The Morphology of Sri Lankan Text Messages

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Abstract : Communicating via a text or an SMS (Short Message Service) has become an integral part of our daily lives. With the increase in the use of mobile phones, text messaging has become a genre by itself worth researching and studying. It is undoubtedly a major phenomenon revealing language change. This paper attempts to describe the morphological processes of text language of urban bilinguals in Sri Lanka. It will be a typological study based on 500 English text messages collected from urban bilinguals residing in Colombo. The messages are selected by categorizing the deviant forms of language use apparent in text messages. These stylistic deviations are a deliberate skilled performance by the users of the language possessing an in-depth knowledge of linguistic systems to create new words and thereby convey their linguistic identity and individual and group solidarity via the message. The findings of the study solidifies arguments that the manipulation of language in text messages is both creative and appropriate. In addition, code mixing theories will be used to identify how existing morphological processes are adapted by bilingual users in Sri Lanka when texting. The study will reveal processes such as omission, initialism, insertion and alternation in addition to other identified linguistic features in text language. The corpus reveals the most common morphological processes used by Sri Lankan urban bilinguals when sending texts.

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