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Acquisition of Prepositions by ESL Learners through Dictation Tasks

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Abstract

The study examines the acquisition of English prepositions by Sinhala speaking learners of English with respect to four fine-grained categories of prepositions found by Littlefield (2006) using first language acquisition of English speaking children. The acquisition order of these four categories found by Littlefield: adverbial prepositions [+Lexical, -Functional], particles [-Lexical, -Functional], semi-lexical prepositions [+Lexical, +Functional], and functional prepositions [-Lexical, +Functional], showed an advantage of [-Functional] features over the [+ Functional] features. One of the aims of the study was to find out whether this ranking was good for learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) in tasks that tap comprehension knowledge (dictation task). The second aim was to see whether at initial stages of learning, there was an advantage of either [+Lexical] features or [-Functional] features, which disappeared at later stages of learning. 316 Sinhala speaking learners of English studying in Grades 4, 6, 8 and 10 answered a dictation task with 40 sentences, 10 each with adverbial prepositions, semi-lexical prepositions, particles and functional prepositions. Sentence length and structure was controlled and sentences differed only in the category of preposition used in them. The main findings of this task were as follows: (1) ESL learners imitated the four categories of prepositions differently in the dictation task. (2) [+Lexical] prepositions were better imitated than [-Lexical] prepositions initially, and this ‘lexical’ advantage disappeared in Grade 10 with all categories being used with comparable accuracy. These findings are recommended to be used in the ESL classroom to facilitate teaching prepositions.
Keywords: Acquisition, [± Lexical, ± Functional] prepositions, English as a Second Language (ESL), Dictation tasks

Introduction
The study examines the acquisition of English prepositions by Sinhala-speaking learners of English as a second language, with special reference to the lexical-functional divide proposed by Littlefield (2006) for prepositions. This paper initially addresses on the theoretical and empirical literature review on the categorization of prepositions using [±Lexical, ±Functional] categories and the complexities around this categorization. It presents a detailed description on Littlefield’s (2006) study.

Secondly, it discusses on the difficulties in acquiring prepositions in English as a second language, and also on how to measure the order of acquisition of prepositions of ESL learners. Next, it addresses on the methodology of the research in order to meet the objectives mentioned in the abstract, followed by its findings. Finally it concludes with a discussion on the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the research findings.

Theoretical and Empirical Literature Review
The categorization of preposition has posed problems with respect to classifying it along the functional vs. lexical dimension (van Riemsdijk 1990, 1998; den Dikken 2003; Botwinik-Rotem 2004; Svenonius 2004). Littlefield (2006) utilized van Riemsdijk’s (1990, 1998) notion ‘semi-lexical’, which she decomposed to [±Lexical, ±Functional], arguing that the combination of these two properties determined the order of acquisition of a number of prepositional elements in English. She considered as [+Lexical] those that contribute semantic content, and as [+Functional] those that are able to check the Case of their complements. These fundamental distinctions resulted in the four categories of prepositional elements in (1), the acquisition of which proceeds from the most lexical to the least lexical, as she claimed.

(1) a. Adverbial prepositions: She sat down.
   [+Lexical, -Functional]
b. Particles: 
*He ate it up.*  
[-Lexical, -Functional]

c. Semi-lexical prepositions: 
*The man runs to the store.*  
[+Lexical, +Functional]

d. Functional prepositions: 
*I am proud of my son.*  
[-Lexical, +Functional]

**Littlefield’s (2006) Categorization of Prepositions**

The debate on how to categorize linguistic items in terms of their features has mostly focused on whether items are lexical or functional. That is, the debate has mostly concerned the features of lexical and functional as binary opposites, if an item is [+Lexical], then it must be [-Functional] as well and vice-versa. Grimshaw (1991) and van Reimsdijk (1990, 1998) proposed the feature [+F] or [-F], which divided the major lexical categories into functional [+F] and lexical [-F] elements. However, Littlefield (2006) parsed out the functional features from the lexical features, suggesting that these features are not in binary opposition. Therefore, if an item is [+Lexical] it can be either [-Functional] or [+Functional], and the same is true for [-Lexical] items. According to Littlefield (2006), a linguistic item is [+Functional] if it provides connectivity between items in a phrase or a sentence. For example, the role of inflection (INFL) in a sentence is to link the subject with the predicate. Without this [+Functional] item, a sentence like, *The girl walk slowly*, would be difficult to interpret since it lacks the [+Functional] item’s’ (INFL) which denotes the singular present tense of the root verb *walk*. A linguistic item is treated as [+Lexical] if it contributes descriptive, or notional content. Essentially, the functional feature concerns the syntactic contribution and the lexical feature concerns the semantic contribution.

Crucially for this study, we can determine whether a preposition is [+Lexical] and [+Functional]. A preposition is determined to be functional if the preposition links elements in a phrase together. Those elements that can assign Case or Agreement are designated [+Functional], those that cannot are designated [-Functional]. Prepositions are determined to be [+Lexical] if they contribute a descriptive, substantive meaning and can act as arguments or adjuncts. Prepositions are [-
Lexical] if they don’t contribute substantive meaning and cannot act as arguments or adjuncts. A diagrammatic representation of Littlefield’s categorization is presented below (as represented in Thomann 2013:2):

Table 1: Littlefield’s categorization of prepositions (Thoman 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+Functional</th>
<th>–Functional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+Case assignment (IP)</td>
<td>–Case assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific complement type</td>
<td>No specific complement type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Semantic content</td>
<td>Semi-lexical Preposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Theta-role assignment</td>
<td>(in, on, under, with)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(morphophonetically heavy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open class category</td>
<td>Adverbial Preposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(throw up the ball)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–Semantic content</td>
<td>Functional Preposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–Theta-role assignment</td>
<td>(of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(morphophonetically light)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed class category</td>
<td>Particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(throw up ‘vomit’)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[± Functional]

As mentioned above, a preposition is [+Functional] if it is able to link elements in a phrase together, usually through Case assignment and a [-Functional] item cannot link elements together. Interestingly, [+Functional] items and [-Functional] items differ in what types of movement they allow. Littlefield (2009:50) provides examples of how [+Functional] items pattern differently than [-Functional] items. In the sentences, *They trudged up the rocky slope* (up being a semi-lexical), and *They let out the brown dog* (out being an adverb), [+Functional] items (i.e. *up*) are allowed to engage in pied-piping (2a) and fronting (3a), while [-Functional] items (i.e. *out*) are not allowed as in (2b) and (3b) below.

(2) a [Up which slope] did they trudge? {semi-lexical [+L, +F]}
    b *[Out which dog] did they let? {adverb [ +L, -F]}

(3) a [Up the slope], they trudged. {semi-lexical [+L, +F]}
    b *[Out the beagle], they let. {adverb [ +L, -F]}
However, [-Functional] items allow object shift (4a) while [+Functional] items do not allow object shift (4b).

(4) a They looked (up) the number (up). \{particle [-L, -F]\} 
   b Mary is proud (of) her bird (*of). \{functional [-L, +F]\}

[-Functional] prepositional items follow the pronominal object (5a) whereas [+Functional] prepositional items must precede their pronominal objects (5b).

(5) a He looked (*up) it (up). \{particle [-L, -F]\} 
   b Mary is proud (of) her (*of). \{functional [-L, +F]\}

Table 2 excerpted from Littlefield (2009: 69), summarizes the different patterns of [+Functional] and [-Functional] elements.

### Table 2: Structural features of [-Functional] and [+Functional] items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>[-Functional]</th>
<th>[+Functional]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adverbs,</td>
<td>Semi-lexical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Particles</td>
<td>Preps,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pied-piping</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fronting</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object Shift</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronominal object precedes Prep Element</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True adverb between verb and Prep element</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gapping (DP follows P)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Littlefield (2009:69)

### [± Lexical]

As with [± Functional] items, [+Lexical] items pattern differently than [-Lexical] items in terms of what types of movement are allowed. For example, [+Lexical] items allow for easy substitution of elements (6a) and [-Lexical] items do not (6b).

Note: the particle in (6b) is marked as ungrammatical because there is no shared element that contributes a consistent meaning as with the adverb which has the shared spatial meaning of *up*.

(6) a The girls will sit/stand/drive/jump up. \{adverbial [+L, -F]\} 
   b *The girls will crack/throw/blow up. \{particle [-L, -F]\}
Additionally, [+Lexical] items allow for imperative structure (7a, 7b) and [-Lexical] items do not (7c, 7d).

(7)  a Out! {adverb [+L,-F]}
    b To the park! {semi-lexical [+L, -F]}
    c *Up! (meaning: Throw up!) {particle [-L, -F]}
    d *Of Daisy! (meaning: Be proud of Daisy!) {functional [-L, +F]}

Table 3 below, excerpted from Littlefield (2009:69), outlines the different patterns that are allowed for [+Lexical] versus [-Lexical] items.

Table 3: Structural features of [-Lexical] and [+Lexical] elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>[-Lexical]</th>
<th>[+Lexical]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prep element occurs with unique, unpredictable head</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy substitution</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative stress</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrastive stress</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gapping (DP precedes P)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be an argument</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be an adjunct</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified by degree adverbs</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified by straight</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fine-grained Categorization of Prepositions

The four categories of prepositions are different from each other in that they act syntactically different as seen above, but their semantic and phonological overlap indicate that they nevertheless belong to the same domain. Let us take a quick look at the four categories now.

Adverbs

Adverbs are a pure lexical category and are categorized as [+ Lexical, -Functional] features. They contribute semantic content but cannot link elements in a sentence nor do they have Case assignment properties.
**Semi-lexical prepositions**

Littlefield assigns features for semi-lexical prepositions as [+Lexical] because they have descriptive content and are [+Functional] because they assign theta roles and establish spatial relationships, and they can link elements in a phrase through Case assignment (Littlefield 2009:42). It seems that the semi-lexicals are the largest category of the prepositional domain.

The theta roles assigned by semi-lexicals are the locative, goal, source, path, and instrument.

(8)  
  a. The eggs are in the basket. (Locative)  
  b. We went to Colombo. (Goal)  
  c. I flew from Sri Lanka. (Source)  
  d. We walked along the river bank. (Path)  
  e. I cut the cake with a knife. (Instrument)

**Particles**

Particles are an idiosyncratic category which are assigned [-Lexical, -Functional] categories. They do not contribute substantive, descriptive meaning, nor have the ability to assign Case. Generally, particles are thought to either trigger an aspectual or idiomatic meaning in conjunction with certain verbs (Fraser 1965, 1976; Bolinger, 1971). Bolinger also claims that where particle up occurs with the verb be, as in *His term is up* and *Time is up;* up can be paraphrased with the verb finished (completive aspect). In addition, Bolinger says that these aspectual features do not match with the particular particle all the time, for example,

(9)  
  a. turn out, grind out, spin out (iterative or repeated sense)  
  b. write out, work out (perfective sense or completive sense)

In some verb-particle constructions (phrasal verbs), the aspectual meaning contributed to the phrase by the particle is not important, and the descriptive meaning remains the same, without it.

(10)  
  a. She ate up the sandwich.  
  b. She ate the sandwich.
It can be noticed that either particle *up* is added or not, the descriptive meaning of (10a) and (10b) is the same.

On the other hand, there are some phrasal verbs (idiosyncratic) where neither the meaning of the verb nor the meaning of the particle contributes to the meaning of the verb-particle construction, for example, *put off*.

**Functional Prepositions**

Functional prepositions are assigned [-Lexical, +Functional] features since they lack substantive semantic content and have the ability to assign Case. Example (11a) illustrates nominal and (11b) adjectival structures where the functional preposition *of* is needed only for Case assignment, but it does not assign any theta role. Functional prepositions can also be inserted into verb phrases where functional preposition assigns Case to the NP argument but not a theta role (11c).

(11)  
\begin{enumerate}  
\item a. The destruction *(of) the city.  
\item b. Mary is proud *(of) her dog.  
\item c. The meal consisted *(of) vegetarian dishes.  
\end{enumerate}

These examples would be ungrammatical if the preposition *of* was omitted because it is required to assign Case to the following noun phrase.

**Second Language Acquisition**

The term ‘second language acquisition’ refers to the acquisition of a new language by children and adults who already have full knowledge of their first language. It is thus distinct from childhood bilingualism, or simultaneous language acquisition, which refers to the child language acquisition of two languages simultaneously, with exposure to both languages beginning in infancy or soon after (Genesee 2000; Meisel 2001, 2004). Child second language acquisition, also known as sequential bilingualism, refers to the acquisition of a second language after age three or four, when much of the first language is already in place (McLaughlin 1978; Lakshmanan 1994; Gass & Selinker 2001). In this context,
learners in the present study were all second language learners, since they were at least 8 years old, and already knew Sinhala as first language.

**Second Language Acquisition of English Prepositions**

The English preposition is often defined as a word that describes the location or direction of one object in relation to another. However, prepositions are often vague and confusing and it is extremely hard for second language learners to learn the nuances of all the English prepositions, how to understand them, and how to use them. In English, prepositions are words, while in Sinhala they are represented as spatial postpositions (12a) or are suffixes (locative, ablative case) (12b) (Tilakaratne 1992).

(12) (a) gala udə sitinə monəra:
gal-a udə sitinə monar-a:
rock-the on staying peacock-the
‘the peacock on the rock’

(12) (b) dænwim puwəruwɛhi
dænwim puwəruw-ə-ɛhi
bulletin board-the-on
‘on the bulletin board’

However, these formal differences are not known to affect second language acquisition (Sudharshana 2013), and second language children are quick to figure out these differences and use language specific forms, with no transfer from L1 to L2.

Moreover, the use of prepositions in context varies greatly from one language to another. The same prepositions can carry vastly different meanings in various languages. For instance, a native speaker of Spanish would have difficulties translating the preposition *por* from Spanish into English, since it can be “expressed in English by the prepositions *for, through, by, and during*” (Lam 2009: 2).
Lam (2009) also points out that prepositions can be difficult to recognize in English speech because they typically contain very few syllables. As a result, language learners may not be able to recognize prepositions in rapid, naturally occurring speech, and often miss them unless they are necessary for the meaning of the sentence. This would mean that functional uses of preposition are less likely to be recognized.

Learning prepositions becomes more difficult because prepositions are generally polysemous, i.e. it is the characteristic of prepositions that they have multiple meanings. Learners often become frustrated when trying to determine prepositional meanings and when trying to use them appropriately (Koffi 2010:299). Tyler & Evans (2003) listed out the polysemous use of *over,* and showed how all meanings can be derived from a proto-scene.

(13)  a. The horse jumped over the fence (on – the- other -side of).
    b. She will stay over the weekend in Kandy (temporal).
    c. Mary looked over the question paper carefully (examined).

As there is a polysemy in English prepositions, the second language learners get confused in producing and comprehending them.

Another difficulty comes from prepositions that conflate complex meanings into a single morpheme. Stringer (2005) has shown that traversal paths (e.g. *across,* *through*) present a particular lexicalization difficulty in the early stages of acquisition. In Stringer’s study, children, who were first language learners of English, Japanese and French were found avoiding this difficulty by splitting such complex paths into sub events, as in (13), where *through* needed to be used.

(14)  He goes in it…he comes out (split into two sub events).

Three studies (Dagut & Laufer 1985; Hulstijn & Marchena 1989; Laufer & Eliasson 1993) examined learners’ avoidance of phrasal verbs in favour of their single-word synonyms. All three studies found that ESL students whose L1s do not contain phrasal verbs (for example, Hebrew language) tend to prefer single-word English verb equivalents to phrasal verbs, whereas students whose L1s have phrasal verbs, tend to use English phrasal verbs. A study by Sjoholm (1995)
indicates that results in learning English phrasal verbs are related in part to their presence or absence in the learner’s native language.

**Accuracy Order of Prepositions in Dictation tasks**

Accuracy order of the usage of prepositions in dictation tasks measures the order of acquisition of prepositions. According to Bley-Vroman & Chaudron (1994), the produced sentence at the dictation reflects on the formulation of the sentence on the basis of the held representation. This representation reflects on what the learner heard and the way the input is processed.

*Figure 1: Dictation as imitation (Bley Vroman 1994)*

It is clear to understand that to form a representation of the input in the dictation task that the listener hears and processes, the learner should use his/her acquired knowledge on prepositions. Therefore, it confirms the fact that by analyzing the production of the dictation task on prepositions, we can gauge the acquisition of prepositions of learners at a given stage.

With the above in mind, we set off to study the acquisition of English prepositions by second language learners. We focus on the accuracy of comprehension of the four categories of prepositions in second language learners of varying English proficiency through a dictation task.

When a certain category of prepositions show the highest accuracy, that category should have been the easiest for these learners to acquire. If these learners imitate the four categories with different accuracy according to a certain order in the
dictation task, that means they have acquired these four categories of prepositions according to that particular order.

**Methodology**

In this study, we tested the acquisition pattern of four categories of prepositions: adverbial prepositions, semi-lexical prepositions, particles and functional prepositions of the Sinhala speaking ESL learners in a dictation task. The main aim was to test and validate Littlefield’s (2006) fine-grained categorization through a dictation task. In order to validate this categorization, we examined these ESL learners’ performance in this selected task, to find out whether there are any significant differences among the accuracy of the usage of the four different categories of prepositions shown by these learners in the selected task. Therefore, it was hypothesized that:

(i) The learners would imitate the sentences with different prepositional categories differently (referred to *Hypothesis 1*).

Given the fact that lexical categories are known to be easier than functional categories, we hypothesized that:

(ii) Sentences with [+Lexical] prepositions would be imitated better than the sentences with [-Lexical] prepositions (*Hypothesis 2*).

(iii) By Grade 10, all prepositional categories will be imitated equally well. (*Hypothesis 3*)

As there are clear cut difficulties for the second language learners in the acquisition of English prepositions, we hypothesized that:

(iv) There would be differences in second language acquisition data compared with first language data reported in Littlefield (2009). (*Hypothesis 4*)

**Subjects**

A pool of 316 Sinhala speaking students (Male = 156 and Female =160) from Sirimavo Bandaranaike Vidyalaya, a girls’ school and from Ananda College, a boys’ school in Colombo, Sri Lanka, participated in the study. A total number of 260 scripts were collected from four grades: 65 each from Grade 4 (age: Mean=8.07, SD=0.26), Grade 6 (age: Mean=10.10, SD=0.31), Grade 8
(age: Mean- 12.09, SD-0.29), and Grade 10 (age: Mean- 14.10, SD -0.31) were randomly selected for the test. The participating grades in two schools were Sinhala medium, where all subjects except English and Tamil were taught in Sinhala. In Sri Lanka, both Sinhala and Tamil are official languages, but all the main activities such as administration, education (up to secondary level), trade, aviation, shipping, and business are mostly conducted in Sinhala language. English language is also used in these activities considerably, being the second Language.

Data Collection Tools

Dictation task: The dictation task had 40 sentences with 10 sentences each for adverbial prepositions, semi-lexical prepositions, particles and functional prepositions. Sample sentences are given below:

- The girl climbed up. (adverbial preposition)
- The boy swam across the river. (semi-lexical preposition)
- The boy got over his sickness. (particle)
- The boy was good at cricket. (functional preposition)

In constructing the sentences, the length of the sentence (6 words per sentence, except in sentences with adverbial prepositions had four words), the syntactic construction, and the tense of the verb were controlled. All the sentences were in active voice and in simple past. Each construction denoted only one event and had only one main verb. Words used in the task were frequently occurring ones, as per our intuitions. The sentences were recorded on CDs in the Sound Studio, Department of Mass Communication, The English and Foreign Languages University. A 35-second pause was provided after each sentence to enable learners to write the sentences down.

Administration

The dictation task was administered in groups of 10-15 in the multimedia room of the school. Precautions were taken to ensure that learners were not able to copy from each other. The laptop containing the CD with recorded sentences was connected to an amplifier (Model No- Microlab M 280 Sub woofer-65) for more
volume and clarity. Clear oral instructions were given to the students on how to answer the test, and they were also asked to listen to the same instructions on tape. The instructions were repeated on the tape to make the students familiar with the recorded voice. Each learner was provided a sheet with 40 numbered spaces to write the sentence in. As in the pilot study, after 20 sentences, a five-minute break was provided, and then the rest of the sentences were played. After the 40th sentence, the answer scripts were collected.

Findings

Key findings of this research are:

(i) Sinhala speaking ESL learners respect the Littlefield (2006) fine-grained categorization of prepositions.

(ii) In the dictation task, initially adverbial prepositions and semi-lexical prepositions [+Lexical featured prepositions] were better imitated than the particles and functional prepositions [- Lexical featured prepositions].

(iii) This ‘lexical’ advantage gradually disappeared in Grade 10, and all the four categories of prepositions were equally acquired.

Under this section, scoring and analysis of this study, the findings of the category–wise performance in each grade and the main findings of the significant differences between the accuracy of the usage of each category of prepositions of these ESL students across the four grades will be presented.

Scoring and analysis

21 out of 316 learners were dropped from the dictation task, since they had left the task incomplete, or had illegible handwriting or had serious problems with spelling making comprehension impossible. For each correct written sentence, a score of ‘2’ was awarded if the preposition used was correct and so were other parts of the sentence. If there were errors of grammar and spelling in the rest of the sentence, but the preposition was correct, a score of ‘1’ was awarded. For a sentence with nil or incorrect preposition, or misspelt preposition, a score of ‘0’ was awarded.
The scores for the four categories of prepositions were analyzed for mean, and standard deviation was calculated. Statistical analysis was done on SPSS 12 to find out if there were any significant variances between the four categories of prepositions in each grade interaction.

To determine the ordering, one would need to look at the two features [+Lexical] and [-Functional] and see whether [+Lexical] or [-Functional] is ranked higher and dictates the order of acquisition. We leave the order of acquisition of these two categories to emerge from our data. However, two developmental orders are possible.

(i) If [+Lexical] features are ranked higher, then semi-lexical prepositions [+Lexical] will be acquired before particles [-Lexical].

(ii) If [-Functional] features are ranked higher, then particles [-Functional] will be acquired before semi-lexical prepositions with [+Functional].

Category-wise performance
The category-wise performance of the groups is presented in Table 4 with the mean and standard deviation, F and p value, for each category of preposition. The maximum score for each category was 20.

Table 4: Performance on prepositional categories in dictation task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>Grade 10</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>9.86</td>
<td>12.95</td>
<td>16.38</td>
<td>81.57**</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.88)</td>
<td>(4.32)</td>
<td>(6.65)</td>
<td>(3.74)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-lexical</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>7.98</td>
<td>10.66</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>103.07**</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.31)</td>
<td>(4.16)</td>
<td>(4.31)</td>
<td>(4.01)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particles</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>10.77</td>
<td>14.45</td>
<td>106.28**</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.02)</td>
<td>(3.94)</td>
<td>(4.65)</td>
<td>(3.60)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functionals</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>9.85</td>
<td>14.49</td>
<td>101.31**</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.24)</td>
<td>(4.02)</td>
<td>(4.73)</td>
<td>(3.80)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard deviation given in parenthesis and italicized
Table 4 shows that the accuracy in imitating sentences with each of the four categories of prepositions increased from Grade 4 to Grade 10: in adverbial prepositions from a mean of 5.42 to 16.38 [F(3, 256) = 81.57, p < .0001]; in semi-lexical prepositions from 3.35 to 15.29 [F(3, 256) = 103.07, p < .0001]; in particles from 2.95 to 14.45 [F(3, 256) = 106.28, p < .0001]; and in functional prepositions from 2.89 to 14.49 [F(3, 256) = 101.31, p < .0001]. This meant that on each prepositional category, older learners were better than the younger learners.

Learners of Grades 4, 6 and 8 had imitated sentences with the four categories differently F > 4.2 at p < .0001. However, by Grade 10, there was no difference in the imitation of sentences with the four categories [F(3, 256) = 1.75, p < 0.157]. This supports our hypothesis that learners treat the four categories differently, and this difference disappears with increase in grade.

To look at the differences within category and between grades, a post hoc Tukey HSD was computed. In Grade 4 performance on adverbs was significantly better than particles [t(15) = 2.462, p < .04] and functional prepositions [t(15) = 2.52, p < .027] but not significantly better than semi-lexical prepositions. Performance on particles and functional preposition was similar and showed no significant difference.

In Grade 6, a similar trend was found, with adverbs being better imitated than particles [t(15) = 2.708, p < .010] and functional prepositions [t(15) = 3.615, p < .00], but not better than semi-lexical prepositions. No significant difference was seen between semi-lexical preposition and particles and functional prepositions, and also performance on particles and functional preposition did not show a significant difference. In Grade 8, performance on adverbs was significantly better than functional prepositions but not better than particles, the rest of the differences were similar to Grade 4 and Grade 6. In Grade 10, the performance on each preposition was similar since no significant differences were found between any of the categories.
65 learners each from the four grades (Grades 4, 6, 8, and 10) had to write sentences (with one of the four preposition types) that they had heard orally. It was hypothesized that learners would imitate sentences with different prepositional categories differently (Hypothesis 1).

Given the numerous findings in first language acquisition research that lexical elements are learnt before functional elements, it was hypothesized that [+Lexical] prepositions (i.e. adverbs and semi-lexical prepositions) would show an initial advantage (in Grade 4 and Grade 6) over [-Lexical] prepositions (i.e. particles and functional prepositions). This would translate in the task as follows: Sentences with [+Lexical] prepositions would be imitated better than sentences with [-Lexical] prepositions (Hypothesis 2). The initial advantage would disappear with increasing age and proficiency, i.e. all categories would be imitated equally well by Grade 10 (Hypothesis 3).

As expected, the ability to hear and imitate sentences with different categories of prepositions showed a steady and consistent increase from Grade 4 to Grade 10. Second language learners showed differences in their imitation of sentences with different prepositions. Recall that the sentence length, number of syllables, familiarity of words, syntactic structure, complexity of ideas presented were strictly controlled, the sentences differed only in the nature of prepositions used in them. Grade 4 and Grade 6 showed that there was significant difference in the way sentences with different prepositions were imitated [in Grade 4: between adverbs and particles \(t(15) = 2.462, p < .04\), between adverbs and functional prepositions \(t(15) = 2.52, p < .027\)] in Grade 6 between adverbs and particles [\(t(15) = 2.708, p < .01\] and between adverbs and functional prepositions [\(t (15) = 3.62, p < .00\)]. However, the difference was not significant in Grade 10. Therefore, this fact fully confirmed Hypothesis 1.

Looking at the differences in sentence imitation, we found that adverbs and semi-lexical prepositions were imitated more accurately than particles and functional prepositions, thus supporting an initial advantage for [+Lexical] features over [-Lexical] i.e. in Grade 4, and in Grade 6. However, adverbs showed a higher imitation accuracy than particles and functional prepositions but not semi-lexical
prepositions. Semi-lexical prepositions were better imitated than particles and functional prepositions in initial grades but the difference was not significant. This supports Hypothesis 2, where we posited that in the dictation task prepositions with [+Lexical] features would be imitated better than prepositions with [-Lexical] features. By Grade 10, the difference in imitation that we showed between [+Lexicals] and [-Lexical] categories also disappeared, thereby confirming Hypothesis 3.

In drawing connections with the researcher’s literature review on Littlefield (2006) study, Littlefield has administered a longitudinal study using spontaneous speech utterances of five first language learners of English (aged 1:2 to 2;3) and provided evidence for the four categories of prepositions in English Language. Therefore, both Littlefield study (2006) and this current study being a cross sectional study using 65 Sinhala speaking ESL students each from: Grade 4, 6, 8 &10 confirm Hypothesis 1 as mentioned above.

However, Littlefield (2006) empirically proves that adverbial prepositions and particles, {-Functional] featured prepositions} are acquired before the semi-lexical prepositions and functional prepositions { [+Functional] featured prepositions}, and do not support Hypothesis 2. The current study, confirms the Hypothesis 2, that there is an initial advantage of adverbial prepositions and semilexical prepositions { [+Lexical] featured prepositions} over the particles and functional prepositions { [-Lexical] featured prepositions}.

Hypothesis 3 in this study, the disappearance of the difference in imitation by Grade 10 is confirmed by the current study. As Littlefield (2006) has done a longitudinal study for a period of time using very small children (aged 1:2 to 2;3), Hypothesis 3 is not applicable.

Discussion

Questionnaire on the general information of the students

The questionnaire analysis showed that 79% of the subjects used only Sinhala outside school and 24.7% both Sinhala and English at home. Most learners
indicated (on the questionnaire) that they had good exposure to reading materials in English and Sinhala.

**Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications on Teaching English as a Second Language**

The advantage of the [+Lexical] featured prepositions (adverbial prepositions and semi-lexical prepositions) over the [–Lexical] featured prepositions (particles and functional prepositions) in the process of the acquisition of prepositions by Sinhala speaking ESL learners, can be used to facilitate teaching English prepositions from Grade 4 to Grade 10. Here the teachers of English should focus more on [+Lexical] featured prepositions (adverbial prepositions and semi-lexical prepositions) than the [–Lexical] featured prepositions (particles and functional prepositions) for initial grades (Grade 4 to Grade 6) in dictation tasks. For example, in *The cat is on the mat* (here ‘on’ is a semi-lexical preposition) should be introduced before *I am proud of my son* (here ‘of’ is a functional preposition).

We can apply this particular advantage of [+lexical] featured prepositions to revise the English language syllabuses and the lessons related to English prepositions in school text books. By conducting workshops for Teachers of English as a second language in local schools in Sri Lanka, they should be made aware about the existence of these four categories of the prepositions and also this order of acquisition of prepositions in order to facilitate teaching English prepositions. Moreover, as it is clear that from Grade 10 onwards, the Sinhala speaking learners have the ability to acquire all these four categories of prepositions equally well, unfamiliar prepositions of all four categories of prepositions can be introduced in their lessons simultaneously.

**Conclusion**

Under the findings of this study, category-wise performance shows that the ESL learners of Grade 4, 6 and 8 had imitated sentences with four categories differently ($F > 4.2$ at $p < 0.001$) and by Grade 10, there is no significant difference in the imitation of sentences with four categories ($F (3, 256) = 1.75, p < 0.157$). Therefore this particular finding supports the existence of fine-grained categories.
of prepositions as proposed by Littlefield (2006). Younger learners had an initial advantage in [+Lexical] categories and therefore, the sentences with [+Lexical] prepositions were imitated better than the sentences with [-Lexical] prepositions. The results also showed that all the categories of prepositions were equally used in Grade 10.

It is a known fact that pure lexical categories are acquired earlier than pure functional categories. Therefore, adverbial prepositions should be always at a higher rank in the order of acquisition whereas functional prepositions should lie at the extreme bottom of the acquisition order. The fact that the particles (phrasal verbs, e.g. Rani ate up the cake.) are acquired after the semi-lexical prepositions in this study can be justified by the fact that Sinhala language has no phrasal verbs (particles) whereas English has much use in phrasal verbs. According to Sjoholm (1995), as discussed in the literature review, it shows that results in learning English phrasal verbs are related in part to the presence or absence in the learner’s native language. Therefore Sinhala speaking ESL learners acquire particles [-L, -F] after the semi-lexical prepositions [+L, +F]. Native speakers of English, as Littefield (2006) shows, acquire particles before semi-lexical prepositions as English language is rich with many phrasal verbs.

Acknowledgements

This study was funded by the National Center for Advanced Studies (NCAS), Colombo-7, Sri Lanka.

References:


Developing Trends in Sri Lankan English (SLE) Vocabulary in the Domain of Journalistic Writing

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Abstract

Sri Lankan English (SLE) is recognized as an independent and unique variety of English. Since the introduction of English to Sri Lanka in 1796, its vocabulary has undergone a steady change. The current study is a trend analysis of the SLE vocabulary seen in journalistic writing. It is conducted through a content analysis and a comparative study. The data is extracted from selected newspaper articles of 1955-1965 and 2005-2015. A total of 44 newspaper pages were used for the study. The data is compared to identify the developing trends in the vocabulary used over a period of 60 years in the country. The data showed that the composition of the vocabulary of English in Sri Lanka has changed over the years. Some words have been dropped from usage and are considered archaic at present, while new vocabulary items have come into use. In the period under examination, there is an increase in the number of words that could be identified as ‘SLE vocabulary’. Many word formation processes are commonly used to create the new SLE terms that are added to the language.

Keywords: Sri Lankan English, trend analysis, vocabulary, composition, word formation processes
**Introduction**

The present study documents the current trends in the Sri Lankan English (SLE) vocabulary as seen in the journalistic writing from 2005-2015. Fernando (2012) identifies vocabulary as an aspect that clearly reflects the changes in a language. SLE vocabulary displays a change in form and composition over the past few decades.

Research on SLE phonology has been conducted by C. Fernando (1976), S. Fernando (1985), Gunesekera (2005) and Wijetunge (2008). Gunesekera (2005) has studied SLE syntax, while SLE morphology has been studied by Fernando (2012), Gunesekera (2005) and Meyler (2011). However, apart from the linguistic characteristics identified and explored by the above researchers, the recent trends in SLE vocabulary as found in newspapers are not studied in detail. The significance of the present study is that it has analyzed journalistic writing as a specific genre of SLE writing with the objective of documenting any emerging trends in the SLE vocabulary in the said genre. Hence, the objective of the present study is to compare the vocabulary of *Ceylon Observer* from 1955-1965 with the *Sunday Observer* from 2005-2015, and thereby document any developing trends seen in the vocabulary, that are different to the ones identified by the previous researchers. Since the data is obtained from the decade 2005-2015, this study could contribute to update the existing records of SLE vocabulary analysis.

Thus, the research was conducted to answer the following research question

**RQ:** In a comparative study of the SLE vocabulary in newspapers from 1955-1965 and 2005-2015, what are the observable trends in vocabulary development?

**Literature review**

**Evolution Models of New Englishes**

Several theories of language evolution and its stages have been put forward by linguists, which are useful for the present study. Kachru (1992) identifies four stages of development in the “non-native institutionalized varieties of English” (p.56). They are “non-recognition of the local variety”, “extensive diffusion of bilingualism in English” which leads to the “development of varieties within a
variety”, non-native variety being accepted as a norm and finally the recognition of the variety (Kachru, 1992, pp. 56, 57). Schneider (2003) identifies “Foundation, Exonormative Stabilization, Nativization, Endonormative Stabilization and Differentiation” (p.243) as stages of language evolution. SLE has undergone most, if not all, of these stages of evolution and the variety has become increasingly Lankanized (Kachru, 1992, p.56). It has now reached a “national standard” (Gunesekera, 2005, p.128).

Fernando (2012) identifies three stages of SLE development. The first is the period after 1796, where English was exposed to social and political pressures from the local languages, and the locals as well as the British had to innovate words to express the “social, economic, geographical, cultural novelties” of the island (Fernando, 2012, p.162). The second is the “post-independence period” (Fernando, 2012, p. 165, p. 164) when the language started to shift from being the English of the “colonizer” to the English of the “once colonized” (Gunesekera, 2005, p. 20). The third stage is termed the “contemporary period” (Fernando, 2012, p. 165) where an increasing number of speakers used SLE as a second language. This is roughly the period where English was restored to the status of one of the official languages, and at a later point, attributed the state of the link language (Gunesekera, 2005, p. 17). Currently, SLE, specifically its vocabulary, continues to expand, and represents features different from those codified in the work of Gunesekera (2005) and Meyler (2011).

Against a backdrop of rapid change, in the context of World Englishes and Sri Lankan Englishes, there is a need for genre specific vocabulary analyses of SLE. The present study focusing on the journalistic writing over the decade 2005-2015 attempts to fill this gap.

**Sri Lankan Englishes**

SLE is branching off into new varieties. Gunesekera (2005) broadly divides SLE as the standard variety and the non-standard variety depending on the social status and the degree of familiarity with the language (p.35). Other SLE varieties are defined by race and ethnic group, religion, age and the social status of the speakers.
These varieties have influenced one another (Gunesekera, 2005, p.127). As Meyler (2011) says:

[W]ithin the relatively tiny English-speaking community, there are several sub-varieties of Sri Lankan English. Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers speak different varieties; Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims have their own vocabularies; the older generation speak a different language from the younger generation; and the wealthy Colombo elite (who tend to speak English as their first language) speak a different variety form the wider community (who are more likely to learn it as a second language. (p.xi)

For a more descriptive representation of the Sri Lankan Englishes, detailed codification of each variety is essential. The present study is limited to the register of journalistic writing and is an attempt to analyze the recent SLE vocabulary of the said register.

**Present Study**

Stating the necessity to continue studies on SLE vocabulary, Gunesekera (2005) writes, “[m]uch more research needs to be done for a thorough listing of the words and phrases of Sri Lankan English” (p.154). Also, Fernando (2012) states that the linguistic studies of the 21st Century should focus on “exploring the linguistic pressures and counter pressures giving rise to the future development of SLE vocabulary” (p.177). Three years after the launch of the first edition of *A Dictionary of Sri Lankan English*, Meyler (2010) points out the need for documenting the rapid changes in SLE saying; “in 10 years’ time, who knows how the language might have changed?”. Hence, SLE research needs to be revised and updated to understand the progressive nature of SLE.

The present study compares the vocabulary of newspapers from 1955-1965 and 2005-2015, and records the emerging trends in SLE vocabulary, thereby attempting to answer the research question stated in the Introduction.
Methodology

SLE vocabulary could be extracted for research from a number of sources. Meyler (2011) uses books published between 1982 and 2006 to obtain his data (p.xxxiii) while Gunesekera (2005) records words extracted from “conversations among Sri Lankans” which “represent real life usage” (p.161). For the current research, 22 newspapers of Ceylon Observer¹ from 1955-1965 and 22 newspapers of Sunday Observer² from 2005-2015 were used. Hence, data was gathered from 44 newspaper pages for the study.

The data collection method is a combination of random sampling and purposive sampling. Two newspapers for each year were selected randomly. The newspapers from 1955-1965 were obtained from the Department of National Archives, Sri Lanka and the newspapers from 2005 – 2015 were obtained from the Sunday Observer website (www.sundayobserver.lk)³. From each newspaper, the articles in the first page and the editorial were used for the study. In the case of online versions, the articles on the home page and the editorial were selected. These criteria make the articles a purposive sample, which according to Dörnyei is “a sampling plan describing the sampling parameters (participants, settings, events, processes), and [which] lines up with the purposes of the study” (Dörnyei, 2007, p.97, p. 126). Once the first page is selected, the SLE words in the page were extracted. To identify if a certain word could be considered SLE, the linguistic knowledge and the experience of the researcher and a colleague who are both native speakers of SLE was used. This was to ensure objectivity in the process of categorizing a word as SLE.

¹ Ceylon Observer was the name used for Daily News and Sunday Observer at the start of the Newspaper in 1834.
³ The online newspaper and the printed newspaper contain the same articles.
Results and Discussion: trends in SLE vocabulary

(Analysis of vocabulary from *Ceylon observer* and *Sunday observer*)

As seen in the table below, the number of SLE words have increased in the dataset of 2005-2015.

**Table 1: Number of SLE words in the articles from 1955-1965 and 2005-2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Number of SLE words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ceylon Observer</em> 1955 – 1965</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sunday Observer</em> 2005 – 2015</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This indicates an increased *Sri Lankanness* in the vocabulary over the past 60 years. Compared to the dataset of 1955-1965, the number of SLE words has increased roughly by three times.

In addition, some words used in the period 1955-1965 were absent in the period 2005-2015. They are mentioned below with examples.

**Words with French origin**

Communique, Epaulette, Cortege, Tour de Lanka were words of French origin that were used in the articles from 1955 to 1965. From 2005 to 2015, the data did not indicate any usages of words with French Origin.

**Idioms from literary texts and biblical allusions**

British English idioms, especially those extracted from literary texts and the Bible were found in the articles of 1955 – 1965. ‘Milk of human kindness’, ‘Manna from heaven’, ‘Jekyll and Hyde’ could be mentioned as examples. Such idioms were not found in the decade 2005 – 2015.

As seen from the data, the language of the decade from 1955 to 1965 consisted of vocabulary that Halverson (1966) termed “latinate” (p.72). However, in the decade 2005-2015, the data did not contain any such phrases / idioms. As the dataset is a sample of the writing in newspapers, it can be stated that the usage of Latinate terms in SLE vocabulary has become less frequent by 2005-2015.
Apart from these, the other morphological features of the SLE vocabulary seen in journalistic writing are analyzed below.

**SLE vocabulary in journalistic writing**

A morphological analysis of the data gathered is given below. The complete list of examples for each word formation category is given in Appendix 1 (Vocabulary from 1955 – 1965) and Appendix 2 (Vocabulary from 2005 – 2015).

**Compounds**

Fernando (2012) identifies self-explaining compounds as a common word-formation strategy in new varieties of English (p.166). Gunesekera (2010) also identifies compounding as a “tendency of South Asian Englishes in word formation” (p.203). Over the 60 years under examination, the number of SLE compounds has increased significantly, from 12 to 31 examples. SLE compounds such as ‘Mahinda Chinthanaya’, ‘Maithri Palanaya’ and ‘Mother Lanka’ reflect the political climate of the country, ‘Aloka Pooja’ refers to religious practices while ‘seeni sambol’ refers to a food item. Fernando, in 2012, observed that the SLE vocabulary reflects the social and political climate of the country. This is evident in the compounds of the date set from 2005-2015. Some examples are given in the table below.

**Table 2: Compounds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bottle Lamp</td>
<td>Mahinda Chinthanaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddha Jayanthi</td>
<td>Seeni Sambol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyawardane Nilame</td>
<td>Aloka Pooja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Ceylon</td>
<td>Thoppigala Jungles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Ceylon</td>
<td>Rajapaksya regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidyalankara University</td>
<td>Bodu Bala Sena</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Borrowings

The complexity and the diversity in the SLE borrowings of the two datasets required a detailed classification rather than a broad division into direct borrowings and indirect borrowings. Thus, the categorization made by Fernando (2012) was used as a guide in the present analysis.

Loanwords

Loanwords are similar to “direct borrowings” (Akmajian, Demers, Farmer & Harnish, 2001, p.27). A loanword displays “phonemic substitution” but not “morphemic substitution” (Fernando, 2012, p.170). Haugen (1950) states that a loanword may contain “no, partial or complete phonemic substitution” (as cited in Fernando, 2012, p.170). Loanwords were abundant in the SLE vocabulary used in journalistic writing. Some examples are given below.

Table 3: Loanwords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loanword</th>
<th>Languages from which the words are drawn</th>
<th>Loanword</th>
<th>Languages from which the words are drawn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Devil Dancer</td>
<td>Maithri Palanaya</td>
<td>Murrukku</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceylon Medical Council</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>Eelam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ran Veta</td>
<td>Lalith Athulathmudali Vidyalaya</td>
<td>Tuk tuk</td>
<td>Thai English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vesak Lanterns</td>
<td>Api Wenuwen Api</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
Loanwords seem to have been popular in SLE vocabulary over the years and have increased in number. The study encountered only 8 loanwords from 1955 – 1965 and 29 from 2005 – 2015. As seen in the examples given above, the loanwords refer to the “flora and fauna of the country, to different types of food and drink, and to Buddhism, the majority religion of the country” (Meyler, 2009, p.57). The word ‘tuk tuk’ is used to refer to the trishaw and is a borrowing from Thai English (Hashim & Bennui, 2014, p.135). SLE has been enriched with loanwords from Tamil, Hindi, Malay, Arabic, Dutch, Portuguese and other Languages (Meyler, 2009, p.57). The loanwords in the dataset 2005-2015 such as Eelam, Gama Naguma, Maga Naguma, Uthuru Wasanthaya, Nagenahira Navodaya, Divinaguma, Yahapalanaya and Anthare reflect the political climate of the country. Such political references were less in the journalistic writing from 1955-1965.

**Blended Stems**

Blended stems are a type of borrowing, and Haugen (1950) defines them as instances where “inflectional suffixes and stems from two different languages are blended in a new variety” (as cited in Fernando, 2012, p.173). Guneseckera (2010) identifies blends in which a “borrowing from an indigenous language [is] suffixed with the plural marker –s”, as a “morphological phenomenon of Sri Lankan English” (p.206). Given below are examples of blended stems.
Table 4: Blended Stems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blended Stem</strong></td>
<td><strong>Meaning in Context</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinhalese(^4)</td>
<td>Sinhala Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Bus] Mudalalies(^5)</td>
<td>People who own buses in the private bus service of Sri Lanka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panas</td>
<td>Small oil lamps made out of clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satyagrahis</td>
<td>People who engage in a ‘satyagaha’ (Protest)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Blended Compounds**

This is a compound created out of a borrowing, and are formed by blending “two or more stems from different languages” (Fernando, 2012, p. 173). Blended compounds, also called “hybrid compounds”, are very commonly seen in SLE vocabulary (Fernando, 2012, p. 173).

\(^4\) The word Sinahlese in the given context meant the Sinhala Language and not the Sinhala Race. Hence the suffix ‘ese’ is added to the word ‘Sinhala’ to create the blended stem.

\(^5\) The word Mudalalies has a derogatory connotation.
Fernando (2012) states that hybrid compounds are a “fairly large” category in SLE (p.173). In fact, the data from 2005-2015 shows that blended compounds have increased in number when compared with the data from the decade 1955-1965, as new blended compounds were created to express political and war related terms. E.g.: Mahajana Faction, Sinha Regiment Camp.

**Loan Translations**

Loan translations are yet another type of borrowings where, as Haugen (1950) says, one could observe morphemic substitution without importation (as cited in Fernando, 2012, p. 174). In the SLE vocabulary, new words are formed by translating the Sinhala compounds into English. In such instances, only the

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6 (S) stands for Sinhala

7 (E) stands for English
meaning of the Sinhala term is carried on to English. Loan translations are also made from Tamil words but the newspaper sample used in the research did not have examples of such usages. Fernando (2012) mentions that in the SLE compound ‘ash plantain’, the morphemes in the Sinhala compound ‘alu kesel’ are substituted with two English translation equivalents (p.174). Loan translations taken from the gathered data are given below.

**Table 6: Loan Translations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>1955 - 1965</strong></th>
<th><strong>2005 - 2015</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loan Translation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Comments on Usage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devil Dancer</td>
<td>A word with cultural references. The performer of the traditional ‘Yak Natuma’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion Flags</td>
<td>Translated from ‘Singha Kodi’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loan Translation</th>
<th>Comments on Usage</th>
<th>Loan Translation</th>
<th>Comments on the usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wonder of Asia</td>
<td>The borrowing from the Sinhala Term ‘Āsiyawe Āshcharya’ which was used by the former president, Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa to define his vision for the county according to his election manifesto.</td>
<td>Compassionate Rule</td>
<td>This is another borrowing from the political arena, used by Mr. Maithripala Sirisena as the tagline of his presidential election campaign. The loan translation stems from the Sinhala compound ‘Maithri Pālanya’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate Rule</td>
<td>This is another borrowing from the political arena, used by Mr. Maithripala Sirisena as the tagline of his presidential election campaign. The loan translation stems from the Sinhala compound ‘Maithri Pālanya’.</td>
<td>North –East Problem</td>
<td>This is a translation from the Sinhala usage ‘Uthuru Nagenahira Prashnaya’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiger Terrorists</td>
<td>The Sinhala usage of the term is ‘Koti Thrsthawadin’</td>
<td>Lion Flag</td>
<td>Used in reference to the National Flag and the translation of the Sinhala term ‘Singha Kodiya’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the definition of loan translations by Fernando (2012), and the examples provided above, it is seen that loan translations capture a specific concept in Sinhala and transports it to English. They may appear to be self-
explanatory compounds but they connote unique meanings in the Sri Lankan social, cultural and political spheres.

In the SLE vocabulary of journalistic writing, the number of loan translations with political connotations have increased significantly from 1955-1965 and this could be viewed as a characteristic of the expanding SLE vocabulary. Fernando (2012) states:

In the contemporary period, when new dialects of SLE developed, there were changes and additions to the SLE vocabulary. The mood in Sri Lanka had become more complex, as it passed through times of racial and class tensions, conflict, war, economic and social, corruption, natural disasters, rehabilitation, peace and reconciliation etc. Words representing these changes in mood have been reflected in SLE vocabulary. (p. 165)

Thus, loan translations are a creative category in the SLE vocabulary which is constantly updated and some loan translations last longer than others. Words such as ‘Triple Gem’ and ‘office trains’ have a greater possibility of retention than words such as ‘honourable peace’ or ‘compassionate rule’. Nevertheless, they are unique expressions of the Sri Lankan experience.

The number of borrowings from the decade 1955-1965 was 15 while the decade from 2005 – 2015 had 47 borrowings. According to Fernando (2012), Sinhala and Tamil borrowings in SLE vocabulary have become fashionable since the independence (p.172). The two datasets confirm this observation by Fernando (2012).
Affixation of Compounds

The data gathered contained a few interesting examples of affixation.

Table 7: Affixation of compounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bus Mudalalies</td>
<td>Bus Muralalis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little pol-thel panas</td>
<td>Maha Nayake Theras</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initialisms and Clippings

Initialisms and clippings are used to form new words through abbreviations.

Initialisms

Initialisms are also called alphabetic abbreviations (Akmajian et al., 2001, p. 26) and each of the letters that spell the initialism is the first letter or letters of a set of words (Akmajian et al., 2001, p.25). These letters of the initialism are individually pronounced (Akmajian et al., 2001, p. 26). SLE vocabulary in newspapers consisted of initialisms which are used considerably frequently both in writing and in speech.

Table 8: Initialisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initialism</td>
<td>Initialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLFP</td>
<td>LTTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka Freedom Party</td>
<td>Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSSP</td>
<td>SLFP-UNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td>BIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Party</td>
<td>the Bandaranaike International Airport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
The articles during the 2005-2015 decade contained 17 Initialisms while the 1955-1965 decade had only 6. Also, Initialisms related to war and politics were commonly used in the journalistic writing of the decade 2005 - 2015. New projects initiated by the government were referred to by initialisms and it was frequently found in the newspapers from 2005 to 2015. The type of initialisms found in each decade represents the socio-political condition of the country at the time.

**Clippings**

Clippings are formed by shortening a word, E.g. Using ‘prof’ for ‘professor’ (Akmajian et al., 2001, p. 26). Clippings were not common in the articles that were analyzed and were found only in the articles from the decade 2005 - 2015. The following are examples from the data gathered.

**Table 9: Clippings (Found in the articles from 2005 to 2015)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Newspaper</th>
<th>Clipping</th>
<th>Extract from newspaper</th>
<th>Meaning of the acronym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Observer,</td>
<td>Prabha</td>
<td>Who supported Prabha to</td>
<td>Velupillai Prabhakaran, the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday 24th May</td>
<td></td>
<td>fight a sovereign State?</td>
<td>leader of the LTTE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Observer,</td>
<td>Varsity</td>
<td>Varsity to shift to</td>
<td>Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday 27th October</td>
<td></td>
<td>student-centred [sic]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>learning…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Semantic Change

Semantic change in the SLE vocabulary occurs when “English words take on a different meaning although the words remain unchanged” (Gunesekera, 2005, p.152). Semantic change was observed in the journalistic writing from 2005 to 2015. Most of the terms with semantic change have appropriated political connotations which might be context specific and arbitrary, as they have been produced in unique socio-cultural contexts.

Table 10: Semantic Change (Found in the articles from 2005 to 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Semantic Change</th>
<th>Comment on the use of word</th>
<th>Extract from newspaper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Observer, Sunday 29th October 2006</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>The term ‘North’ not only means the Northern province but also the people of the North and their concerns.</td>
<td>The opposition Leader Ranil Wickremasinghe too deserves a bouquet for extending the support of his party to the Government at a juncture the South needs unity and consensus to negotiate with the North.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Observer, Sunday 29th October 2006</td>
<td>Mahawa</td>
<td>A train going to Mahawa</td>
<td>With much surprise to the passengers, the Mahawa, that was announced as cancelled earlier, arrived at Gampaha sans passengers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Observer, Sunday 21st October 2008</td>
<td>Tiger Den</td>
<td>This term is expanded to mean the LTTE Headquarters</td>
<td>… he could not halt the advancing Security Forces who are closing in on the Tiger den…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
Newspaper | Semantic Change | Comment on the use of word | Extract from newspaper
--- | --- | --- | ---
Sunday Observer, Sunday 26th July 2015 | White Van | The term suggests the abductions which are said to have been done using white vans | Definitely this white van concept was orchestrated by the previous government.

Sunday Observer, Sunday 13th April 2014 | Lions | Used to refer to the Sri Lankan Cricket team | …it provided a better option for the lions to beat the West Indies in the semifinals.

### Archives

This section contains the vocabulary which was found in the articles from 1955 – 1965. At present, they are hardly used while some of them are no longer in use. These are mostly English words which reflect the Sri Lankan society of the 1950s and were used in context-specific meanings.

**Table 11: Archives (Found in the articles from 1955 to 1965)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Archival words</th>
<th>Comment on the use of word</th>
<th>Extract from newspaper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ceylon Observer, Sunday 5th February 1956, p.1</td>
<td>Ceylonese</td>
<td>Ceylonese is replaced by ‘Sri Lankan’ in the present day.</td>
<td>The plan will have a &quot;christening&quot; ceremony and suitable Ceylonese names are being considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceylon Observer, Sunday 5th February 1956, p.1</td>
<td>Bazaar</td>
<td>Bazaar is replaced by terms such as ‘marketplace’ or even the Sinhala term ‘pola’.</td>
<td>But in the bazaar, stalls occupied by Sinhalese merchants were profusely decorated with Lion flags.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
These terms have decreased in use and have been replaced by new, SLE words. E.g. The use of ‘pola’ instead of ‘bazaar’. ‘Ceylon’ was changed to ‘Sri Lanka’ after the year 1972, when the country became a republic. These examples show that the SLE vocabulary of the journalistic writing in Sri Lanka has changed over the past 60 years.

### Conclusion

In answering the initial research question, after a comparative study of the SLE vocabulary in newspapers from 1955-1965 and 2005-2015 several tends in SLE vocabulary development were identified.

Within the sample of the study, the vocabulary of the decade 2005-2015 could be termed more ‘Sri Lankan’ than that of the decade 1955-1965. In the genre of journalistic writing, the number of SLE words have increased from 37 to 110 and there is a decrease in words of French origin, idioms and biblical allusions. New SLE words are coined using several word formation rules. The most common trends observed in SLE word formation were compounding, loan words, initialisms and semantic change. Within the sample, over 60 years, the number of...
compounds has increased from 12 to 31, while the number of loanwords has increased from 8 to 29. The number of initialisms has increased from 6 to 17, with 14 words with semantic change in the decade 2005-2015 as opposed to none in the decade 1955-1965.

As Künstler, Mendis, & Mukherjee (2010) observe:

[T]he English language has also been adapted to the socio-cultural context of Sri Lanka. Drawing an analogy to Kachru’s (1983) concept of the ‘Indianization’ of English in India, one could posit a process of Ceylonization (or Lankanization, for that matter) of English ever since the establishment of British supremacy over the island in 1802 (p.264)

Similarly, it could be concluded that the developing trends in the SLE vocabulary found in journalistic writing have contributed to the increased Lankanization of SLE.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the staff at National Archives for their support and the colleagues of the Department of English for their input in conducting this research.

References:


Effect of Work Stress on Work Life Balance: Moderating Role of Work-Life Support Organizational Culture in Sri Lanka Customs Department

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Abstract

This study was initiated with the primary objective of assessing the impact of work stress on work-life balance of custom officers serving for the Sri Lanka Customs Department. Further, to assess the moderating role of ‘work-life support organizational culture’ in the said context it was established as a secondary objective. The study is a basic research in which the researches attempted to answer a problem that is concerned with filling a contextual gap in the empirical knowledge. Deductive approach was predominantly applied, and the study is mainly explanatory. Hence, this was carried out as a cross-sectional, quantitative field-study among a sample of, randomly selected 200 custom officers. Primary data was collected through a standard questionnaire which has met the accepted standards of reliability and validity.

It is found that work stress has a significant negative relationship (r = -0.695) with work-life balance of custom officers. The direct impact (r² = .476) of work stress on work life balance is also statistically significant (sig = 0.000) and which is further moderated (r² = .481) by the prevailing culture in the context. Moreover, the culture in Sri Lanka Customs is identified as a work-life support culture in which employees are empowered adequately to manage multiple roles in their lives, though the job is highly stressful. So that, it is recommended to encourage and maintain such a culture continuously in the Customs Department to help employees to manage multiple demands and expectations deriving from rest of life other than work. Further, it is suggested that the policies and initiatives put
forward to facilitate employees’ work-life balance in the organization to be reviewed and appropriately modified frequently, aligning with the organizational culture to obtain the maximum outcomes from such policies and initiatives.

Keywords: Work stress; work-life balance; work-life support organizational culture; Sri Lanka Customs Department

Introduction

In the past three decades, a higher degree of the focus of social research was given to the study of underlying relationships among work and rest of the life of working people; employees (Clark, 2000; Chan et al., 2015). Such studies have shown that the lack of balance in person’s life is related to higher turnover, less productivity, and lower work effectiveness (Clark, 2000). Not surprisingly, employees are generally ready to sacrifice their rewards or even change the organization with the prime purpose of achieving a better work-life balance (Galinsky, Bond & Friedman, 1993 as referred in Lambert et al., 2008).

Similarly, work stress is an impressive theme which has been widely researched and reported for a considerable period of time in the last three decades. Work stress is an ecological scenario in which an employee is required to perform a certain work that exceed his/her capacity and resources for accomplishing it. Stress arises under conditions where people expect a huge gap in compensation from meeting the target versus not meeting the target (Berry, 1997). Accumulated work stress is very much harmful to employees as they will react by trying to disregard it by removing either mentally, physically, and emotionally or by leaving the job entirely (Dupre & Day, 2007). Further, research on work stress suggest that it has negative outcomes for individuals such as higher work-life conflicts (Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002 as cited in Lambert et al., 2008) and increased work-life imbalance.

One of the current researchers is a customs officer serving the Customs Department of Sri Lanka, and it has been observed that many of the customs officers are suffering from work-life balance issues. Also, due to the work roster, rotation among various geographical regions including; Katunayake, Galle,
Trincomalee, Jaffna, Hambantota, and the endless night shifts officers are under stress even though they can get a quite considerable level of financial rewards. Researchers conducted structured interviews with randomly selected six custom officers to collect preliminary evidence to justify the problem. All of them have replied in the same way saying we are under stress and experience work-life balance problems.

Though the direct impact of work stress on work-life balance is recognized, however, theoretical discussion on that and previous research findings of the association among those two constructs is not consistent across all the domains, and much remains to be discovered. (Lambert et al., 2008; Chan, et al., 2015). It is recognized that a relatively fewer number of studies tried to discuss the impact of work stress on work-life balance, from the perspective of custom officers. Among such previous research studies which attempted to establish the association between work stress and work-life balance in different countries, only a few were conducted in Sri Lanka. Hence, having considered the aforesaid situation the below mentioned problem is raised in the present study to be investigated with empirical data collected from the Sri Lanka Customs Department.

**What is the effect of work stress on work-life balance of custom officers, which is moderated by the work-life support organizational culture in Sri Lanka Customs Department?**

The primary objective of this research study is to assess the impact of work-stress on work-life balance of customs officers those who are currently working for Sri Lanka Customs Department. Moreover, to recognize and assess the moderating role of work-life support culture in the Customs Department, on the association between work stress and work-life balance was established as the secondary objective.
Significance of the study

Accordingly, this research addresses the gap in management and social research examining the effect of work-life support organizational culture in explaining work-life balance of employees, especially in the domestic context. Consequently, the study would bridge the contextual gap in Sri Lanka Customs Department up to a significant extent. Also, this study would make a major practical implication by investigating the moderating effect of work-life support organizational culture which has not been taken into account to discuss the impact of work stress on work-life balance in research literature.

Additionally, this study will address the lacuna in *Job Border Theory* (JBT) of Clark (2000) in which having a separate border between job and the life is recommended. However, customs officers don’t have a border like that. Instead, they have a blended life; not a separate work life and a family life. So, the Job Border Theory is not adequate to explain the work-life balance scenario of custom officers. Hence, having a greater degree of theoretical significance the current research would provide insights to extend JBT. Further, the current study highlights the significance of creating and maintaining a sound work-life support organizational culture in the corporate atmosphere as an essential pre-requisite.

To obtain the maximum benefits from a work-life initiative, it is essential to identify the organizational culture first, to which all such policies must congruence with. Having understood that, this study will provide insights for decision makers and practitioners in organizations other than Sri Lanka Customs to fix work arrangements, and especially to execute work-life support initiatives in their respective work places according to the prevailing culture. Also, this study will provide insinuations for the state authorities and officials by providing insights into employment and policy making process of relevant state-owned business organizations. Hence, this research study has a sound theoretical, practical and policy significance for many stakeholders in the context.
Literature review

Ernest & Jama (2011) and Guest (2001) investigated the negative relationship among job stress and work-life balance of physical education teachers in Greece. Job stress significantly correlated with high work-life imbalance and higher tendency to leave the job among government officers in European countries (Steven, Ngo & Tsang (2010) as cited in Ernest & Jama (2011). Further, Gruneberg (1979) mentioned that stress can be exacerbated by organizational factors, such as: a long working day, radical organizational changes and lack of organizational support, minimum support from leaders and peers, and conflicts with demands for roles and role-playing.

Furthermore, Wickramasinghe (2012) identified and defined work stress as an unfavorable reaction of people when they have excess pressure put on them at work. Larson (2004) stated that job stressors may refer to any attribute of the workplace which creates a threat to the employee. For stress to exist, the demand from the job (including working environment) versus the capability of the employee will probably mismatch. In addition, stress is due to many factors that affect the employee, so that he/she is confronted with stress in his/her work. One of the most important factors that influence work stress is work demands and time demands which in turn negatively affect the work-life balance of a working person (Opatha, 2015). In simple terms it means, when two stressors; work demands and the time constraints are active, an employee has to select one domain at the cost of the other domain which hinders the balance between work and life. Hence, in any form stress will affect the work-life balance of people who are employed.

One expectation of implementing sound Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in a workplace is to facilitate workers at different life stages, with respective life responsibilities to enjoy a healthy and prosperous life. Thus, any management should implement initiatives to help the achievement of organizational targets, but not at the cost of workers’ personal targets (Opatha, 2015). It means none of the employees need to sanctify his/her personal growth due to working in a particular organization. If it happens either employee or the employer is not conscious about work-life balance. So that, the expression work-
life balance highlights that the demands of the job/work ideally should not hinder the private life of the worker. Weerasinghe and Batagoda (2012) mentioned that:

“...everyone has a life; work is not the life. What is work? It is just a part of life. None of us come to work to die; but to live...”

On one hand, Brown, et al. (2004) identified that few factors such as: number of global workplace, increased number of women entrants into the world of work, dual-career couples with no children, single parent families, and increased tendency of eldercare responsibilities; issues in job security (say there is no life time jobs now, job hoping itself is the passion of the new generation); and a distorting of work-life boundaries due to technological advancements due to which it is hard for a modern working person to achieve work life balance. Many of those factors are work place related stressors. On the other hand, employees might burn-out as a result of this imbalance. Burnout is identified and defined as a state of physical, psychological and emotional exhaustion as a result of accumulated work stress (Maslach & Leiter, 2003).

Similarly, work-life balance indicates an individual's focus across different life roles (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). Unlike the prevailing view which says that a person could organize his/her life, in this hierarchy of priorities, Marks & MacDermid (1996) argued that employees could portray positive engagement even in diverse life roles; which is in simple terms, one could essentially hold a balanced focus/attention on multiple roles.

Any description of Work-Life Balance (WLB) includes two elements of equality: input and output. The inputs are the own resources; might be time, energy, money, relationships. (Kirchmeyer, 2000). Further, there are different types of such balance easily identified within a person. Positive balance suggests a higher degree of attention, time and engagement, while negative balance refers to a low degree of involvement in such domains. Indeed, inputs indicate an individual's level of role engagement in terms of 'time devotion' and 'psychological involvement' in demands of multiple roles in the life. The other element of this balance refers to the resulting experiences in work and life domains. Ideally, the major outcome
earned form this balance would be the long term happiness in life (Clark, 2000). Positive balance implies a higher degree of satisfaction with work and life roles where negative balance suggests a lower degree of life satisfaction derived from those multiple roles. It means the person is not appropriately balanced.

Greenhaus et al. (2003) identified WLB as the degree to which an employee is appropriately engaged in, and as a result, contented with own life domains. Complying with Marks & MacDermid (1996), this definition also considers the positive balance and the negative balance. Greenhaus et al. (2003) identified three dimensions of work-life balance. They are:

**Time balance (input balance):** the extent of time devotion to multiple roles; **Involvement balance (input balance):** the extent of psychological bond with multiple roles; and **Satisfaction balance (output balance):** the extent of happiness a person gets by balancing so called multiple roles.

According to Greenhaus et al. (2003) to obtain a proper balance among work and life one must keep a tradeoff between inputs and the outcome. Also, to obtain a proper work-life balance one should exercise a proper combination of the above three elements occasionally. In one situation time balance might be more important, but in another different situation involvement balance might be more important. According to the stress theories and motivation theories (as argued by Clark, 2000) a person should compare his/her inputs and the outcome of satisfaction of particular situation to judge the cost and the benefits of work-life balance. However, that methodology is more technical in practice as it is very hard to quantify everything in life.

Work-life balance is highly a subjective, self-defined level of wellbeing that an employee can reach, or can set as a target, through which the person is empowered to manage multiple roles effectively (Clark, 2000). It supports the creation of health, wealth, enjoyment and prosperity. It is all about living in a contented full life both inside and outside of the paid employment. Work life balance does not reach when the work and life domains are very heavy or very light (Clark, 2000). As mentioned earlier, work-life balance is not about an equal balance on both
domains. Sometimes imbalance might occur even because of not working or not engaging in a productive business; either personal or organizational. Thus, the conclusion would be, work life balance is a productive equilibrium a working person should reach on which all the other decisions relating to health and success will be accomplished (Guest, 2001).

Bailyn (1993); Galinsky & Stein (1990); Regan (1994); Caudron (1997) as cited in Thompson et al., (1999) recognized the significance of having a work-life support organizational culture in an organization. Thompson et al. (1999) defined culture of life support as common norms, beliefs and values that the organization supports and appreciates the integration of the work of employees and life. Similarly, Thompson et al. (1999) discovered three key elements in a work-life support organizational culture. They are: corporate demands on working time & engagement and expectations about work and the family to be; career consequences associated with trying to achieve a balanced life; and managerial understanding, support & sensitivity to employees’ life and family responsibilities.

Culture in a work environment could possibly ensure that employees/workers can have alternative options that take their family life into account without skipping their career progression. Clark (2000) also found that organizational culture is most often linked with the employees' work-life balance. As Clark (2000) mentioned it is broadly associated with life well-being of a person; because culture is everything. Beauvais & Kowalski (1993) discovered that organizational culture based on working life is negatively associated with the conflict between work and family, and as mentioned by Francesco & Thompson (1996) the culture of life support was positively (favorably) associated with life's happiness, which in turn positively affects the achievement of organizational goals. Likewise, McNall et al., (2010) found that when employees perceive that their respective work culture is supportive and comfortable in balancing multiple demands in the life as a result such employees will respond more proactively by elaborating the potential level of loyalty, engagement and commitment at work. Hence, the way employees perceive the culture in comparison to the scarifications of rest of the life in utterly
significance (Clark, 2000) as it affects today to retain talented employees. So, the current researcher would conclude the debate afore-presented as: helping employees to live with the work, rather than continuously getting their engagement only for the work, will help to retain the high talent with the modern organizations.

Hence, it seems that there are enough evidence to argue a relationship among work-life support organizational culture and the work-life balance. Clark (2000) mentioned that underline causal relationships among work-life support organizational culture and work-life balance is not perfect and clear in historical findings. Further, Clark (2000) suggested that a construct like culture should be a moderator in a relationship. Hence, as a part of the contribution of the current researcher, work-life support organizational culture is taken as a moderating variable in the current study.

Having considered the theoretical explanations and empirical evidence in extant literature reported above, building on the Job Border Theory and Human Ecology Theory, following two hypotheses were formulated to be tested with empirical data. According to the problem of the present study, the study context considered to collect empirical data was the Customs Department of Sri Lanka.

\[
H_1: \text{ There is a significant impact of work stress on work-life balance of employees.} \\
H_2: \text{ Work-life organizational support culture significantly moderates the impact of work stress on work-life balance.}
\]

**Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework of the current study is depicted in figure 01. Work stress is considered as the independent variable while work-life balance is taken as the problem (dependent) variable. Work-life support organization culture (which prevails in Sri Lanka Customs Department) is assumed to be a moderator in the research model. The hypothesized relationships among constructs also shown in the same figure.
The independent variable; work stress is defined by Gruneberg (1979) as the harmful physical and emotional response that happens when there is a mis-match between demands of the job and capabilities or resources of the employee. Similarly, Cousins et al. (2004) defined the term stress as a pressing mental status in one's life due to an environmental reason/s which he mentioned as a multi-dimensional construct.

In the current research the working definition of work-life balance is taken from Greenhaus et al. (2003) in which work-life balance is defined as the degree to which an employee is appropriately engaged in, and as a result, contented with own life domains. Moreover, Greenhaus et al. (2003) discovered three (03) dimensions of work-life balance. They are: time balance; involvement balance and satisfaction balance.

Work-life support organizational culture is a culture in which employees are facilitated and encouraged to balance all the relevant domains of their lives up to the maximum potential level by recognizing the value of such a balance as a core value in the culture. Further to this working definition, Thomposon et al. (1999) identified three key elements in a work-life support organizational culture. They are: organizational demands on working time & engagement and expectations
about work and the family to be; career consequences associated with trying to achieve a balanced life; and managerial understanding, support & sensitivity to employees’ life and family responsibilities.

Study design
The study is a more basic research as the researchers attempted to answer a problem that is concerned with filling a contextual gap in the empirical knowledge having both theoretical and empirical values. Deductive approach was predominantly applied. The study is mainly explanatory. Similarly, this is a cross-sectional, field study in which researchers’ interference was minimum. The unit of analysis was at the individual level; a customer officer. Primary data was collected using a standard questionnaire through a survey.

Population and the Sample
The population concerned for the current study includes all the custom officers serving for Sri Lanka Customs Department; a total of 2018 officers (Annual Report of Sri Lanka Customs, 2017), from which the final sample was taken for the study. As the total number of respondents in the population is known, simple random sampling technique would be more appropriate to be used to select a representative sample (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). A total of 200 custom officers was selected randomly from the headquarters of Customs Department which accounts nearly for 10% of the population.

Measurement scales of variables
Work Stress
Work stress was assessed using the measurement scale developed by Cousins et al. (2004) which was the most commonly used scale in the literature. This was appraised through six dimensions: demands, control, support, relationships, role and organizational change. The current researchers used 34 items fixed on a five point Likert scale adopted from Cousins et al. (2004) to assess work stress, and it had the average coefficient alpha of 0.91 in the original scale. Sample items include in the scale: 'I am pressured to work long hours' (demands); 'I can decide
when to take a break' (control); 'There is friction or anger between colleagues' (relationships).

**Work-Life Balance**

The dependent variable work-life balance was assessed using the measurement scale (24 items) suggested by Thomas & Ganster (1995). It was measured via three dimensions such as: time balance & involvement balance (input balance), and satisfaction balance (output balance). Coefficient alpha for the original measurement scale was 0.88. Custom officers were required to mention their level of agreement for the statements given on a five-point Likert scale fixed at 1 = never and 5 = always. Sample items include: ‘I have a good balance between my job and my family time’ (time balance), 'my job makes it difficult to be the kind of spouse or parent that I’d like to be' (involvement balance) and 'I feel emotionally weak when I get home from work' (satisfaction balance).

**Work-Life Support Organizational Culture**

Work-life support organizational culture was appraised through 18 items measurement scale which is suggested by Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness (1999), and also widely used. A five point Likert scale anchored at 1 = never and 5 = always was employed as in the original scale. Alpha for the original scale obtained was 0.94 (Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness, 1999). Sample items are: 'department is sensitive to our family and personal concerns' (managerial sensitivity and support), 'In this department employees who participate in available work–family programs are viewed as less serious about their careers than those who do not participate in these programs' (negative career consequences) and 'Employees are regularly expected to put their jobs before their families' (time demands and work expectations of the department).

**Data analysis tools and techniques**

The collected primary data was analyzed with the support of Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. Frequency tables and descriptive statistics derived from SPSS were used to elaborate the sample composition and the individual behavior of three constructs. Reliability and the
validity of measurement scales used, were ensured through an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient.

As this is a basic level quantitative research in which hypothetico-deductive reasoning is predominantly applied, moderated simple regression with SPSS is more appropriate to test the moderating effect of an organizational level variable (culture) than Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in AMOS (Cousins et al, 2004). Hence, correlation analysis, simple regression analysis and the moderator regression analysis were done in the current study to test the formulated hypotheses and to come up with a conclusion.

**Results**

The final sample of the current study (n = 188) consisted of 100.0% males (n = 188) and 0.00% females (n = 0), hence, this is a male dominant sample. Their age groups are from 24 to 42 years. The majority (54.25%, n = 102) of the custom officers in the sample were married, and the remaining 45.75% (n = 86) were single. Approximately 93.10% (n = 176) of the respondents belonged to either the monthly income group of Rs. 75,000 - Rs. 100,000 or the more than Rs. 100,000 income group. Table 1 exhibits the demographic composition of the study sample.

**Table 1: Demographic composition of the sample**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>54.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>45.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 24 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 - 30 years</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>61.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 36 years</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 - 42 years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 42 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than Rs. 50,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Income</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0.00%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 50,000 - Rs. 75,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 75,000 - Rs. 100,000</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>55.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 100,000 - Rs. 125,000</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>38.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than Rs. 125,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Seniority</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 01 year</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 - 03 years</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>63.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 - 06 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 - 10 years</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey Data (2016)

Internal consistency statistics were used to ensure the reliability of measurement scales (for each dimension and for each construct) which was assessed through the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient with the aid of SPSS. Further, the data was tested for multivariate assumptions consisting the test for normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity before proceed with the hypotheses testing.

Correlation analysis

To examine the relationship between work stress of employees and work-life balance a scatter plot is constructed. According to the scatter plot linear relationship can be seen among two variables. As the relationship is linear, researcher used the 'Pearson Correlation Coefficient' to test the strength of the relationship among above mentioned two constructs/variables. As shown in table 2; Pearson Correlation Coefficient is -0.695. It shows there is a strong negative relationship among work stress and work-life balance of the employee. Further, correlation coefficient is significant at the 0.01 level as sig (2-tailed) is less than 0.01; which is 0.000. Hence, it can be statistically claimed that there is a significant negative relationship among work stress and work-life balance of custom officers.
Table 2: Correlation statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Stress</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Work Life Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Stress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.695**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey Data (2017)

Regression analysis

In the current research, moderated regression analysis was used to test the research model and develop the regression equation in steps (as recommended by Clark, 2002; Brown, 2004; Kim & Gong, 2016). Then take the coefficient of partial determination to measure the marginal contribution of variables in the research model. Adjusted R Square values of computed two models are given in table 3.

Table 3: Model summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.695a</td>
<td>.483</td>
<td>.476</td>
<td>.36233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.716b</td>
<td>.512</td>
<td>.481</td>
<td>.35537</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work stress

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work stress, Work life support culture

c. Dependent Variable: Work-life balance

Source: Survey Data (2017)

According to the model summary of table 3; the highest adjusted R Square is given by the second model. It means 48.10% of variation in dependent variable (work-life balance) is explained by the fitted regression model (which is moderated by the work-life support culture). To test the significance of the model following hypothesis was established.

H0: $\beta_1 = \beta_2 = 0$ (1)

H1: At least one $\beta_i \neq 0$ (2)

Where, $\beta_1$ and $\beta_2$ for work stress and work-life support culture respectively.
Table 4: ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>20.655</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.655</td>
<td>157.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>10.240</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.895</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>21.171</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.585</td>
<td>83.817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>9.724</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.895</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Predictors: (Constant), Work stress
<sup>b</sup> Predictors: (Constant), Work stress, Work-life support culture

Table 5: Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.820</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>5.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work stress</td>
<td>-.695</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.729</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>5.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work stress</td>
<td>-.626</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work-life support culture</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Dependent Variable: Work-life balance

Source: Survey Data (2017)

As per the table 4; the fitted second regression model is significant as Sig value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Hence, H<sub>1</sub> is accepted and it can be claimed that second regression model is significant than the first one which includes the moderator variable.

Table 5: Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.820</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>5.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work stress</td>
<td>-.695</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.729</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>5.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work stress</td>
<td>-.626</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work-life support culture</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Dependent Variable: Work-life balance

Source: Survey Data (2017)
According to table 5; following hypotheses were formulated to test the analyzed data.

\[
\begin{align*}
H_0: \beta_0 &= 0 \text{ Vs } H_1: \beta_0 \neq 0 \\
H_0: \beta_1 &= 0 \text{ Vs } H_1: \beta_1 \neq 0 \\
H_0: \beta_2 &= 0 \text{ Vs } H_1: \beta_2 \neq 0
\end{align*}
\] (3) (4) (5)

Where, \( \beta_0, \beta_1 \) and \( \beta_2 \) stand for constant value in the equation, work stress and work-life support culture respectively.

As sig values are less than 0.05; it can be conclude that constant is significant and should include in the final model. Similarly, \( \beta_1 \) and \( \beta_2 \) also significant and must be included in the final regression model. Thus \( H_1 \) hypothesis of above is accepted.

Following is the constructed regression equation; where \( X_1 \) stands for work stress and \( X_2 \) stands for work-life support organizational culture. Work-life balance of employees' is given by \( \hat{Y} \).

\[
\hat{Y} = 0.729 - 0.626 X_1 + 0.139 X_2
\] (6)

To ensure whether the constructed model is fitted the researchers did a residual analysis. Referring to the P – P plot, as residuals are close to 45 diagonal line it can be said that residuals are approximately normally distributed. According to the scatter plot of standardized residuals derived in the residual analysis, points are randomly distributed and there is no pattern. Thus, the model is statistically adequate and can use to predict the variation in the dependent variable.

Having considered the aforesaid statistical evidence two alternative hypotheses (\( H_1 \) and \( H_2 \)) formulated in the present study were accepted. In conclusion, there are enough statistical evidence to claim that work stress is a significant predictor variables of work-life balance, and the work-life support culture exists in Sri Lanka Customs Department is found to be a significant moderator. It means work stress affect the work-life balance negatively. However, in a work-life support culture employees could achieve the work-life balance despite of the negativity coming from excessive stress.
Discussion of findings

It was found that work stress significantly negatively associated with work-life balance of customs officers. Moreover, work-life support organizational culture was found to be a significant moderator. It was found that the direct relationship/impact of work stress on work-life balance is significantly moderated by the organizational culture that prevails in Sri Lanka Customs Department. Hence, it could be stated that even though the custom officers suffer from huge work stress as found in data analysis, they can enjoy a better balance between work and the life due to the organizational culture. So, the culture embodied in Sri Lanka Customs is the platform on which better work-life balance policies are being applied.

The found direct relationship and the impact of work stress and work-life balance has been long validated in several domains. For example, Ernest & Jama (2011); Guest (2001); Steven, Ngo & Tsang (2010) and Wickramasinghe (2012) has obtained similar results. Ernest & Jama (2011) and Guest (2001) explored the negative relationship between job stress and work-life balance of physical education teachers in Greece. Ngo & Tsang (2010) found that job stress is correlated with low work-life balance and high propensity to leave. Further, Wickramasinghe (2012) found that one of the factors mostly influence work stress is work demands and time which in turn negatively affect the work-life balance of an employed person. Hence, it is noted that the current researcher has received similar results as found in literature.

The culture that exists in Sri Lanka Customs Department is found to be a work-life support culture as per the results of this study. That might be the reason customs officers are able to a certain extent balance their lives even though they engage in highly stressful, limitless, timeless and borderless work. In line with the findings of the current research, Clark (2000) found that organizational culture is most often linked with the facets of work-life balance. As Clark (2000) mentioned it is significantly correlated not only with job satisfaction of workers, but also with long term happiness in life. Further, Beauvais & Kowalski (1993) found that work-life support organizational culture will reduce the amount and the gravity of inter-
role conflicts. Similarly, Francesco & Thompson (1996) found a culture in which employees are comfortable in balancing multiple demands facing a 'win-win' situation without sacrificing anything in life is as a proven expectation of new generations; generation Y and generation Z. It is indeed a critical eye opening finding for employers, as they are the new comers to the world of work and hence, organizational cultures must be redesigned to welcome them and retain them.

**Conclusion**

Current research is distinctive in its clarification of the organizational culture regarding the balance between work and life and has made great practical experience. It is not considered the work-life support culture in explaining the impact of stress at work on balance between work and life in up to date literature. So, with empirical findings this would address the contextual gap in Sri Lanka Customs and the inadequacy of stress theories up to date.

The findings illustrate that the impact of work stress on work-life balance is moderated by the work life support of organizational culture. In particular, the existence of a culture of support in the field of employment is the main pre-requisite for achieving the intended results of the so-called employment initiatives in Sri Lanka Customs. Hence, it could be concluded to establish and maintain such a culture at work to get the maximum expected outcome of implementing work-life balance initiatives and to manage the work stress of employees.

**Recommendations**

To obtain the expected results from work-life balance initiatives to its maximum, it is recommended for customs superiors and higher rank officers (the authority) in Sri Lanka Customs Department to nurture a work-life support organizational culture as an essential pre requisite. In such a culture employees could achieve an appropriate balance among work and the rest of life. Also, frequent employee training would be an effective way to develop employees' capacity to manage multiple expectations of multiple roles in their lives, convincing communication, proper delegation of work and the authority, allowing employees to prioritize two
domains accordingly are some of the effective ways to foster such a culture in the work place.

In line with the extant literature, to develop employees' capacity to manage multiple expectations in multiple life domains, previous studies have also shown that organizations must create and maintain a culture in which workers are allowed to effectively discuss their jobs (Carlson et al., 2009), and supports them in their work and non-work pursuits (Chou & Cheung, 2013).

**Directions for future research**

It is expected that future research studies will be carried out in the same domain, or might be in the Customs Department itself, should be initiated considering more outcome variables such as employee productivity, family satisfaction, and as well as other socio-cultural factors as moderators or mediators may increase the strength of the research model. Also, cross validation of the results in other organizations and industries is suggested. Furthermore, it is suggested that future studies should collect data from various data sources other than employees, such as: managers, team leaders/project leaders, subordinates, clients, spouses, children, and comparatively from a bigger sample as it would provide more solid and broader insights regarding the relationship between the variables considered in this research study.

However, within its boundaries, the current study successfully achieved its set objectives, and opened new possibilities for social investigations in the future. Hence, it is expected that future studies in other industries/markets/countries considering more variables, will add more value to the present research work in the field of Human Resource Management.

**References:**


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Effect of blind feeding during the first month of the culture cycle on growth of Penaeus monodon, Fabricius cultured in semi-intensively managed ponds in the North West of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The Initial feeding regime of cultured shrimp, Penaeus monodon, in many semi-intensively managed farms in Sri Lanka is based on intuition. This study was conducted to evaluate feed management strategies employed during the first month of the culture cycle (the period of blind feeding) in five selected, semi-intensively managed shrimp farms located in the North West of Sri Lanka; three earthen ponds (0.3 – 0.5 ha) in each farm were selected. Feed types, the ration, the feeding frequency and the adjustments made to feeding regime in each farm were recorded weekly. The Mean body weight and the mean % specific growth rate (%SGR) of shrimp cultured in each farm were calculated after 30 days of culture cycle.

Blind feeding was implemented in all the farms from the date of stocking of shrimp post larvae up to the first 30 days of culture. The feed ration among farms varied significantly with a range of 4.0 – 7.3 kg/day/100,000 post larvae (Oneway ANOVA, p<0.05). The farmers did not consider stocking densities of shrimp post larvae as an important factor when calculating the feed ration. A correlation was not found between the mean %SGR of shrimp and the amounts of feed given during the blind feeding period (Pearson correlation, R=-0.15; p=0.8). The weight gain of shrimp also did not correlate with the amount of feed given during the period of blind feeding (Pearson correlation, R=-0.33; p=0.6). At the end of the blind period, the mean body weight and the mean %SGR of shrimp at the end of the
blind feeding period in selected farms varied from 2.0-3.3g and 2.6-3.9 day\(^{-1}\) respectively. The early life stages of shrimp may be more dependent on natural productivity of the pond environment for food rather than on formulated feed. Therefore, there is a possibility for reduction of the amount of given feed during the initial stages of the culture cycle without compromising the growth of shrimp post larvae.

**Keywords:** *Penaeus monodon*, blind feeding, \%SGR, stocking density

**Introduction**

Shrimp farming in Asia has been developed steadily over the last four decades in response to the increasing world market demand. At the same time, shrimp production systems of many countries changed from ‘extensive’ towards ‘intensive’ with increasing inputs of high quality feed and good water quality. Though farmers pay more attention to the nutritional quality and price of feed, on farm feed management is often neglected (Nunes, 2009; Tacon et al., 2013). On farm feed management techniques in tropical shrimp culture are mainly based on intuition. To a large extent, this is because most aquaculture research has been conducted in developed countries with temperate species (Nunes and Parsons, 1999).

Feeding strategies in shrimp culture range from the use of fertilizers and simple supplementary feed mixtures to water stable pelleted shrimp feeds (Tacon, 1993; Mohanty, 2001; Nunes, 2009). The aim of feed management at the farm level is to make available the best quality formulated feeds to the animals, in the required amounts at the right times and places (Akiyama & Chwang, 1989; Jorry, 1995; Tacon et al., 2013). When feed arrives at the farm, methods of feed presentation, feeding rate and frequencies are the three main areas where much improvement can be made (Akiyama & Chwang, 1989; Hasan, 2001). Improvements in feed consumption can be achieved by feeding at a time when it can be used most efficiently. For most of the cultured shrimp species, feeding tables relating to body size and ration size as well as recommendations on feeding methods are available (Kongkeo, 1997; Cruz, 1991; Hung & Quy, 2013). However, the application of
such recommendations are questionable at the early stages of the culture cycle as
farmers cannot readily monitor the growth, survival and biomass of shrimp and
their feed consumption. In addition, information on feed management often
requires adjustments at each farm as conditions change from farm to farm. Feed
demand cannot be readily estimated using feed monitoring trays during the first
few weeks of culture cycle and therefore, available option for farmers is to practice
blind feeding. Generally, pond water is not changed during the first month of the
culture cycle.

According to De Silva and Davy (1992) the most appropriate approach to manage
feed in aquaculture ponds would be to evaluate the current feeding practices and
feeds offer rather than to develop new diets which are completely alien to farmers.
This study was carried out to evaluate feed management strategies during the blind
feeding period of the culture cycle in shrimp farms located in North Western
Province of Sri Lanka with a view to suggest possible improvements.

Methods and materials

Sampling sites

Five commercial shrimp farms located in Thoduwawa, Madurankuliya and Palawi
in the North West of Sri Lanka were selected for this study. The physical
characteristics of the farms selected are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Physical characteristics of the selected shrimp farms
(M1, T1, M2, T2 and P are selected farms)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water source</td>
<td>Madurankuliya</td>
<td>Thoduwawa</td>
<td>Madurankuliya</td>
<td>Thoduwawa</td>
<td>Puttalamp lagoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size (ha)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of ponds</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. studied</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pond size (ha) 0.4 – 0.5 0.4 – 0.5 0.4 – 0.5 0.3 – 0.4 0.3 – 0.5
Stocking density (post larvae m\(^{-2}\)) 25 20 30 15 24
Age of pls at stocking 20 20 20 22 22

Three rectangular, earthen ponds from each farm were randomly selected for this study. No attempt was made to interfere with the ongoing farming practices in the selected farms and the study was carried out from February to March, 2012.

**Farm management**

The ponds were fertilized with inorganic and organic manure before stocking of post larvae. In brief, 12 – 20 kg ha\(^{-1}\) urea and 16 kg ha\(^{-1}\) triple super phosphate were applied into the ponds. Cow dung and chicken manure at a rate of 250 – 300 kg ha\(^{-1}\) were applied to Farm T2. Each pond was stocked with *P. monodon* post larvae purchased from three commercial hatcheries. The pond sizes and stocking densities are given in Table 1.

The farms were weekly visited and all the feed management practices employed were recorded. The farm owners and managers were informed to record all day to day management procedures employed i.e. feed type, ration, feeding frequency, mode of application and other management measures such as addition of fertilizers. The shrimp were fed with a widely used, commercial pelleted feed. The percentage protein, lipid, ash and moisture levels in commercial shrimp feed were 42, 9, 12 and 10, respectively.

**Shrimp growth and feed utilization**

After 30 days of stocking, the shrimp in all the experimental ponds were sampled using a cast net. Sampling was done in the late evening covering several points throughout the pond. In each pond, more than 200 shrimp were sampled and weighed using a portable balance (Model SK 1000, NAD). The average body weight of shrimp at each pond was calculated according to the following formula:
Average body weight = Weight of sampled shrimp / number sampled. Data collected from three ponds of one farm were used to obtain mean body weight of shrimp for that particular farm. A computation reflecting the growth as percent of body weight were made using the specific growth rate as follows: percentage specific growth rate (%SGR) = lnW_2 – ln W_1 / t_2 – t_1 x 100, where W_2 = average body weight at current sampling; W_1 = average body weight at previous sampling (W_1 was considered as zero in this study); t_1 = days of culture at previous sampling (t_1 was considered as zero in this study); t_2 = days of culture at current sampling.

**Pond water quality**

The dissolved oxygen content (DO), pH value, salinity, turbidity and water temperature were weekly measured in situ using a water quality checker (Model WQC – 22A, TOA Electronics Ltd., Japan). Ammonia, nitrite, nitrate and total phosphorus levels (Parsons et al., 1984; APHA 1995) of experimental pond water were measured weekly at the laboratory.

**Results**

**Blind feeding**

The average weight increment of shrimp after the blind feeding period varied between 2.0 – 3.3g showing high variation in growth at the initial stages of the culture cycle in different farms (Figure 1). The highest and lowest average weights were recorded in the farm T1 (3.3g) and M1 (2.0g), respectively.
The blind feeding strategies considerably varied between farms (Table 2). Feed given at the first month of the culture cycle varied between 120.8 – 219.8 kg/100000 post larvae. Farm P had the highest feeding rate (7.9 kg day\(^{-1}\)) while farm M2 had the lowest rate (4.3 kg day\(^{-1}\)) during the first month of the culture cycle (Figure 2). The post larvae reared in farms T1 and P were given a significantly higher amount of feed compared to that of the other farms during the blind feeding period (one way ANOVA, p<0.05). The average weight of shrimp after the blind feeding period did not correlate to the feed amount given during the same time period (Pearson correlation, R=-0.33; p=0.6).

Table 2. Feed amounts given in selected shrimp farms during the blind feeding period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total feed given (kg/10(^5) post larvae)</td>
<td>126.8(^{ab})±40</td>
<td>198.9(^{ac})±20</td>
<td>120.84(^{b})±24</td>
<td>131.5(^{ab})±9</td>
<td>219.8(^{c})±10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding rate (kg/day/ha)</td>
<td>9.45(^{ab})±2.1</td>
<td>14.7(^{c})±2.6</td>
<td>8.3(^{b})±1.4</td>
<td>9.74(^{a})±2.7</td>
<td>16.23(^{c})±3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Values with different superscript are significantly different from each other (One way ANOVA using Scheffe'e comparison of means; p < 0.05); pls - post larvae

No correlation was found between the amount of feed given with the initial stocking densities of shrimp post larvae during the blind feeding period. Farm M2 with the highest stocking (30pls/m²) had the lowest feeding rate.

Figure 2. Fluctuation of mean feed given with respect to stocking density during the blind feeding period against initial stocking densities of shrimp post larvae

The mean percentage SGR day⁻¹ of shrimp (Figure 3) varied between 2.9 - 3.5 and it did not have a correlation with feed amount given during the same period (Pearson correlation, R=−0.15; p=0.8).
Pond water quality

The dissolved oxygen, pH value, salinity, temperature, ammonia and nitrate concentrations in experimental pond water were not significantly different (One-way ANOVA, p>0.05). Significantly higher turbidity levels were observed in pond water in farms T1 and P while significantly lower nitrite levels were observed in farms M1 and T2 (One-way ANOVA, p<0.05). Significantly lower phosphorus levels in pond water were detected in farms M2 and T2 (One-way ANOVA, p<0.05).

Table 3. Mean ± sd of physico-chemical parameters during the blind feeding period in shrimp culture ponds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Farm M1</th>
<th>Farm T1</th>
<th>Farm M2</th>
<th>Farm T2</th>
<th>Farm P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DO (mg/l)</td>
<td>4.4 ± 1.2</td>
<td>4.0 ± 0.3</td>
<td>5.1 ± 0.4</td>
<td>4.4 ± 0.3</td>
<td>4.8 ± 0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pH</td>
<td>7.9 ± 0.3</td>
<td>8.0 ± 0.3</td>
<td>7.9 ± 0.1</td>
<td>8.4 ± 0.2</td>
<td>8.3 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salinity (ppt)</td>
<td>24.8 ± 0.7</td>
<td>25.5 ± 0.7</td>
<td>25.2 ± 1.5</td>
<td>23.7 ± 1.5</td>
<td>26.4 ± 2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Mean percentage SGR day⁻¹ ± SD of shrimp against feed amount given during the blind feeding period in each selected farm
### Turbidity (NTU)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm</th>
<th>Mean ± ME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>17.5 ± 4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>26.8 ± 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>16.2 ± 6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>16.7 ± 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>28.1 ± 5.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Temperature (°C)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm</th>
<th>Mean ± ME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>28.4 ± 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>30.1 ± 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>30.6 ± 0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>29.7 ± 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>28.1 ± 0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ammonia (mg/l)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm</th>
<th>Mean ± ME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>0.18 ± 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.09 ± 0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>0.09 ± 0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>0.19 ± 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0.17 ± 0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Nitrite (µg/l)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm</th>
<th>Mean ± ME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>16.1 ± 9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>20.5 ± 6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>20.7 ± 6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>14.0 ± 3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>24.5 ± 3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Nitrate (mg/l)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm</th>
<th>Mean ± ME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>0.21 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.18 ± 0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>0.16 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>0.13 ± 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0.25 ± 0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Phosphorus (mg/l)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm</th>
<th>Mean ± ME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1.4 ± 0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.9 ± 0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>0.3 ± 0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>0.3 ± 0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1.2 ± 1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means with different superscripts in each row are significantly different (p<0.05) as determined by oneway ANOVA followed by Tukey’s pair wise comparison of means.

**Discussion**

In all the farms supplementary feed was given from the time of stocking irrespective of the quantity of fertilizer used and/ or natural food availability. The farmers did not have a methodology to assess the natural food availability in culture ponds and also there is no standard method to calculate the ration size during the initial stages of the culture cycle. Samocha and Lawrence (1992) suggested to calculate the daily feed requirement of post larval to juvenile shrimp based on a kg/ha/day basis rather than on the biomass of the shrimp. The feeding rates in shrimp culture ponds with 24-30 pls/m² ranged from 8 – 16 kg/ha/day in the present study. The feeding rate in nursery ponds of another widely cultured shrimp species, *P. vannamei* at a stocking density of 150 – 200 pls/m² were 13.1 kg/ha/day in Ecuador (calculated according to Duenas et al., 1983). Accordingly, during this study young *P. monodon* seemed to be over fed by the farmers.

Although some of the water quality parameters significantly varied among farms they were within the optimum ranges for cultured shrimp according to Poernemo,
(1990); therefore, those variations of water quality might not have a significant impact on shrimp larval growth or feed consumption during time period of the present study. Water quality deterioration during the initial stages of farming cannot be expected as the stocked animals are small and their metabolism rate and amounts of supplementary feed given are low (Tseng et al., 1998).

The lack of correlation between SGR% of shrimp with the amount of feed given indicates the importance of the availability of natural food for the growth of post larval shrimp. The availability of benthos and other food organisms may have significantly contributed to the growth of shrimp during the initial stage of the culture cycle (Rulbright & Harvell, 1981; Anderson et al., 1987; Cook & Clifford, 1997; Shishehchian & Yusoff, 1999). However, the contribution of natural pond productivity to the nutrition of shrimp decreased as stocking density increased (Apud et al., 1980; Maguire and Leedow, 1983). Farm T2 with the lowest stocking density (15 pls/m²) recorded the highest %SGR (3.9/day) during the blind feeding period. This farm was fertilized using cow dung and chicken manure, and this practice might have increased the natural productivity in the pond. Shrimp are opportunistic feeders and are able to harness food particles suspended in the water column (e.g. phytoplankton, zooplankton, microbial flocs, organic detritus, etc.) and food organisms living in the bottom of the pond (e.g. plant and animal biota), in addition to the formulated feeds provided (Robertson et al., 1993; Nunes, 2009). Therefore, adding large quantities of high valued nutritious feed without giving due consideration to natural productivity of culture water is a waste of resources and should be minimized in semi-intensive shrimp culture.

It is obvious that there is no acceptable method for determining the initial feeding rates. Farmers believe excess feed used during the initial stages of the culture cycle would help to promote the algal bloom in pond water. The use of expensive nutritious feed as a fertilizer is questionable environmentally and economically. It is important to train the young shrimp to accept formulated feed for the expected fast growth at later stages and therefore the availability of sufficient formulated feed could be essential in intensively managed ponds. According to Qingyin et al. (1995) Chinese shrimp farmers provide little or no feed at the first few weeks in
semi intensive shrimp culture ponds and this practice could be recommended for
Sri Lankan shrimp farms that are managed under semi-intensive systems.

The feed intake pattern and consumption rate of shrimp varies widely under
different agro-climatic conditions (Tacon et al., 2013; Hung & Quy, 2013).
Therefore, a site specific standardized feeding program is essential for effective
feed management (Mohanty, 2001). The results of this study could be used to
prepare guidelines for such on farm feed management strategies for semi-
intensively managed *P. monodon* grow-out ponds in the North West of Sri Lanka.

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The Sri Lankan Undergraduate in the Sinhala Press

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Abstract

The problems, protests and politics of the state university system are constantly featured in Sri Lankan media. While researchers have shown systemic reasons for violence in universities (Weeramunda, 2008; Samaranayake, 2015), public perception of undergraduates, as shown in the media, appears to construe students as needlessly rebellious and in perpetual protest. With the understanding that the media representation of a group is an important part of public discourse, this paper aims to conduct a qualitative analysis of the Sri Lankan undergraduate as shown in selected newspapers from the Sinhala press. Editorials, feature articles and news reports in Sinhala newspapers (both state-owned and privately-owned) from an eventful week in January 2012 are studied closely. A secondary aim is to identify linguistic structures used for stance-taking in Sinhala media discourse. The findings show a significant difference in the representation of undergraduates between these two types of newspapers, with the state-controlled newspapers covering undergraduate issues less whilst at the same time portraying them in a polarised manner (as victims or agents of aggression). Privately-owned newspapers provide more coverage of student issues, often incorporating student voices and explicitly showing their support of student causes. In terms of language structures, analysis shows that the discourse of the Sinhala press incorporates linguistic features such as metaphors, focused clauses, double negation, and subject deletion for stance-marking. Overall, this paper illustrates divergent public discourses on undergraduates present in Sinhala media.

Keywords: Sri Lankan undergraduates, student violence, stance-marking, Sinhala media, discourse


Introduction

The problems, protests and politics of the state university system are constantly featured in Sri Lankan media. Student politics are a particularly frequent topic in print media, which is still the most widely accessible channel of information for the Sri Lankan public. Analysing the representation of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Dutch newspapers in the 1980s, Teun van Dijk (1988) contended that the study of dominant ideologies reproduced by media needs deeper semantic analyses than those provided by quantitative oriented content analysis. Following this tenet, this paper discusses the representation of the undergraduate of state universities in the Sinhala press of Sri Lanka.

News discourse is defined by John E. Richardson (2007) as “the system (and the values upon which it is based) whereby news organisations select and organise the possible statements on a particular subject” (p.76). Bednarek & Caple (2014) state that newsworthiness is decided by reason of such factors as “Proximity (geographical or cultural ‘nearness’); Negativity (negative aspects, e.g. conflict, death, disaster, accidents, negative consequences); Eliteness (elite status); and Superlativeness (‘the more X, the more newsworthy’)” (p.136) and go on to say that it is “existing in and constructed through discourse” (p.137, emphasis in original). As such, news is embedded in broader discourses present in society at the time, being formed by them even as it influences such discourses. Of special significance to this paper are studies of news or media discourses on social movements and minority populations. Van Dijk's (1991) analysis of Dutch newspapers in the 1980s is an illuminating illustration of how the influx of Tamil refugees to Netherlands (and other parts of Europe) at the time was constructed by the press and the political elite as a ‘problem’ and used later by conservative political elements to continue anti-immigration policies. The selection and portrayal of events and actors in the press then is not an accidental or random happening but part of larger discourses at work in society.

In contrast to constant and intense attention to ‘student unrest,’ in the Sri Lankan press, scholarly attention on undergraduate violence has been sporadic (Samaranayake, 1992; Weeramunda, 2008; Zubair, 2011; Schubert, 2012). In
Ralph Pieris’ (1964) article ‘Universities, politics and public opinion in Ceylon’, Pieris discusses public opinion of universities, but there is no mention of student politics. Gamini Samaranayake (1992), using the University of Peradeniya as a case in point, ties student unrest to “the changing socio-economic background of the students and the prevailing political atmosphere in Sri Lanka” (p.112, see also Samaranayake 2015; Samaranayake 1999). In contrast, A. J. Weeramunda (2008), in a report on university violence funded by the World Bank and commissioned by the National Education Commission, argued that student violence and indiscipline “have been occasioned by a variety of deficiencies in the administrative, academic, and managerial aspects of the university system” and need multiple solutions including “reductions of [the] government’s role to providing of funds” (p.6).

The focus on student violence as a dominant theme in scholarship on universities is understandable given the high levels of violence taking place within universities. However, this also highlights a gap in our knowledge on other aspects of this complex issue. The link between student violence and reductions in state funding to universities in particular, illustrates a prevalent discourse on higher education that needs further research that moves beyond the rather straightforward correlations that are currently drawn between these factors. Given the importance of student activism to university issues, the lack of research in this area is a significant gap.

Methodologically, analyses of student violence take the form of situational overviews (Uswatte-Aratchi, 1974; Samaranayake, 2015, 2016), or narrative-based studies (Pieris, 1964; Schubert, 2012). Apparent from this admittedly brief survey is the lack of empirical research on student politics, especially from anthropological or sociological studies, and the predominant framing of student issues, even within scholarship and academia, from the perspective of violence. Academic discourses being embedded in wider social discourses, and the equation of student issues with student violence needs to be critiqued, at the same time that we, as academics, need to position and work towards violence free universities.
The paper begins with a brief review of recent events relating to undergraduates in state universities. After a summary of the design and method of study, it proceeds to the analyses of state-controlled newspapers and thereafter, privately-owned newspapers.

**Context**

A full description of shifts in the public perception of undergraduates in post-colonial history would need a longitudinal study. Still, some insight to public perception may be gained from literature that academics have produced. In the 1960s, the “Chronicle” section of the international journal *Minerva* published two reports on the state of higher education in ‘Ceylon’, as part of a regular series on global incidents (‘Chronicle’, 1966; ‘Chronicle’, 1969). It is apparent that by this time, undergraduates were already protesting against a lack of facilities and problematic administrative behaviours (e.g. related to admission of undergraduates). A report was commissioned and the Minister of Education personally intervened in the situation (‘Chronicle’, 1966). The demands for adequate facilities for larger numbers of students then appears to be a persistent issue which is still part of student demands. With their involvement in the 1971 insurrection, students were associated with revolutionary movements and national politics (a less significant issue in the 1960s). Since then, universities were seen to be ‘hotspots’ of political activity (Uyangoda, 1989; Wickramasinghe, 2005). By the 1990s, undergraduates were in the news for continuous protests, marches, and strikes, an illustration of their involvement in political movements of the country. A. J. Weeramunda's (2008) commissioned study on ‘violence’ and ‘indiscipline’ can be read as an indicator of public perception that universities were sites of violence. Weeramunda lists multiple reasons for violence in universities (including but not limited to student protests) and links it to a number of underlying issues including low quality of teaching, involvement of national political parties in student politics, lack of university autonomy, and successive governments’ inability to deal successfully with graduate unemployment – many of these echoing the Wijesekera Report in 1965 (‘Chronicle’, 1966; also see Samaranayake 2016).
Student unrest has periodically and consistently been linked to economic lethargy and the high levels of graduate unemployment in the periods leading up to JVP uprisings (Samaranayake 2016; 1997). Since the 1970s, undergraduates have also protested against national issues such as militarization, free education and privatization, showing an increased regard for issues that impinge on education. These nuances of student politics, however, are generally not seen in media discourses of undergraduate politics or in public discourses on students in universities.

Since 2010, universities have featured in public discourse significantly more, due to several reasons I summarize in this section. First, undue state intervention in university administration has increased, to the extent that it has been described as “unprecedented” by the university teachers’ trade union (FUTA 2013 May 07). During 2011-2012, the then government tried to introduce three interventions: a) the ‘Leadership Course,’ a mandatory orientation course for incoming undergraduates conducted by the Sri Lanka Armed Forces in military institutions (starting in 2011); b) the proposal to enact the Quality Assurance Accreditation and Qualification Framework bill, or ‘Private Universities Bill’ (in 2011); and c) the security services of Rakna Lanka Pvt (Ltd) which the universities were forced to hire (again 2011). Only the enactment of the private universities bill was averted, after a few months of agitation by the public, including by undergraduates. The Federation of University Teachers’ Associations (FUTA) launched its own wage campaign in 2010 and a more dynamic strike campaign in 2012.

January 2012, the month discussed in this paper, was particularly eventful. The government had stated their intent to pass the Private Universities Bill in Parliament in January, which resulted in wide spread protests by both undergraduates and academics during this month (Tennakoon & Kasthuri, 2012). During the first week of January, an iconic statue in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura was bombed (by armed forces according to students and by students according to the authorities) (Dasanayaka, 2012). Students led a protest march heading to Temple Trees. At least two universities (Universities of
Kelaniya and Rajarata) had suspended students allegedly on charges of ragging, against which undergraduates of both universities marched in protest (Kasthuri & Kumara, 2012). Rajarata University students also petitioned the Human Rights Commission against the university administration, citing as grievances the closure of the university, uninvestigated suspensions, and the lack of clinical training facilities for medical students stalling their graduation. Meanwhile, some students of the same university’s Faculty of Medicine were suspended for two years over an incident that took place in 2011 (Samarathunga, Jayaruk & Perera, 2012).

During this same month, in Sabaragamuwa University unidentified men attacked four students; while some students of the same university damaged the house of a student counselor. At the University of Ruhuna undergraduates had an altercation with the Police who prevented them from going on a protest march against the Private Universities Bill (Samarathunga et al, 2012).

As we can see, the avid scrutiny of universities by the media during January 2012 was not unwarranted as per principles of newsworthiness, particularly negativity and superlativeness (Bednarek and Caple, 2014). What I aim to show, however, is that the nature of media discourse was simplistic in some instances, and fed into stereotypes of undergraduates, though some variation occurs in terms of newspaper ownership.

Methodology

This study is a discourse analysis of the representation of Sri Lankan undergraduates in Sinhala print media, using four Sinhala language newspapers. It is not a quantitative analysis of items, but a thematic analysis focusing on the reporting of events related to universities during an eventful week in January 2012 (see above).

The choice of Sinhala newspapers was based on coverage and attentiveness to the topic. Sinhala newspapers have wider national coverage than Tamil or English newspapers. Secondly, Sinhala newspapers had a higher number of items on universities in comparison to English newspapers. A second aim is to contribute to studies on discourse in Sinhala.
The newspapers selected for analysis were *Silumina*, *Dinamina*, *Irida Lankadeepa*, and *Lankadeepa*. These newspapers were selected based on the criteria of a) ownership, b) day of publication, and c) rate of circulation. *Silumina* and *Dinamina* are published by the state-administered Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd (also known as the ‘Lake House’); *Irida Lankadeepa* and *Lankadeepa* are published by Wijaya Newspapers Ltd, one of the largest news publishing companies in Sri Lanka. At the time of analysis, the two privately-owned newspapers had higher and wider rates of circulation than state newspapers. Daily and Sunday newspapers were chosen from each sector.

After an initial survey of items in January 2012, the study focused on the second week of the month, because it had the highest number of items in print in Sinhala (and English) newspapers for the month, due to the simultaneity of major events as described in the previous section. From a total of 176 items published during the month in these four Sinhala newspapers, 38 were published during this week (distribution shown in Table 1). This particular week, therefore, shows the general discourse trends of the Sinhala press towards undergraduates and state universities in a more marked manner.

**Table 1: Number of items in print media, 11th-13th and 15th January 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td><em>Silumina</em> (S)</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Dinamina</em> (W)</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td><em>Irida Lankadeepa</em></td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Lankadeepa</em></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 38 items analysed here are genre specific: editorials, feature articles and news reports. Interviews, letters and press releases were excluded from the analysis. Interviews were excluded because the content of the interview is not produced by the newspaper. For instance, a newspaper may publish interviews from two people with opinions that diverge, conveying the newspapers’ desire to give space to different perspectives; while the decision to publish the interview (and whether to
publish in its entirety) is the editorial board’s decision, the content of the interview is outside the newspaper agency’s purview. Likewise, letters to the editors and press releases are written by outsiders to the news agency, even though their publication conveys editorial approval. Editorials, news reports, and feature articles, on the other hand, include planned content produced by the news agency’s staff, mostly under the direction of the editorial board itself. We can assume then that these genres are more representative of the discourse of each newspaper or agency.

In the following sections of the paper, I first present an analysis of the state-owned newspaper’s representation of undergraduates, followed by that of the privately-owned newspapers’ representation. A third section details the Sinhala language features that are used to show stance and focus in the Sinhala press. News excerpts are presented in two columns. The first column presents the Sinhala excerpt transliterated in the Roman alphabet. Two phonetic symbols are used: /æ/ for the open front unrounded vowel sound (e.g. vowel sound in can); /ə/ for the mid-central unstressed vowel sound (e.g. vowel sound in her). A colon indicates a long vowel sound (e.g. /ræ:n/ for ran). The second column presents a near-literal translation in English, i.e. some pragmatic content may be lost. For the purposes of this paper, references to ‘media’ should be read as references to print media.

Print Media Representation: Findings and Discussion

Undergraduates in State-Owned Media

State-owned Sinhala newspapers, Silumina and Dinamina, gave markedly less coverage to university issues in comparison to their privately-owned counterparts, producing 10 out of the total 38 items. These 10 items, however, included editorials, high in impact given their role as the opinion of the editorial board. Notably, all three editorials functioned as warnings or harbingers of evil tidings, signalling this with the use of metaphors in their titles: “the cat’s paw of a sacrifice” (“Bilipu:jaːwəkə balal aθa” 2012), “The university bedevilled” (“Sarəsaviye: bahirəvəya: eyi” 2012) and “Saturn in the university” (“Sarəsaviye: henəhura!” 2012). The metaphor used in the first two titles, that of a treasure guarded by a malevolent being (“bahirəvəya”) who can only be
appeased by a live sacrifice (“bilipu:ja:wə”), i.e., the students, is a productive metaphor for the Sinhala newspapers analysed. Referencing undergraduates as both the sacrifice and the devil is illustrative of the double-faced portrayal that characterises state-affiliated news discourses on undergraduates: on the one hand they are innocent students sacrificed to the agendas of powerful third parties, and on the other, they are violent students who wreck the university system. This latter form of typecasting is evident in the third editorial title as ‘the astrologically malefic Saturn’ (henəhura:). By indexing folk cultural beliefs carrying forceful negativity in their titles, newspapers depict universities as an uncertain space, helpless against other more powerful forces.

Lawlessness in universities, implied in the titles of the editorials, is a recurrent theme in state newspapers. University closures are dealt with in detail, using discursive strategies such as imperatives and justifying authoritarian interventions. Dinamina reports that Vice Chancellors of the universities had difficulty ‘controlling’ (“pa:lənəyə”) undergraduates and asked for ‘interventions’ (“mædihathwi:m”) from parents and the government (Priyashanthi 2012b). The image of universities as unrestrained and violent spaces is heightened by frequent reports on ragging and student protests. The editorials of Dinamina and Silumina explicitly address the closure of universities, stating that these closures are necessary measures due to the ‘troublesome’ (“kalahaka:ri:”) politics of Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) (“Sarasaviye: henəhura!” 2012); also (“Sarasaviyə bahirəvəya: eyi” 2012). By framing undergraduates as ‘uncontrollable’ and intervention as necessary, parents and Vice Chancellors are produced as the moral and institutional authorities suited for such an intervention. It implies that strong measures taken against students, and a discourse on undergraduates as a ‘problem’ is acceptable.

The reference to the JVP, an organisation long associated with student unions, is used in the construction of the dichotomous undergraduate profile. According to these news reports, while some ‘extremist’ students (“antəwa:di:”, Priyashanthi 2012b) create trouble, the majority of the students are ‘preyed on’ by ‘bankrupt political parties’ (“bankoloθ de:shapa:lə:nə paksha”, Priyashanthi 2012b). The
state newspapers cite not only the JVP but also the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as key elements in student politics, naming them ‘puppet masters’ (“ruːkədə natəwanna:”, “Bilipuːjaːwakə balal athə” 2012, Priyashanthi 2012b). The mention of two political parties associated with war and violent insurrections serves to advance the image of lawless students. At the same time, it contributes to the rendering of the undergraduate as hapless and passive victims, reinforcing the necessity for authoritarian intervention by the state and university administration.

Another thematic strand in these newspapers is the need for globally relevant knowledge, which is then shown to be lacking in Sri Lankan universities. Given here is an excerpt from Dinamina:

**Excerpt 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpt Transliterated</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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| wathman sri: lankaː weː wishwəwidyaːlə paddəthiːyə desə baləmu. ratəə wədəgath paryeːshənəyək, samiːkshənəyək, aluth nyaːyək idiripath kələ wishwəwidyaːləyək thibeːdoː? nətəhə. rateː sanwardənəyətə adaːlə aluth mathəvaːdəyək, prəvaːdəyək bihikələ wishwəwidyaːlə thibeːdoː? nətəhə. eseː nam mahajana mədal kaːbaːsiniyaː kərəmin wishwəvidyaːlə thulu siduwanneː kumakə? peləpaːli pəvəethwiːma, udgoshənə kiriːma, panthi varjənəyə kiriːma haː poːstər gəsiːma pəmanaːk wishwəwidyaːləyətə prəmaːnəwathə? (“Sərəsəviyeː henəhura!” 2012) | Let [us] look at the university system in present-day Sri Lanka. Is there a university that has presented an important study, survey, or a new theory important to the country? No. is there a university that has produced a new perspective, theorem relevant to the development of the country? No. If that is so, what happens in the universities [that are] eating up public funds? Is it enough for the university solely to go on protest marches, strikes, and poster campaigns?
The excerpt shows the news item purportedly evaluating the current status of universities. It begins with an exhortatory directive ‘let’s look,’ (“balamu”) inviting the reader, i.e. the public, to consider the function of universities together. Through this the reader becomes complicit in judging universities as failed institutions, unable to produce globally applicable knowledge. The structure of the argument is a series of rhetorical questions with emphatic negatives leading the reader towards the final rhetorical question ‘Is it enough for the university solely to go on protests marches, strikes, and poster campaigns?’ The reference to ‘public funds’ reminds the public that funds that should rightfully be used for knowledge production are misused for protest campaigns. The references to England and Malaysia are then placed as foils to Sri Lankan universities, emphasising the lack of knowledge production in the country. With the use of such linguistic strategies, the editorial builds an affective stance against the university community.

These references to global knowledge economy serve to reinforce the government’s discourse on higher education at the time (Mahinda Chintana n.d.).

In the excerpt shown below, from a Dinamina editorial, university closures are once again brought up as a necessary evil but this time, they are also linked to a particular type of knowledge production:

Excerpt 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpt Transliterated</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wishwewidiyaːlo wasaː damannato sidu wanneː æyi? iːtə diya həki keti pilithuːra wanneː jaːviːpe. deːshupaːloːnaːyə wisin æthi kəɾənu labəna kalaːhakaːriː: thaththnɔːyaː nisa meː aːyəθnə wasaː dəmiːmətə siduwənə bənəːyəː.....owungeː prədəːnə adahasak wanneː danəɾəthi adyaːpənə kəɾənəyə prəthikshəːpə kəɾə yuthu bənəːyə. danəɾəthi adyaːpənəyə prəthikshəːpə kiriːmen kisidu diyunu</td>
<td>Why does it become necessary to close the universities? The short answer that can be given to that is: these institutions have to be closed due to the troublesome situation created by JVP politics… one of their main ideas is that the capitalist education system should be rejected. By rejecting capitalist education, no developed science will be learned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
The reference to capitalist education, while seemingly contradictory to the then government’s stance against Western countries, illustrates well the neoliberal shift in national educational policies with its focus on science and technology. In some convoluted manner, the repudiation of capitalism (and by implication ‘developed science’) by the JVP, has become the reason for university closures. This discourse on the need for ‘capitalist education’ also resonates with donor agency discourses (e.g. Asian Development Bank and World Bank) with their emphasis on the dire need for training in technical and vocational education for the country. However, on the Private Universities Bill itself, which had been widely called a state move against free education, the state newspapers report rarely. Both Dinamina and Silumina carry few items on it, denying the existence of such a Bill while reporting extensively on violence in universities and university closures as a result of this. This is a significant silence, given their emphasis on educational issues. It also parallels the then government’s own process of silence, repudiation and later withdrawal of their intention to bring the Bill to Parliament.

State newspapers (through both text and title) portray university students as pawns of a political power struggle at national level. By citing the LTTE and JVP, they evoke unpleasant connections in the readers’ minds, implying the potential for future violence. The image of the student as victim is heightened with the use of paternalistic terms such as ‘children’ (“daruwan”, “lamai”) in quotes by government and university officials (Priyashanthi 2012a, 2012b). The infantalisation of adult undergraduates thus boosts the rationale for the use of force against them, as subjects of either bills or police and military disciplinary action.

By writing less (10 out of 38 items) on universities, state newspapers may have reduced visibility on this issue; yet, their decision to discuss these issues in editorials – an important subgenre in news - as well as the discursive strategies used in the reporting, illustrates that the issue is one of grave concern.
Undergraduates in Privately-Owned Media

The *Irida Lankadeepa*, published on Sundays, and its daily *Lankadeepa* are privately-owned national newspapers and account for 28 of the 38 items published during this week. The two *Lankadeepa* newspapers provide detailed coverage of events in the universities during this time period. A reason for the higher number of units, however, is their strategy of reporting multiple events in universities separately, i.e., as discrete units, rather than synthesised accounts. For instance, in one issue of the Sunday newspaper *Irida Lankadeepa* (11th January 2012, p.14), one page published no less than six separate news items on university-related events that had taken place during that week. Its editorial focused on universities, while feature articles and news reports discussed protests by undergraduates and the bomb attack on the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Its regular political feature section also discussed universities during this week. This ‘discrete units’ strategy facilitated the readers’ focus on distinct issues or events, whereas a synthesised account may have merged these different issues into a nebulous ‘university crisis’ category. However, we could question whether the number of separate items on universities would contribute to the perception of universities as strife-laden institutions. In a sense, having discrete items highlights newsworthiness in terms of ‘superlativeness’, i.e., the more news on an issue, the more newsworthy it is (Bednarek and Caple, 2014).

The two privately-owned newspapers foreground student issues rather than academic or administrative concerns. This means, they foreground undergraduate protests, their clashes with the police, and student suspensions by university authorities. The front page of the daily *Lankadeepa* on 12th January 2012, for instance, highlighted student protests by publishing several photographs of them in the centre of the page. The government’s withdrawal of the controversial Private Universities Bill was published on the same page in small type. Such visual representation draws constant attention to student activities, the message to the reader being that student concerns are a more important issue for the general public. Here again, the newspaper’s alignment with the student perspective
conflicts with the newsworthiness of the story, signalled in their desire to highlight the protest through centrally placed visuals.

Textually, however, student voices are presented more frequently than university authorities or the government, especially in the daily *Lankadeepa*. The newspapers use quotes from student union representatives; and in many instances give wider coverage to them than to university administration. One article on a student strike (Kasthuri & Kumara 2012), for example, focused mostly on the reasons for the strike and student perspectives on it, with minimal attention (2 of 7 paragraphs) to perspectives of university officials. The *Lankadeepa* also reports on press conferences held by students that are largely unreported by other newspapers. Added to these, larger fonts for headlines, central placement of headlines, and centrally placed visuals make the undergraduates the most important actor in *Lankadeepa*’s reporting of universities.

The positioning of university students as the major issue is mirrored by the discursive strategies used by both newspapers through the device of focalisation, as shown in the excerpts below:

**Excerpts 3-5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpt Transliterated</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3) owunge: siyəlu adya:pənə katəyuthu soya: bæluwe: jye:shtə shishyə kanda:yəməi (Samarathunga et al, 2012, p.6)</td>
<td><em>It was the senior student group</em> that looked after all their [the incoming students’] academic issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) me: awastha:we: sisun sahaka:rə police adika:ri:wərəya: hamuwe: kiya: sitiye: thamanta muhunə pæ:meta siduwi: thibenə adya:pənə gətəlu sambandayen sa:kachcha: kiri:mətəwath upəkuləpathiwərəya: awastha:wak nodenə nisa: mewəni arəgəlwələtə kæməetthen ho:</td>
<td>In this instance what the students have told the police sub-inspector was that <em>because</em> the vice chancellor doesn’t give them an opportunity to even discuss their educational problems, <em>they have had to resort to protests such as these whether they like it or not.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
These excerpts illustrate a more sympathetic portrayal of undergraduates in comparison to that of state newspapers, achieved with the inclusion of information and discursive features not used on behalf of undergraduates in state newspapers. These newspapers provide reasons for student protests, in excerpt 4 for example, which is not always provided or highlighted in state-owned newspapers. Indeed, in excerpt 5, the article explicitly supports the students’ position. In direct contrast to the information in state-newspapers at the time, Lankadeepa papers also state that (according to undergraduates) senior students provide help to first year students, and that the university administration is not attentive to student needs. A rare instance of the private newspapers’ incorporation of the university administration’s perspective is shown in excerpt 6 below, from a Lankadeepa editorial:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>akəmæththen ho: yomuwimə thamantə siduwim: æthi bawayi. (Bandara &amp; Chandradasa 2012, p.14)</th>
<th>From then to now, many young people, known and unknown undergraduates, have sacrificed their lives to the common cause. […] Those who govern say that what is destroyed is a pile of bricks and cement. We do not believe ever that by breaking statues and destroying images alternative viewpoints can be suppressed. (Dasanayaka 2012, p.38)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
The editorial excerpt above draws attention to the multiple forces at play in undergraduate politics. While it appears to be a balanced discussion of different perspectives, with its comment on inflexible student groups and university administration, the subtext of the editorial is the involvement of external political parties in student politics. With the use of negatives (“nowe:”) and double negatives (“næththe: nowe:"”) the reader’s attention is pushed towards unnamed external forces, implying that this is widely known information (‘not a secret’). Even though the editorial asks for an inquiry on problems faced by the universities, the use of the involutive aspect of verbs (e.g. pennum kærei or ‘is shown’) dilutes the force of the demand. The editorial appears to be supporting the students without explicitly critiquing the government.

As can be seen from this section, the Lankadeepa newspapers’ written discourse portrays student issues positively. They provide detailed accounts of the

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1 The literal English translation of “krəməweːdəyə” is ‘methodology’, an unusual choice for this sentence.
progression of university protests, stressing the peaceful dispersal by students or the use of tear gas by police and armed forces at peaceful student marches (Samarathunga et al 2012, p.6; Tennakoon 2012, p.3). These accounts counter the public image of university students as violent and uncontrolled/uncontrollable agitators. Unlike state-controlled newspapers, privately-owned newspapers critique the government by pointing to the unwarranted use of armed forces or police personnel or other action by university authorities against students.

This sympathetic portrayal is nevertheless undermined by the newspapers’ visual impact. In many instances the newspapers use photographs of student marches, occupied spaces or iconic landmarks. Most images show students in action poses that can be construed as aggressive (or at the very least, agentive) whereas police personnel are usually shown in static poses: students marching en masse, with raised fists and open mouths indicative of shouting vs the police or the army standing in lines facing students. In addition, the titles of feature articles are either dramatically metaphorical (e.g. ‘university afire’), or refer to student suspensions, protests or demands. The headlines and photographs, therefore, create a first impression of the university as a troubled and violent space, deterring from the content of the items and generating textual ambiguity. Student issues are still sensationalised, reinforcing existing stereotypes of students in state universities. This divergence illustrates the tension between the mainly sympathetic position of the news agency towards students and the tendency of the press to sensationalise an issue which is newsworthy. Despite the more detailed and nuanced presentation of the troubles within universities, privately-owned universities too, contribute to the sustained image of university students as trouble-makers.

**Linguistic structures in Sinhala media discourse**

Several linguistic features have been used by the Sinhala press for focus and stance-taking. These linguistic features are common to all the newspapers, though they have been used to different extents. These features are described below with examples.
One of the most productive strategies, common in general to media discourses, is the use of flamboyant metaphors (Fairclough, 1995). As discussed in the previous sections, this is found in the Sinhala press as well. Examples of the metaphors used are ‘cat’s paw’ (balal athɔ), live sacrifices (bilipu:ja:wɔ), ‘abyss’ (aga:dəyə), heat up (unusum viyə), old scripts (perani pitəpat) (see “Bilipu:ja:wəkə balal athə” 2012; Priyashanthi 2012a; “Sisu aragəlwələtə wisəndumə wanne: a:rhikəyətlə gələpenə adya:pənə kraməyək” 2012; “Sisu kaləbələ pitupəsə balal athak” 2012; Ranajana 2012; Tennakoon 2012; Tennakoon & Kasthuri 2012). As Lakoff and Johnson (2008) have shown, the categories of the metaphors we use are important as a way of both highlighting and hiding aspects of our experience. In this case, the most salient categories appear to be that of victimhood (e.g. ‘puppets,’ ‘live sacrifices,’ ‘offering lives’), prey (‘carry off prey,’ ‘hooking fish,’ ‘cat’s paw’) and disasters (‘arson,’ ‘abyss,’ ‘flames’). Of these, the metaphor of ‘a cat’s paw,’ is of note since its usage in the Sinhala press is different to its meaning in English. In the Sinhala press, it is used to mean not only ‘a person used unwittingly for another’s purpose’ as its meaning in English is generally given, but also as an instrument used by an agent. Two titles of articles will serve as examples of this: in ‘the cat’s paw of a live sacrifice,’ the cat’s paw is the undergraduate who is a victim (“Bilipu:ja:wəkə balal athə” 2012); whereas, in ‘An LTTE cat’s paw behind student protests’ (“Sarəsavi aragələ pitupəsə LTTE balal athak”), the term stands for the invisible hand of the LTTE that is instigating student unrest (Priyashanthi, 2012a).

A second linguistic strategy is the use of cleft sentences and assertion markers in Sinhala. The flexible syntactic structure of Sinhala allows us to move the clause that contains the main focus of a sentence to the end of the sentence. This latter part, the cleft (or focused) clause also contains assertion (or focus) markers –yi (e.g. bawayi) and –ni (e.g. “washəyənt”) which signals to the reader the authorial intent to focus meaning. In the sentence from excerpt 3, for instance, “It was the senior student group that looked after all their (i.e., the incoming students’) academic issues” (owunge: siyəlu adya:pənə katayuthu soya: bəluwe: jye:shtə shishyə kanda:yəməi) the senior students are made prominent by its placement at
the end of the Sinhala sentence and the assertion marker -yi (Samarathunga et al 2012, p.6). In the privately-owned newspapers these are used to enhance the voice of undergraduates (supporting the incoming students, trying to discuss their issues with authorities) conveying the message that protests are a result of unmet student needs. Through these, state action against students, such as arrests and police violence, is implied to be unsympathetic and unwarranted.

Two other linguistic structures are pervasive, that of double negation and subject deletion. One of these is the marked structure, double negation, which allows the author to make an affirmative statement but reduce its strength because the two negations cancel each other out. For example, see the sentence given below from excerpt 6 (“Ja’purǝ kulǝpǝthi ma:himi…” 2012, p.4):


[It is not that there aren’t other reasons for university problems, (in addition to the issue of) flexibility of these two parties (i.e., students and the administration)]

By using the double negation “naeththe: nowe:” the writer signals that the inflexibility of the two parties involved is the most significant problem even though other issues exist. However, the double negative is a marked syntactic structure, and draws attention to the author’s knowledge of other issues as well.

Subject deletion is apparent in the texts of all four newspapers. Dropping the subject is a known phenomenon in Sinhala speech, which allows much syntactic flexibility (Gair and Paolillo, 1997). From the data analysed for this paper, it is evident that written Sinhala too allows the deletion of a subject from sentences. An example from excerpt 2 is ‘by rejecting capitalist education [subject] will not be able to learn any developed science’ (danəpəthi adya:prənəyə prəthikshe:ə kiri:men kisidu diyunu vidyawak igeni:ma ə nohəki wənu ætha, “Sarəsaviye: henəhura!” 2012). In this sentence, deletion of the subject (which could have been ‘you, students, the country’) allows the avoidance of explicit stance taking for or against a group, and at the same time, provides for flexibility in reader interpretation. These linguistic devices are particularly salient in editorials, which
is a genre that entails more stance-taking than in news reports, which would necessitate a more explicit statement of agentive action in its reporting.

Conclusion

This paper presented an analysis of the discursive representation of Sri Lankan undergraduates in the Sinhala press. Focusing on an eventful week in January 2012 when newspapers reported on universities with an unusually high frequency, the paper presents the differences in the treatment of undergraduate politics between state-owned and privately-owned newspapers, using editorials, news reports, and feature articles. These differences in reporting include differences in the types of information presented, headlines, genre preferences and the amount of space dedicated to this issue. Privately-owned newspapers dedicate more space for university-related issues, and have a generally sympathetic stance towards undergraduates, as evidenced in their writing. Yet, as shown above, the message given by the visual language (headlines, pictures) echoes that of the state-owned newspapers. State-owned newspapers provide less space and the perspective of authoritative voices (e.g. university officials, government administration) rather than student voices. Additionally, the most significant aspect of their reporting is a discursive construction of the undergraduate as either a troublesome student or a hapless victim of more powerful forces.

Despite these differences, however, Sinhala newspapers utilise several language-specific features in common: the shift of clauses for syntactic focus, omission of the subject, double negation, metaphoric titles and the use of idioms. While the study considered only some genres in Sinhala newspapers, it is possible that these forms of representation and the linguistic features are used for stance-taking in media discourse in general. More extensive and in-depth studies of the language used in Sinhala media would bring us a better understanding of Sinhala political discourse. Studies of Tamil media are also important, and would greatly enhance our understanding of characteristics of public discourse in the country, especially given the lack of coverage of North-Eastern student issues in the Sinhala press.
The differences in the ideologies and discourses stemming from ownership-based Sinhala media are possibly due to the function of state-owned media. The week of the data considered here is embedded in an intensely and aggressively confrontational feud between the populations of state universities (faculty and students) and the Minister of Higher Education. As agents of the state, therefore, the state-owned newspapers may have presented state-dictated portrayals of undergraduate issues. This is, however, a disturbing implication as the simplistic and damaging discourse on undergraduates (and through that, universities) from the state perspective implies a lack of faith in state universities. Antagonistic discourses on undergraduates justify the lack of state investment in universities and the problems that universities face from the government of the time. Changes in state discourses on universities, therefore, would be a useful area of study, given current the problems in higher education.

This study also makes it evident that the ‘university student’ is still a major focus of public attention, regardless of other newsworthy events in universities, such as faculty trade union campaigns or national educational policy changes. The differences between news groups make comparative studies across media important. Are all privately-owned media as ‘supportive’ in their news reporting? Has the state media’s discourse changed over the years? What would a comparison between Sinhala, Tamil and English media tell us about public discourses on undergraduates? These are questions that would enable more concrete conclusions on media representation. This is especially important as academics, administrators as well as the students themselves are consumers and producers of these discourses.

References (Primary Sources):


“Sisu arəgaləwələtə wisəndumə wannə: a: rəthikəyətə gəlapənə adya:əpanə krəməyəkə” [the solution to student protests is an economically suitable education], (2012), Irida Lankadeepa, 15 January, p.4, http://epaper.dailymirror.lk/epaper/services/OnlinePrintHandler.ashx?issue=483720120115000...


References (Secondary Sources)


1 During the month of January 2012, these newspapers published 176 items (of the same genres) in total; whereas, only 90 items were published during this month in four comparable English newspapers (Daily News, Sunday Observer, Sunday Times, Island).
GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

1. Research Articles:
These should describe new and carefully confirmed findings. Experimental procedures should be given in sufficient detail for others to verify the work. Authors are recommended to keep their papers short, preferably less than 20 manuscript pages. The paper should comprise the following sections.

- **ABSTRACT** of not more than 250 words
  (Summarize the research focus, methodology, results/findings of the research and the main conclusions and recommendations, if any.)
- **KEYWORDS**
  Should be given for indexing and information retrieval
- **INTRODUCTION**
- **METHODOLOGY**
- **RESULTS**
- **DISCUSSION**
- **CONCLUSIONS**
- **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**
  One paragraph is suggested, with acknowledgement of financial support listed at the end.
- **REFERENCES**

2. Short communications:
A short communication should not exceed four printed pages in length including figures, tables, etc. and is suitable for recording the results of complete small investigations or giving details of new methods of techniques and apparatus. Progress reports are not acceptable.

3. Review papers:
Review papers submitted for publication should be critical analyses of a body of standard literature already available. It should examine a specific domain of an academic discipline and is expected to have a very clear and concise title, abstract, introduction, text, conclusion and a list of references, preferably in less than ten manuscript pages or in less than 10,000 words. The forgoing requirements are the prerequisites needed primarily.
PREPARATION OF MANUSCRIPTS

All manuscripts must be in English and typewritten on A4 size papers (297 mm × 210 mm) these should be submitted only after prior consultation with the editors.

With font Times New Roman and 2.0 line spacing. The left margin should be 3 cm and other margins should be 2.5 cm. The full paper should not exceed 20 pages. All the pages must be numbered consecutively.

TITLE OF THE PAPER (font-12, bold, UPPER CASE, left-justified)
(If the title is longer than 8 words, please also provide a running title for the header)

AUTHOR(S) NAME(S) (font-12, bold, UPPER CASE, left-justified)

Author(s) Affiliation(s) (font-12, bold, Title Case, left-justified)
Write the Names and Postal Addresses of All Institutions in Full. Include the Email address of the Corresponding author.
If an article is submitted by more than one author, the corresponding author should be specified clearly.

All the SECTION HEADINGS should be centred, and in bold UPPERCASE.

REFERENCES

References in the text should be cited as the author’s name followed by the year of publication in brackets. e.g. Gunawardene & Fernando (1995) or where appropriate, (Gunawardene & Fernando 1995). At the end of the paper references should be listed alphabetically. Titles of Journals should be given in full.
Examples are as follows:

Journal articles:

Books:

Articles in Edited volumes/books:
Electronic documents:
References to electronic documents should contain information for the particular document version that was viewed. Examples are as follows:

Website:

Online Journal:

FIGURES AND TABLES
All figures and tables must be placed within the text at the appropriate points, rather than at the end. In the body of the paper all figures and tables must be cited consecutively in numerical order. Tables and Figures should be numbered with Arabic numerals (Figure 1, Table 1, etc.) Use (a), (b), (c), etc., to label the parts of figures (Figure 1(a), Figure 1(b), etc.).

Equations
Equations that are important, long, complex, or referenced later in the paper are set off from the text (displayed) and may be numbered consecutively with right-justified Arabic numbers within parentheses (1), (2), (3), etc.

Abbreviations and Units
Scientific names of microorganisms, plants and animals must be used in accordance with the international rules of nomenclature and given in full. SI units and symbols should be used for physical properties.

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Authors are requested to submit their manuscripts as an Open Office or Microsoft Word file.
The final version of the manuscript if accepted for publication should be submitted in camera-ready format.

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PLEASE BE KIND ENOUGH TO STRICTLY FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES.