

Language contact and language evolution: A case of derivational affixes

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ABSTRACT

Language change takes place due to various reasons. One of them is language contact, i.e. language borrowing. It is a result of intercultural relationships, commercial exchange and social development. With these, new goods, instruments, technology, knowledge and concepts are introduced from one speech community to another, members of which have to borrow necessary words or coin new terms for naming them. This causes gradual change of language concerned.

The present paper discusses how language contact affects the systems of a language with special reference to derivational affixes in Sinhala. They are either borrowed from the donor language where they occur, or are newly formed on the basis of the semantic specification of the derivational affixes of the donor language. As a result, the total number of affixes in the borrowing language will expand and semantic change of the existing affixes may take place within the borrowing language.

This type of study provides a valuable contribution to realize the nature and the current trends in languages. Further, it sheds light on theoretical and historical linguistics and grammatical study of Sinhala in particular.