# ABSTRACTS OF BA DISSERTATIONS

# DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH,

# UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO

# BATCH OF 2016

**Sandani N. Y. Abeywardena**

# Judicial Reasoning on Trial: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Legal Judgments on Rape Delivered by the Superior Courts of Sri Lanka between 1995-2013

## Abstract

Language plays an important role in legal discourse and the rape trial encapsulates this link between language and law as well as the politics of gender for, by its very definition in Section 363 of the Penal Code, only a woman can be a victim of rape in Sri Lanka. By analysing legal judgments on the offence of rape delivered by the Superior Courts of Sri Lanka during the time period 1995-2013, this study adopts a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine the linguistic features and discursive practices present in the construction of the female her conduct and the offence of rape, in order to evaluate whether extra-legal i.e. socio-cultural perceptions are considered by Courts when reaching a verdict.

The analysis of linguistic features including semantic relations, modality and cohesion, reveals that judgments invoke images of women that are drawn from gender-based stereotypes, while relying on constructed social norms of blame and responsibility in a situation of rape. Furthermore, findings indicated the presence of discursive practices that obscured the causality of rape. In an effort to 'ascertain the truth', Courts classify female behaviour before and after an alleged act of rape and this classification reveals judicial expectations regarding female behaviour. These behaviours are then used as a yardstick to evaluate the veracity and reliability of the narrative of the victim. Therefore, a clear delineation of an expected code of conduct of a truthful Complainant is created and reinforced and this delineation has the effect of policing and controlling female behaviour. These discursive practices appear to draw from, support and reinforce gender-based stereotypes and attitudes regarding rape in society. By relying on such social norms and attitudes, the Courts justifies viewing the allegation of rape with suspicion and

apportions blame and responsibility onto the female Complainant, unless there is clear evidence, such as the presence of severe injuries, which satisfies the 'conscience of the Court' that she has not fabricated the allegation.

Such constructions are problematic given that by doing so the Courts invests these perceptions, which are unjustified generalisations of stereotypes, with the authority of the law. These discursive practices undermine the impartiality and fairness that is expected of the judiciary and affects the right to a fair and just trial and further legitimize such social norms. Violence against women is a violation of their human rights and the reliance on gender-based stereotypes and constructed social norms in the evaluation of evidence in a rape trial leads to further violation of the rights of the female rape victim.

**Maneesha Dullewe**

**The Metaleptic Rewriting of Self:**
**An analysis of two long-form graphic narratives, their dual construction of self and**
**narrative with characters who seek out their authors**

## Abstract

This thesis demonstrates how, in the field of narrative fiction, the mechanisms of metalepsis serve to extend beyond narrative fiction. The examination of metalepsis encompasses a critique of the concept as conceived by Gérard Genette, with the use of two long form graphic narratives; Mike Carey's *The Unwritten,* and Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman.* The Genetian explication of metalepsis as "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.) or the inverse" is taken up in this thesis. Using these two graphic narratives, it explores the transgressions between the world in which one tells, and the world of which one tells, in order to determine if fictional constructions of self (i.e. characters, protagonists, proxy readers), have a true postmodern sense of agency. Via Genette's concepts of diegetic level and metalepsis, the thesis explores the impulse behind fiction through a Foucauldian paradigm. Conceiving of the narrative as a series of embedded levels from which the characters attempt an escape, the thesis examines the possibility of ultimate deliverance from the narrative itself. The twin constructions of subject and narrative are deconstructed with a view to ultimately dismantle the concepts of authorship and the sacred text. Through *The Unwritten* and *The Sandman,* it explores how the effects of metalepsis represent traumatic experience engendered by the transgression of a diegetic character. It also examines the manner in which the fictionality of the narrative is asserted through a journey that attempts to transcend fiction, which ultimately places the universal author forever out of reach, forever on a diegetic plane or narrative level above the one that a character inhabits. The results of this inaccessibility are deemed traumatic experience, containing as it does a violation of physical spaces and narratological convention. This study attempts to highlight the manner in which these two works of fiction under examination allows ontological transgressions in order to create a

narrative from the tension between being made and unmade. The resulting ontological uncertainty exists alongside the task of authoring the self. Accordingly, *The Unwritten* and *The Sandman* reveal a certain paradigm through which one can view the construction of a fabric of reality itself and its possible impact on the subject. The central question posed by this thesis is the nature of the author of the self, in that both narratives reflect a rejection of an extradigetic author for the self. It also posits that the realization of the narratological concept of metalepsis on a story level is made possible through the graphic narrative, which expands the options of narrative. This construction is examined with an eye towards rebellion against an author, which in both these works of fictional narration ended in either death or imprisonment, as a form of creative unmaking of the subject, thus reinforcing the frames of fiction.

**Avanthi Jayasuriya**

**<u>"Neurotic Narrators"</u>**

**Abstract**

The image of the "neurotic woman" which has pervaded the literary and cultural consciousness of the West, is not a trope which is alien to the Sri Lankan canon of literature. The study explores how writers of contemporary Sri Lankan fiction employs the template of the self-narration by the neurotic female in order to create a discursive, alternate space wherein dominant tropes of feminine selfhood, identity and subjectivity posited within the rubric of the diaspora are interrogated and reconfigured. The research therefore, maps the trajectory of mental illness in two novels by Sri Lankan women writers whose writing incorporates the representation of a "neurotic woman", i.e. "If the Moon Smiles" (2000) by the diasporic writer, Chandani Lokuge and "Colours of The Sun" (2010) by Rozaine Cooray. Conceptual frameworks of narrative theory embedded in the hysterical narrative premise, diasporic subjectivity and the Mishra's notion of "diasporic imaginary" are used to foreground underpinnings of female identity in the manifestations of neurosis in the novels.

The trope of the "neurotic woman" in the fiction of Lokuge and Cooray, captures the problematic identity pertaining to the diasporic subject, whose subjectivity is complicated by the essentialized identities of gender and ethnicity within the context of the Nation. In their representation of the "neurotic woman" it is possible to create a context for comparative analysis in terms of the delineation of the tenets of homeland and identity associated with the "diasporic imaginary" (Mishra 2007). Lokuge's novel which is steeped in the problematic of ethno-religious identity where the trope of the "neurotic woman" presented within the cultural schema of spirit possession becomes a site framed by a hegemonic Sinhala Buddhist ethos, causing the psychic crisis seen in Manthri. The narrative strategy used by Lokuge interrogates and reframes the notions of identity and home nation associated with the diasporic imaginary, and its contextual implications in a period defined by an ethnic conflict. Cooray's novel delineates the "neurotic woman" placed within a symptomatic framework of depression, invoking the lack of belonging and the fractured subjectivity of the diasporic subject due to the undefined nature of her identity linked to the ethno-nationality of her home nation. The analysis demarcates how Cooray's use of

the epistolary narrative which invoke the premise of the hysterical narrative, reconfigures the tenets of home nation and identity which inform her diasporic subjectivity. As in the case of Lokuge and Cooray, the narrative premise used by the Sri Lankan women writers becomes a subversive space wherein problematic identities are reframed, thereby underscoring the text's ability to offer counter narratives by subverting the essentialised ethno-national and gendered identities of the home nation, particularly in a socio-temporal context of ethnic conflict.

**Nimasha Malalasekera**

**The Contact between Sinhala and English Orthography in Online Text Messages**

**Abstract**

Online texting refers to sending messages via online mobile messaging applications (apps). At present, using English characters to represent Sinhala words appears to be a common feature in online texting among Sinhala-English bilinguals. Much research has been conducted on the contact between Sinhala and English, features and conventions of Internet language and language contact in digital Internet genres. However, no research has yet examined the linguistic phenomenon of using English letters to represent Sinhala words. This study examines the contact between Sinhala and English orthography in online text messages in which spoken Sinhala vowel and consonant sounds are represented using English letters. The data come from a corpus of online text messages sent via mobile messaging apps like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and Viber collected from twenty undergraduates in the Faculty of Arts of the University of Colombo. The text messages were collected using the friend of a friend method. The study identifies several patterns of representing spoken Sinhala vowel and consonant sounds through English letters. The patterns are categorized into four main patterns of representing Sinhala vowel sounds and two main patterns of representing Sinhala consonant sounds. The copied English symbols which are new to the basic code (Sinhala) invoke a need to expand the conception of frequential copying for it only focuses on copied elements that are already in the basic code. The patterns of representing Sinhala vowel and consonant sounds through English symbols are identified as habitualized copies since they tend to occur frequently, regularly and normally among the research subjects. Although the frequent and regular use of the copies reflects a certain degree of acceptance of the copies by the bilingual research subjects who seem to constitute a speech community, it is necessary to observe the occurrence of the copies in the basic code over a longer period of time in order to identify them as conventionalized code-copies. Thus, the study which focuses on messages sent by informants over a period of ten months can only argue that the copies seem to appear only as part of a more general bilingual norm and seem to be undergoing a process of conventionalization. Language birth being the final

result of conventionalization, the study also shows the potential emergence of a new variety of Sinhala in which the orthographic system reflects the contact between Sinhala and English orthography. Moreover, the patterns identified help develop more user-friendly online Sinhala-English transliteration software than the existing ones like Google Input Tools, SinGlish Transliterated and SinGlish (Phonetic) Transliterated which are unable to identify certain patterns of representing Sinhala vowel and consonant sounds through English characters or have their own transliteration schemes which the users have to adopt. Thereby, these patterns challenge the conventional idea that no system of transliteration of a (more) phonetic language like Sinhala by an unphonetic one like English can be perfect.

**Asuka Randeniye**

**Talking With Lizzie Bennet: The Negotiation of Form and Content in the Transmedia Narrative of The Lizzie Bennet Diaries**

## Abstract

This dissertation examines the web video series The Lizzie Bennet Diaries as a digital text that employs transmedia storytelling, and explores the continuities and discontinuities evidenced in the form and content within a context that created an immersive, interactive experience for the audience by dispersing its narrative across multiple social and other media platforms. The first chapter situates the study within the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of digital discourse, media and cultural studies, and the dialectics of simulation and simulacra, and traces the historical legacy of the text as a contemporary retelling of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. It discusses the democratization of the internet as a possible catalyst that allowed for new independent narrative content to experiment with form, thus resulting in texts such as The Lizzie Bennet Diaries which make use of a variety of mediation techniques to problematize and question the seemingly straightforward audienceperformer dialectic. The Lizzie Bennet Diaries is thus placed within the realm of simulacra by shedding its referent, Pride and Prejudice, through its self-contained 'world' yet its interpretive capabilities appear limitless due to the nebulous boundaries that govern its performativity within and without its digital arena. The second chapter analyzes the form and content of the series vis á vis its cultural and discursive legacy of the novel Pride and Prejudice. In the convergence of cultural legacy and the divergence of discursive legacy is found the content that makes form evident by paying homage to its narrative roots; formulaic narrative strategies and references to previous incarnations of the novel abound in the digital text, perfectly encapsulated by its serialized vlog form. The final chapter deconstructs the performative aesthetic of transmedia storytelling within a digital media theoretical framework and explores its impact on the form and content of the text. It finds that the heavily mediated nature of the multiple narratives and the negotiation of character identities between the organic and cybernetic worlds of the near-simulacrum The Lizzie Bennet Diaries allows for content that is made evident through form; the multiplicity of narrative mediums allow

for the multiplicity of issues and voices to be included in the series. Thus, this study attempts to highlight how form and content are made evident within a context of transmedia storytelling in a digital text and examines its impact on the platforms, processes, and principles of contemporary storytelling, which display trends of increasing democratization through the subversion of normative storytelling and media.

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**Chamini Abesiriwardhane**

**Translator − From a Shadow to a Blaze: A Theoretical Expedition on the Translator's Agency and Visibility with a Case Study**

## Abstract

This study examines different ways in which a translator can maintain his/her visibility in a translated text. A literary text from the Sri Lankan body of (recently) translated literature is examined in the form of a case study by applying a number of key theories pertaining to Translation Studies. The text primary to the study, Hemamali Gunasinghe's *Sepalika*, is analyzed along the lines of the two translation strategies – domestication and foreignization, along with the manner in which paratextual elements such as the foreword, introductions, and footnotes are used, while also paying attention to the parallel text format of the book. The study fills a gap in the existing body of research on the visibility of the translator in the context of Sri Lankan translated literature. While the study is also expected to contribute to the discourse on the translator's agency and authority in his/her productions, scholars, critics, and practitioners of Translation Studies are expected to be the immediate benefactors of the study. The findings suggest that a translator can establish and retain his/her agency by transcending the traditional understandings of the boundaries of the selected translation strategies and paratexts, while also bringing into focus that the textual alignment of a text can be utilized to sharpen the visibility of the translator.

Keywords – Translation Studies, domestication, foreignization, paratexts, parallel text format

**Swasha Fernando**

**An Analysis of Learner Motivation in the Acquisition of English as a Second Language: A Study of the Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Colombo**

**Abstract**

Language achievement is not merely the aptitude to language acquisition but rather, a result of the interplay of numerous linguistic, cognitive and emotional factors. Motivation is a coordinate of these many factors and is constantly asserted as strongly responsible for achievement in the second language (Masgoret and Gardner 170; Oxford and Shearin 121; Noels et al 35). As a result of this, motivation proves to be an insightful source of analysis in the context of second language acquisition. According to Dörnyei, motivation is a complex phenomenon; it is both a factor internal to the learner (an individual desire or interest), as well as a factor externally determined by the socio-political construction of the learners' environment (language attitudes influenced by the language community, educational and cultural contexts of learning) (Dörnyei "Motivation" 519).

The Ten Year National Plan for a Trilingual Sri Lanka (2012-2022), asserts the need to develop English as a life skill, along with the advancement of the two official languages in order to create a trilingual nation (Fernando "Ten Year National Plan for a Trilingual Sri Lanka (2012 – 2022) Draft Plan"). Furthermore, as identified in the Graduand Employment Census 2012, according to the graduands of the Management stream, English proficiency was the next important necessity following the degree, in order to secure employment (Ramanayake 46). As the lack of English language proficiency has negatively affected the employability of graduates, this study seeks to analyze learner motivation in the acquisition of English as a second language amongst the undergraduates of the Faculty of Management and Finance (FMF) of the University of Colombo.

In order to affirm the importance of motivation in the acquisition of English as a second language for undergraduates, this study will be rooted in the dynamic interplay between the internal and external factors that affect motivation in language acquisition. It will adopt

Dörnyei's theory of the "L2 Motivation Self System" (L2MSS) to identify and understand the sources of motivation for an undergraduate second language learner of English.

As graduates of the Management stream are required to study solely in the English medium, and further seek employment in the corporate sector, the acquisition of English is vital for their progress. In order to determine factors that both promote and inhibit learner motivation, this study will rely on questionnaires to elicit the views of students with regard to various sources, sites and orientations of L2 motivation, as well as certain attitudinal measures, which may impact the SLA of English at university. It will further rely on student interviews and executive interviews in order to substantiate the findings. As Dörnyei's theory has effectively condensed many constructs of motivation, it functions as an appropriate platform for the analysis of learner motivation.

As 'sources of motivation' have not been explored before, this study attempts to do so, in the context of Dörnyei's theory. In light of this, it includes a new element to the theory, the university culture, also an aspect not considered previously, which contextualizes the theory further. The study revealed that the Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self, sufficiently motivates learners, as they rely on the said elements as sources from which they derive their motivation. However, the L2 Learning Experience, which consisted of the educational context (classroom) and the cultural context (university culture) of learning, was identified as an inadequate source of L2 motivation. The study has further analyzed this discrepancy within the sample population through a comparative analysis with certain attitudinal measures in order to ascertain the possible reasoning behind this phenomenon. On conclusion of the study, it was determined that the awareness of such factors affecting motivation in language acquisition is of absolute necessity in order to enable the reconstruction of the cultural context of learning, which would positively impact the educational context and thereby enhance the L2 Learning Experience as a source of L2 motivation.

**Atarah Senn**

**Speaking Through the Silence: The Perception of Silence Surrounding the English Theatre of the Eighties during a Decade of Socio-Political Tension in Sri Lanka**

## Abstract

The English theatre of the eighties has been looked at as a community that refused to engage with the socio-politics of the decade due to a majority of the members belonging to the bourgeoisie class of Colombo that were not affected by the youth insurrections or the ethnic riots that affected the rest of the country.

This study attempts to find if a political voice existed within the English theatre and why this voice did not create an impact or have a hold in the cultural memory of the eighties.

English theatre was seen as an art form that entertained the middle and upper classes of Colombo and as such was seen as silent during a period of acute political tension. The perception of silence constructed with regard to the English theatre of Colombo was gradually historicised through larger cultural and academic work on theatre in the eighties that did not address political engagement and the English theatre.

Memory is used as a concept in this study to gain access to a time that was historicised without the inclusion of a seemingly insignificant narrative. The archiving of new memory and perspectives of the English theatre in the eighties, allows an understanding of newer memories on a historicised narrative of theatre.

In order to discover the political voice of the English theatre within the perception of silence, the study focuses on theatrical semantics such as the costumes and props used by directors to politically engage with the audience in order to influence and impact ideology regarding current socio-political issues such as racism, rampant capitalism and state autocracy. The study primarily focuses on the performances of Dario Fo's *The Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, directed by

Steve De La Zilwa in 1987 and William Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* directed by Richard de Zoysa in 1987.

**Rebecca Surenthiraraj**

**Recognising Linguistic Identities through Language Policy in Higher Education**

## Abstract

This study explores the link between linguistic identities and language policy in the multilingual nation of Sri Lanka, proposing the higher education sector as a space within which diverse linguistic identities can be recognised and promoted through informed language planning and policy. Considering the history of language policy in Sri Lanka, post-war language planning tends towards instituting official trilingualism as a means to achieve ethnic reconciliation. Within this context, the objective of this study was to understand the significance of publicly recognizing diverse linguistic identities through a policy of official multilingualism within the specific context of a higher education institution.

A sample of fourth year students in the Faculty of Arts of the University of Colombo was chosen for the study. The findings imply that, while perceptions of the three main languages and their significance may vary, there is a need for language policy that recognises all three languages equally within both academics and administration of the departments, the Faculty and the University. The study is proposed as a preliminary exploration into formulating explicit language policies in higher education in Sri Lanka, and highlights the need for language policies that are aware of the multiple linguistic identities that exist within Sri Lanka.