Lanka* (Sinhala medium)². The findings reveal that non translated English words in English fonts splatter the contents of the Sinhala medium manual making their frequency of occurrence approximate 34%. Importations followed by loan translations too inflated the Sinhala ICT wordstock of the manual but coinages were rare and loan creations had a zero occurrence. This study concludes that the redundancy of coinages enforced through preference for English importations sociolinguistically tarnishes and threatens the purity of Sinhala: a minority language of the world. This redundancy is not restricted to ICT terminology but can be extended to all spheres saddling Sinhala with a substantial lexical debt owed to English in its day to day linguistic parlance.

Keywords: ICT terminology, borrowing, Sinhala, linguistic purity

I. INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

Etymologically the vocabulary of a language consists of two main assemblages: lexical items native to the language and foreign elements which are loanwords. The omnipresence of loanwords in languages of the world is succinctly worded by Haspelmath and Tadmor (2009, p. 55)^[1] who state that a

language 'entirely devoid of loanwords' is a very rare occurrence. According to Postolea (2012: 103)^[2] concepts 'being basic units of knowledge, are almost never bound to their place of birth. Packed in their original language, they easily travel across borders'. This is very true to ICT terminology and the influx of these ICT terms 'packed in their original language': English, results in a linguistic metamorphosis in the recipient languages. Sinhala, a language which is struggling to preserve its purity against linguistic pressures inherent to globalization and technological development, is witnessing an ascendancy of English borrowings in the ICT word stock. Linguistic purism which safeguards the linguistic rights of minority languages, as defined by Geers (2005)^[3] aims to purify above all the lexical system of a language from loanwords and other harmful language units replacing them mainly out of the native resources of a language.

According to Sager (1997)^[4] the first process where the new concept is named by its creator in his/her native language is primary term formation and when the name given to a concept by its original creator passes from its original language into other languages it is secondary term formation. Within the genre of ICT almost all the newly innovated terms originate in English thus making it the original language of creation. In the Sri Lankan context the process of secondary term formation is a complex procedure which involves the gamut of strategies in loanword formation of which the three main components are: Importation, Partial substitution and Substitution. Many scholars over the ages (Betz, 1959^[5]; Duckworth, 1977^[6]; Haugen, 1950^[7]; Toury 1995^[8]; Weinreich, 1953^[9]; Betz, 1959^[10]; Zenner, 2013^[11]) have theorized on various types of norms identified in the borrowing process. Thus there are a multitude of taxonomies but this study uses the taxonomy put forth by Grzego (2003: 26)^[12] where Betz's (1959)^[13] terminology with revisions of Duckworth's (1977)^[14] are combined together with Haugen's (1950)^[15] terminology of lexical borrowing.

1.1 Modes of borrowing

Words taken over from foreign languages are known as borrowed words or loan words and the term borrowing is used to denote the process of adopting words from one language to another. Lexical borrowing is by far the most common category of borrowing in the field of ICT in Sri Lanka. Literature has theorized that the motivation to borrow lexical items occurs in two modes. Theorizing on modes of borrowing the Dominant Hypotheses was formulated by Higa (1979)^[16] and Kachru (1994)^[17] formulates the Deficit hypothesis. While both

¹ <http://www.sinhaladictionary.org/index.php/list/glossary+of+computer+terms/5.b.xhtml>

² <http://www.nje.sch.lk/ebook/e11tim33.pdf>