

MORPHOLOGICAL PROCESSES IN THE LANGUAGE OF FACEBOOK

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Social networks including Facebook®, Twitter® and Instagram® have gained popularity throughout the world and thus have emerged with distinct cultures of their own. The fact that interactions on them are done ‘virtually’ without one to one communication emphasises the significance of written medium of communication in social media. This stance is evident in the culture of Facebook where a considerable number of Sri Lankans are engaged in social networking. Online chatting, posting various updates, captioning photos and videos are done through texts, thus ‘language’ plays a key role in the communication that takes place. Therefore, a remarkable linguistic culture has emerged, with numerous ‘new words’ entering the language every day. Accordingly this study concentrates on the usage of English particularly by Sri Lankans who interact through Facebook. However, in the instances where borrowings are concerned, the influences from and upon Sinhalese are also discussed. Various social and cultural implications were taken into consideration in order to analyse the semantic changes and culture – bound expressions. The proposed study is a participant observation in which the researcher conducted the analysis while actively participating in the activities that happen on Facebook. A number of Facebook profiles of both Sri Lankan and foreign users, Facebook chats, Facebook pages that are administered by local and foreign users and the design of the website in general are thus considered the primary source whereas the literature on morphological processes and the language on the internet serves as the secondary source. The analysis of these new words exposes various morphological processes, which are compounding, initialism, acronym, semantic expansion, affixation, blending, semantic shift, functional shift and borrowing. Remarkably, existing words are employed to create new words and new meanings rather than coining entirely new words. A significant number of morphological processes attempt to shorten longer phrases and sentences.

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