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CONTENTS

Who Wants to Sterilise the Sinhalese?: A Social Media Critical Discourse Analysis on the Communal Clashes in Sri Lanka in 2018

Carmen Aguilera-Carnerero1

A Corpus-Based Method for Morphological Analysis

Nimasha Dilshani and Gihan Dias2

Linguistic Innovations, Acceptance and Norm Development: Is Written Sri Lankan English Forming Alternative Norms?

Chathuri Hediwaththege3

Seeming Neutrality of Corpora as Neutralizer of Ideological Struggles: The Case of Available Bodies of ‘Data’ on Adivasi Language

Nandaka Maduranga Kalugampitiya4

The City as Archive: Jaffna in the Sri Lankan English Literary Narrative

Neloufer de Mel5

Conceptual Metaphor in South Asian Englishes: The SAVE Corpus-Based Approach

Mandulee Mendis6

A Corpus Analysis of the Use of Prepositions of Place among the Users of Sri Lankan English

Sajith Peiris7

The Politics of Aesthetics: The Precarious Business of Judging Literature

Harshana Rambukwella8

The Acquisition of Split Intransitivity by the Lankan L2 English Learner

Kumarasamy Ravindran9

The Language of Rights: An Analysis of ‘Right(s)’ and ‘Fundamental Right(s)’ in Sri Lankan Supreme Court Decisions

Charya Samarakoon10

The Politics of Displacement: “Othering” of Refugees in Jean Arasanayagam’s Work

Neluka Silva11

After Magic Realism?: Reading *Rankarañduva* in the Age of Post-critique

Praveen Tilakaratne12

#GenElecSL: A Study on the Communicative Roles Played by Hashtags during Sri Lanka’s 2015 General Election

Sarika Warusavitarana13

Writing a ‘Hook-Up’ App for Sri Lankan English Theatre: Locating Queer Youth Sexuality with Digital Technology in *The One Who Loves You So*

Shermal Wijewardene14

Who Wants to Sterilise the Sinhalese? A Social Media Critical Discourse Analysis on the Communal Clashes in Sri Lanka in 2018

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In this paper, I will analyse the discourse of part of the Sri Lankan net community during and after the attacks undergone by Sri Lankan Muslims in February and March 2018 in the districts of Ampara and Kandy. In particular, I will analyse the comments made to the online version of one of the main English newspapers (*The Daily Mirror*) reporting the attacks as well as the comments on an informational news website with more comments (*The Colombo Telegraph*). The analysis will follow a bottom-up approach from the analysis of linguistic traits such as the transitive frames, use of pronouns, selection of lexical fields, semantic roles, social actors and collocations among others to the use of more argumentative strategies such as the topoi to the socio-discursive implications of the texts. The methodology used in this piece of research is mainly based on Corpus Linguistics as a methodology which studies real language in use (Hunston and Francis 2000) and will make use of software tools such as AntConc (Anthony Laurence, 2017). The theoretical framework that I use to interpret the data is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) drawing from Fairclough (1989, 1995) for the analysis of the linguistic traits at a syntagmatic level and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (2002) for the socio-historical contextualization to interpret the data.

Keywords: corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, extreme speech, Sri Lanka

A Corpus-based Method for Morphological Analysis

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Sinhala is a morphologically rich, highly inflected and low resource language. Morphology studies the internal structure of words and their forms in different uses and constructions. This research comes out as a major step in the development of a morphological analyser and synthesizer for Sinhala language. Sinhala verbs are conjugated in many forms to denote different linguistic information. This research is significant as a major attempt to develop a set of rules for all the conjugational forms of Sinhala verbs based on a corpus which represents different domains of official letters, newspapers and Wikipedia data. The testing data consisted of a cleaned corpus of 100,000 sentences extracted from Sinhala official letters, newspapers and Wikipedia data. The corpus was tagged using the Parts of Speech Tagger developed for the Sinhala language. The tagged verbs were extracted and the corpus was analysed manually as well. The analysis confirmed the main four verb root classes, 11 non-finite verb categories and four finite verb categories of the Sinhala language. Different conjugated forms of verbs were identified and some generic conjugated forms and verb categories were not used in the corpus. Additionally, some domains use a certain set of verb forms only. This study proposes a set of rules for Sinhala verbs based on the corpus for a computer base. Owing to the complexity of Sinhala morphology, it is impossible to have an exhaustive lexical listing as one verb root can generate more than one conjugated form. Insufficient domain knowledge and lack of standards were challenges faced in this research study.

Keywords: corpus, morphology, Sinhala language

Linguistic Innovations, Acceptance and Norm Development: Is Written Sri Lankan English Forming Alternative Norms?

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This study focuses on examining whether variant grammatical and lexico-grammatical features found in SLE writing are in the process of becoming alternative norms in SLE. The study explores the extent to which these variant features continue to occur in semi-formal writing through a corpus study and examines the level of acceptability associated with them among first/co-first language English speakers in Sri Lanka. The corpus study draws data from the Sri Lankan component of the SAVE corpus and a self-compiled newspaper corpus of 2 million words. The acceptability study is based on a sample of 80 first language/co-first language speakers of English in Sri Lanka who responded to 30 sample sentences drawn from the two corpora, 16 of which included grammatical/lexico-grammatical features of SLE. The corpus study revealed that a majority of the target features appeared at least in one corpus. The findings of the acceptability study reveal that there is a strong consensus regarding the acceptability of 'come down' as a variant phrasal verb belonging to Standard SLE. It also revealed that, even though the sample is not completely exonormative in its language attitude, a strong consensus cannot be observed among the respondents regarding the acceptability of a majority of the features while there is a very strong consensus regarding the unacceptability of five features. Thus, it is too early to conclude that a majority of these variant features can be considered to be accepted as alternative norms in SLE.

Seeming Neutrality of Corpora as a Neutralizer of Ideological Struggles: The Case of Available Bodies of ‘Data’ on Adivasi Language

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This paper engages with the political and ideological dimension of corpus building. A corpus in the sense of a body of concrete, raw, and unmediated data yet to be analysed by a researcher has the appearance of neutrality. According to the available scholarly accounts on corpus building many of which take the appearance of user-guide manuals, there are no significant political concerns regarding a corpus as long as that corpus is adequately ‘representative’ and ‘balanced’. Based on an engagement with the existing bodies of ‘data’ on the Adivasi language in Sri Lanka, better known as the Veddah language, the paper explores the political and ideological undercurrents that define the seemingly concrete, raw, and unmediated bodies of ‘data’ on the Adivasi language. In a context where there are competing and contradictory views on the nature of the Adivasi language both within and outside the Adivasi community, the assumptions that appear to have governed the formulation of the existing bodies of ‘data’ or ‘corpora’ privilege some of those views over the others. This paper seeks to establish the argument that the aura of neutrality and (scientific) objectivity that such data/corpora are generally understood to embody invariably elevates the privileged views to the level of (scientific) ‘truth’, while undermining the validity of the rest of the views. It also argues that such an approach fails to provide useful insights into the way (the) language functions on the ground.

Keywords: Adivasi, corpus, ideology, language, Veddah

The City as Archive: Jaffna in the Sri Lankan English Literary Narrative

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In *Running in the Family*, Michael Ondaatje's journey towards recollection and his family, begins (after a brief prologue and when in Sri Lanka) with a holiday spent at the Governor's bungalow inside the 17th Century Fort in Jaffna. Amidst the witty, impish, yet intricate Chinese box of stories Ondaatje's aunt provides of his family, is a reflection on the Fort as a stronghold of colonial territoriality, haunted and fading now, and a sideways mention of why Ondaatje is at the Governor's bungalow - as a guest of his uncle inquiring into "race riots" - i.e. the anti-Tamil violence of 1977.

The focus of the tales *in* Jaffna, however, are not *about* Jaffna, except brief references to the Fort, the bungalow, food and drink. As such, Jaffna in the memoir provides a useful heuristic for thinking about the city's place as a space, locus of identity, contestation and metaphor in Sri Lankan literature in English. In what ways does this literature provide "a habitation and a name" to the city of Jaffna while at the same time being affected by its transformations? How are relational spaces brought into being in this literature? What happens when we triangulate the city, ethnic minority and narrativity in this literature? Drawing on insights from cultural geography and urban studies, postcolonial studies and narrative theory to answer these questions, as well as selected literary texts linked in multiple ways to the Gratiaen Archive, the paper analyses Jaffna as a narrativised location, a loaded referent, and a performative. It thereby speaks to both the overall theme of the conference (corpora, archive and performance) and more specifically to the theme of interrogating conflict and post-conflict.

Keywords: Jaffna, relational spaces, warscape, Sri Lankan literary narrative in English

Conceptual Metaphor in South Asian Englishes: A Corpus-based Approach

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The extensive development of different varieties of English across the world emphasizes the significance of a variety of English that can reflect the world views of a community. A variety should be examined from not only the aspects of lexis, syntax and phonology, but also from the perspective of cultural conceptualizations in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of how English is used by communities of speakers around the world to express themselves. Cultural conceptualizations of a community are embedded in the conceptual metaphors used by the members of the community. The South Asian region, with its numerous cultures, possesses varieties of English that contain distinctive conceptual metaphors. However, conceptual metaphor in South Asian Englishes is an under-researched field and thus calls for scholarly investigation. The corpus-based approach has been widely utilized in conceptual metaphor research in world Englishes. The South Asian Varieties of English (SAVE) corpus contains data from six South Asian countries. This paper examines whether the SAVE corpus contains the potential to be utilized to investigate conceptual metaphor in South Asian Englishes. The study qualitatively analyses the features of the SAVE corpus in relation to the demands of conceptual metaphor research and argues that approaching the study of conceptual metaphor in South Asian Englishes through the SAVE corpus, is acceptable.

Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor, SAVE Corpus, South Asian Englishes

A Corpus Analysis of the Use of Prepositions of Place Among Users of Sri Lankan English

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This study is an attempt to investigate the use of prepositions of place in Sri Lankan English. Prepositions are considered one of the most elusive of grammatical categories in linguistic literature. Some languages entirely dispense with prepositions while even among the languages that make use of prepositions, it is difficult to find precise cross-linguistic patterns. Such variation is the result of the highly polysemous nature of prepositions and their tendency to engender idiosyncratic constructions. Hence, it is highly likely that even among the varieties of the same language, there are differences in how users make use of prepositional constructions. The present study utilized the written component of the ICE-SL corpus to analyze the use of three prepositions of place – *in*, *on*, *at* – by users of Sri Lankan English. The analyses revealed that the preposition, *in* is largely favored by Sri Lankan English users in constructions that would typically be produced with the preposition, *on* in Standard British or Standard American English. However, the use of *at* does not indicate such a clear pattern of a variety-specific use. It is proposed that the tendency among Sri Lankan English users to substitute *in* for *on* is the result of the rather idiosyncratic distribution of constructions that make use of the prepositions, *in* and *on*. The seeming use of a single postpositional affix by both Sinhala and Tamil to indicate the lexical nuances conveyed by the three English prepositions of place – *in*, *on*, *at* – is presented as additional proof of their idiosyncrasy.

Keywords: corpus analysis, English prepositions, Sri Lankan English

The Politics of Aesthetics: The Precarious Business of Judging Literature

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Since its inception Gratiaen prize judgments have attracted more criticism than admiration. A fair degree of this criticism is based on the perception that Sri Lankan writing in English is limited in its imagination, scope and range. This perception in turn is informed by the view that English writing in Sri Lanka has historically failed to substantively engage with Sri Lankan reality and that it is essentially reflective of narrow preoccupations of an English speaking, elite, urban class. In addition to this concern with the content of submissions many Gratiaen judging panels have also commented on the quality of submissions based on a notion of ‘craft’ – or the idea that ‘good’ literature requires not simply creativity or inspiration but persistent effort at shaping such inspiration into a worthy literary artefact. The focus on craft also implicitly shifts the judgment from content to form. In addition to these factors, Gratiaen judgments are further complicated by the open multi-genre policy of the prize – deciding what ‘good’ literature is from a diversity of genres is challenging because of the multiplicity it represents in terms of form and content.

This paper seeks to make the above context an occasion to reflect critically on the ‘business’ of judging literature. With the theoretical turn in literary studies, succeeded by its culturalist turn, questions of literary form and the aesthetics of literature have largely receded to the margins. Given the value judgments that inevitably bear upon any form of aesthetic evaluation, and the persistent critique of canonical approaches to literature, the reluctance or avoidance of explicitly aesthetic questions is understandable. However, regardless of the academic critique of literature, literary prizes like the Gratiaen have a significant impact on public perceptions on literature and the ‘endorsement’ a literary work receives by winning a prize contributes significantly to its afterlife and circulation within public and institutional discourse. Also, though academic literary criticism may not explicitly engage with aesthetics or aesthetic criteria implicit notions of ‘good writing’ do continue to inform academic criticism of literature. This paper critically engages with the politics and ideology of literary judgments by critically engaging with a select number of texts from the Gratiaen archive alongside judging criteria used by some Gratiaen judging panels. It also explores in brief different aesthetic ideologies ranging from the Kantian notions of ‘originality’, through Bourdieu’s notion of ‘taste’, to postcolonial critiques of canonical aesthetics and looks at how these aesthetic ideologies might help us understand the ‘business’ of judging literature in the Sri Lankan context.

The Acquisition of Split Intransitivity by the Lankan L2 English Learner

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Intransitivity involves agent-subject verbs, unergatives, and theme/patient-subject verbs, unaccusatives. This is known as split intransitivity. Change of state verbs belong to unaccusatives, which give production to causative-inchoative alternation (causative - The boy broke the pot; inchoative – The pot broke.) by virtue of verb semantics. In English, the verbs appearing in these two structures share the same shape, whereas in Sinhala/Tamil there is an extra morphology in the inchoative to show this distinction. This study addresses the acquisition of causative-inchoative alternation in English by L2 learners who have Sinhala/Tamil as their first language. The study specifically asks the question if Sinhala/Tamil L2 English learners at intermediate level are able to acquire split intransitivity in relation to causative-inchoative alternation. Using an acceptability judgement task learners belonging to UTEL Bands 5 and 6 along with a group of L1 English users as controls were asked to judge both grammatical and ungrammatical sentences in relation to causative-inchoative alternation. Although the learners performed averagely in accepting the grammatical sentences, they fail miserably in rejecting the ungrammatical sentences. Thus the study demonstrates a learnability problem in split intransitivity as they are not sensitive to unergative-unaccusative distinction. They over/under causativize and over passivize, which shows incomplete development of lexical argument structure. Recognizing the absence of a focus on verb semantics in the L2 English curriculum and guiding morphology in the verbs in English, the findings support the idea that for interlanguage to have more target-like properties in this domain there needs to be more verb semantics based input in intransitivity.

Keywords: split intransitivity, causative-inchoative alternation, unergatives-unaccusatives, learnability problem

The Language of Rights: An Analysis of ‘Right(s)’ and ‘Fundamental Right(s)’ in Sri Lankan Supreme Court Decisions

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The 1978 Constitution of Sri Lanka constitutionally entrenched for the first time a chapter of justiciable Fundamental Right. In the four decades since then, the Supreme Court has interpreted in countless decisions the scope and nature of each of these rights. The rich and stimulating findings which corpus analysis could bring forth from this body of judicial decisions has not been previously researched. This paper examines a Sri Lankan English legal corpus of over 5 million words made up of 1089 judicial decisions. Comparisons made between the four subcorpora consisting of the decisions for each decade reveal how the word ‘right(s)’ and the phrase ‘fundamental right(s)’ are used in contexts of restricting or derogating and in contexts of extending or implying.

Keywords: corpus analysis, legal corpus, rights, Sri Lanka, Supreme Court

The Politics of Displacement: “Othering” of Refugees in Jean Arasanayagam’s work

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“Shouldn't the existence of even one single refugee be a cause for alarm throughout the world?” (Alakbarov: 2009). This poignant question is at the core of some work of the 2018 Gratiaen Prize winner in Sri Lanka, Jean Arasanayagam. Her experience as a “refugee” (IDP) during the 1983 ethnic riots, impelled her to interrogate the politics of displacement, which is even more critical as refugees are made the targets of global intolerance, and demonised as the “other”. Through an exploration of two short stories “The Journey” and “Fear: Meditations in a Camp” (All is Burning) and selected poems from *Apocalypse '83* I will explore how “... by breathing life into fictional characters, literature turns the anonymous, the global statistics of horror into individualized, personal case studies, ... even if very often fiction can only helplessly record oppression, it can also denounce it” (Messo Piquel, 2007: 150). Recounting experiences of alienation, displacement, interwoven with the everyday realities such as hunger, Arasanayagam’s work captures the psychological, emotional and physical burden of being a “refugee” and the “othering” they endure. “Refugees ... are most often constructed as ‘Others’ and increasingly their identities are territorialized” (Hydman 2000: xxii). The individual’s predicament of exclusion, captured in Arasanayagam’s work, enables an interrogation of political and social marginalization that is symptomatic of displacement. Her work foregrounds the compelling search for identity and belonging that such a situation provokes.

Keywords: Arasanayagam, marginalization, “other”, refugee

After Magic Realism?: Reading *Rankarañduva* in the Age of Post-critique

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This paper argues that the genre ‘magic realism’, conceived as an ideal type, conforms to the general logic of ‘critique’, that is, the dominant paradigm through which much of post-Kantian thought has operated. Being bound by the logic of predicating the term ‘magic’ to the subject ‘realism’, such that realism is modified, deconstructed, or improved, but never fundamentally abandoned, magic realism thus remains a moment within the historical becoming of realism, still very much a part of the secular world co-habited by critical philosophy. Moreover, in the same way that critical philosophy is bound to an a priori subject-object relation, magic realism too is bound by the limits of what has been ‘given’ as reality, which it can then proceed to critique or deconstruct. In more recent times, however, there have been movements away from this paradigm, with the ‘post-secular’ being announced in cultural studies, and the ‘post-critical’ being discussed within continental philosophy. This begs the question as to whether there is an ‘after’ of magic realism, or whether the novel form as such depends on a certain unsurpassable relation to realism. In this paper, I explore this problem in light of Ven. Batuwangala Rahula’s 2015 novel *Rankarañduva*. While arguing that *Rankarañduva* cannot be reduced to an allegory of the post-critical, especially on account of its complex relation to Buddhist aesthetics, I argue that it nonetheless signals an albeit vague possibility of thinking, writing, and being beyond both magic realism and critique.

Keywords: magic realism, post-critique, *Rankaranduva*, Batuwangala Rahula

#GenElecSL: A Study on the Communicative Roles Played by Hashtags during Sri Lanka's 2015 General Election

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This paper draws on a corpus of 6201 tweets including the hashtag #GenElecSL, that were generated during the 48 hours leading up to Sri Lanka's 2015 general election in order to analyse the communicative roles played by hashtags. It draws on a conversational vibrancy framework (Lin et al.) and a classification of hashtags based on Roman Jakobson's model on the functions of language (Recuero et al.) to closely examine how hashtags were created and utilised by members of a discourse community to help facilitate online political discourse. It was established that event specific hashtags such as #GenElecSL were created by the community to better organise and facilitate commentary and debate on the general election. These hashtags were also seen to fulfil multiple communicative functions in connection with the content of a tweet and in relation to other hashtags, leading to the conclusion that with reference to Sri Lanka's 2015 general election, hashtags functioned as a mechanism that both facilitated and framed political discourse and interactions between users.

Keywords: discourse community, hashtag, political discourse, Twitter

Writing a ‘Hook-Up’ App for Sri Lankan English Theatre: Locating Queer Youth Sexuality with Digital Technology in *The One Who Loves You So*

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This paper is situated in, and contributes to, the study of the role played by digital technologies in shaping perceptions of sexuality and relationships, both in society in general and more specifically in cultural production. I explore the co-construction of queer youth sexuality and digital technology in the scripting of *The One Who Loves You So*, a contemporary Sri Lankan English theatre production, (2018) by Arun Welandawe-Prematilleke. I focus on how the sexuality of the two young gay and bisexual male characters is written to be performed from the perspective of their use of smartphone technology, primarily the sex-seeking dating application, Grindr, as well as Skype, Instagram, pornography sites, and texting. Concurrently, I look at the ‘writing’ of the hook-up app for the stage. I explore how technology is understood in the play by virtue of it being assigned a discursive connection with young people’s engagement with sexuality and the digital, and I highlight how that understanding of technology is materially performed and instantiated. The paper favours a constructionist approach, following Dalessandro (2018) and Miller (2018). It finds that the play affords a non-linear yet evolving understanding of configurations of sexuality in relation to digital technology and vice versa, mimicking the fluid online-offline transitions typical of dating apps such as Grindr. The paper argues that the performatively abrasive-tender relationship between the two male characters stands for the theatrical representation of the conflicted relationship between queer youth sexuality and digital technology.

Keywords: digital technologies, Grindr, hook-up apps, Queer youth sexuality, Sri Lankan English theatre writing

