

## THE MEME CULTURE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SRI LANKAN ENGLISH MORPHOLOGY

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This research study demonstrates the influence of “internet memes” on the morphology of language and language usage among the Sri Lankan youth. With the rapidly growing trend of Internet and social media, popular social media content in both Sinhala and English leads to mixed language usage among speakers of both languages. The research study focuses on how the “meme culture” continuously influences morphology through the widespread social media usage among the youth in the country. The research study was conducted based on memes and social media posts that are currently trending in Sri Lanka, and was not limited to content of Sri Lankan origin. A sample group of 50 students (aged 18 to 24 years) were given a questionnaire which tested their knowledge of popular meme references. Thereafter, speech samples and written content (obtained with the prior permission was of the subjects) were collected over a period of two weeks. The model of morphological analysis adopted in this study is based on Seneratne’s analysis on the morphology of Sinhalese and English code-mixing. This study shows that Sri Lankan youth are aware of popular meme trends and social media content which they refer in everyday conversation among peers. This confirms that these have a significant influence on the speech and vocabulary of Sinhala and English speaking youth. The contribution of the “meme culture” to the development of Sri Lankan English morphology in the current era can also be gauged through this research.

**Key words:** memes, youth, morphology

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