Substitution and Transition of English Lexicons: Focusing on Japglish and Singlish

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Abstract—This article examined the use of English lexicons (i.e., loan words) in the contexts of Japanese language and Sinhala language. Japanese language and Sinhala language are said to be identical in many linguistic aspects. Moreover, with the development of English language education, both languages have successfully adopted many lexicons from English into their own contexts. A comparison was conducted on Japanese and Sinhala languages with relation to the use of English loan words. This study, first, examined the transitional system in Japanese context (alias *Japglish*), and the substitution system in Sinhala language (alias *Singlish*). Then, the two systems are compared to seek whether, the processes of adaptation, and the nature of use, show any typological facts that linguistically binds both languages. The review showed that in Japanese language, the transition system allows to use four types of English loan words. In Sinhala language on the other hand, there are three types of English loan words that are being used by the substitution system. A further analysis showed that both systems possess unique aspects, though not identical conversely. Overall, this study concludes that, *Japglish* and *Singlish* demonstrate typologically incongruence in the process of adaptation and the nature of use.

Index Terms—lexical transition, lexical substitution, loan words, English lexicons, Japglish & Singlish

I. INTRODUCTION

It is widely known that English plays a major role as a common language in communication in many societies as either a second language or a lingua franca (Tonkin, 2004). According to this study, although the number of native speakers are greatly high in Chinese language (and English is been second high), English language dominates the status of been the first among other languages used by many states and people. While there are some contradictions to this phenomenon from different angles, there are also some unique developments in the field of sociolinguistics due to the spread of English language in non-native English speaking societies. Some states have taken additional steps to establish a unique usage of English language with that of their own in the country. In Japan for example, where English language is used and taught widely as a second language, has developed a transitional system of English loan words called Japanized English words [Zhang, Tamaoka, and Hayakawa, (2014), Shibasaki, Tamaoka, and Takatori, (2007)]. On the other hand, in Sri Lanka where English language is considered as a lingua franca, has developed a system that substitute English loan words with that of Sinhala language [Kanduboda, 2009; Premawardhana, 2003; Weerakoon, 2000].

According to linguistic typology on Japanese language and Sinhala language, many aspects in both languages are said to be identical [Miyagishi, 2003, 2005; Noguchi, 1984]. The main typological element between Japanese language and Sinhala language lies in word order phenomenon; in which both languages belong to Subject-Object-Verb word order class and they both possess a free-word-order phenomenon mostly in their colloquial styles [Kanduboda & Tamaoka, 2009; Tamaoka, Kanduboda, and Sakai, 2010; Kanduboda, 2014]. The English language is also being used in both Japan and Sri Lanka for long time. Although the records suggest that English has started to spread through the island as early as 1600 due to the initial contacts between the Japanese and Europeans[i], adoption in the society has taken several decades due to many social issues in politics, economics and education. In contrast, the case with Sri Lanka, English education has begun with the roots of colonization during 18s[ii] under British rule. Despite the historical background, both countries possess their own languages; Japan with Japanese and Sri Lanka with Sinhala or (Sri Lankan) Tamil. Thus, the English language automatically becomes the second language to people in both countries[1]. However, both countries treat English language in different scheme; for Japan, it's a second language, while for Sri Lanka it's a lingua franca. Despite these differences, both Japanese language and Sinhala language have been able to adopt English loan words into the daily contexts in a unique way.

The main purpose of this study is to examine the transition system in Japanese and the substitution system in Sinhala to discover any typological aspects that can be traced in the usage. The Japanese English is surveyed with transition by many linguistic scholars and have given ample evidence on the phenomenon. For Sinhala English, information on the substitution system is very limited but informative at the same time. Therefore, this study will overview the phenomena via the data from previous studies, and conduct a simple comparison between Japanese language and Sinhala language

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[1] It should be noted that for some Sinhala or Tamil people English may be the third language since they learn either Sinhala or Tamil as another language before account with English education. However, is not taken into consideration in this paper.

to seek linguistic evidence on both languages.

This paper constitutes following steps. The next section will be responsible for providing information on Japanese English and its' transition system. Following chapter will present information on the substitution system of Sinhala language according to previous studies. Finally, the conclusion will deliver the overall summary of this study.

II. TRANSITION OF ENGLISH LEXICONS IN JAPANESE CONTEXT - JAPANIZED ENGLISH ALIAS *JAPGLISH*

According to a previous study done by (Shibasaki et al. 2007), there are two main arrays of argument for Japanized English. On one hand, a set of scholars consider Japanized English as an entry to the English language education. On the other hand, another set of scholars consider (especially with katakana English) Japanized English with negative consequences. Many arguments can be made to support and oppose both views in different ways. For example, in pedagogical view, the same phenomenon can be analyzed within the framework of Japanese as a second or third language to the native speakers of other languages. Another approach can be taken from linguistic perspective seeking the properties of the system, typological aspects with other languages and onwards. This paper examines the phenomenon in linguistic typology with relation to Sinhala language. Accordingly, the same phenomenon will be used as *Japglish* for the sake of this paper's purpose.

Japanese basically has three writing systems; *hiragana, katakana* and *kanji. Japglish* is written mostly in *katakana (as katakana is the system that allocated to write anything that is foreign)* and altered to many forms afterwards. There are four types of *Japglish* proposed in (Shibasaki et al. 2007). Further studies have examined the usage of these types with relation to Japanese language education. The results have demonstrated variety of difficulties in the processing of Japanese language by many learners such as English native speakers, Chinese native speakers, and Korean native speakers (Zhang et al. 2014; Yamato & Tamaoka, 2011, 2012). However, these four types of Japglish are used in daily conversations by the Japanese native speakers.

In Shibasaki et al. (2007), the first type consists of lexicons that are also in English but used with a different meaning. For example, English "smart" semantically represent the meaning of "being talented", where as in *Japglish* "smart (written and pronounced as *suma-to*[2])" is semantically expresses when someone been "thin, good looking and handsome". The second type consists of lexicons which are shorten or deformed. For example, English "department store" is shorten in *Japglish* as "depart (written and pronounced as *depa-to*)". The third type consists of lexicons that are not in English but sounds like English. For instance, in *Japglish* there is word "nighter[3] (written and pronounced as *naita-*) which represents the meaning of a night game (especially in baseball). Finally, the last type consists of lexicons that exists in English but are combined/ adjoined to produce another meaning. For instance, English "hello" and "work" is combined as "hello-work (written and pronounced as *harowa-ku*[4])" which expresses the meaning of "a job hunting center/ job bank". It should be noted that these *Japglish* widely used in written Japanese as a part of Japanese language.

Overall, it is evidential that the transition system in Japanese demonstrates quite uniqueness in adopting English language to its own. The loan words have been altered to some extend and adjusted in order to fit in the Japanese language context. Thus, original linguistic aspects such as word order, grammatical structure needn't to follow any changes and the new set of words can smoothly be fitted into Japanese context. In linguistic view, even though the semantic properties have being changed, the word class of origins has remained unchanged, nouns/ combined nouns. However at the same time, it is also evidential that due to this uniqueness, English native speakers who learn Japanese as a foreign or second language face difficulties in recognizing and processing sentences with real meaning, and wise versa.

The transition system is quite unique in Japanese language settings. The substitution in Sinhala language is correspondingly promotes another unique method of adopting foreign language into the own contexture. The next part will provide further details in this regard.

1. Substitution of English lexicons in Sinhala context - Sinhala English alias *Singlish*[5]

According to previous studies (Kanduboda, 2009; Premawardhana, 2003; Dissanayaka, 2007) substitution of lexicons from other languages such as Portuguese, Dutch and English have referred to the terms called language mixing and borrowing (and there is another accompanying term as language switching in sociolinguistics, however is not taken into consideration in the present argument[6]). Among other languages, English is said to play a major role in Sinhala context especially in colloquial form (the other is known as written) due to historical reasons (long period of colonialism) and economic, educational developments.

There are evidence that the substitution of English lexicons is mostly happened with content words such as simple nouns, combined nouns etcetera (but not functional words such as at, in, on etc.). An overall outline of Sinhala language

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[2] Long vowel as <u>a</u> in 'c<u>a</u>r'
[3] Pronounced as light-<u>lighter</u>
[4] English 'lo' is pronounced in katakana as 'ro'
[5] It is not the first paper to introduce the term *Singlish* as it has been used in some other previous studies (for example, Dissanayaka, 2007). Thus a further explanation will be omitted.
[6] In some studies the term *language* is replaced with the term *code* according to different approaches. A detailed explanation of these three terms; *borrowing, mixing and switching*, is given in following studies (Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 1990; Hoffmann, 1991; Nishimura, 1992). However, due to the controversies of these terms this study applies the term called lexicon substitution.

and its' substitution system are given by Dissanayaka, (2007). In his book he explains that people in Sri Lankan whose native language is Sinhala, use English in their daily conversations to a great deal. According to this study, there are number of methods which English lexicons are substituted into Sinhala language. As the study suggest, the substitution system depends on whether the English denotes a person, thing/ property, place or action[7].

Table 1 represents patterns of substitution from English to Sinhala with relation to nouns. First, English nouns that denote persons can be substituted with a Sinhala noun by adding a suffix to the original (which entails no change of original form). For example, English "waiter" is used in Sinhala context by adding the suffix –*kenek* as in *waiter-kenek*. Again, some English nouns which denote properties can also be suffixed to express people from a different angel. For example, word "bicycle" can be suffixed with –*kariya* to make *bicycle-kaariya* to express a "female cyclist". The same method again is applied to substitute nous like car, bus etc. suffix –*eka* is added to the end of English nouns and used in Sinhala context. The same methodology is used to adopt nouns for places such as China, toilet, Office and so on. Not only the nouns, but also verbs have been substituted into Sinhala context as illustrated in table 2.

Table 1. Patterns of English lexical substitution in Sinhala language – *noun substitution*

Original properties	English origin	Sinhala Suffix	Embedded form	Representation in Sinhala
Person	waiter	kenek	waiter-kenek	a waiter
		la	waiter-la	waiters
Thing	bicycle	kaari(ya)[1]	bicycle-kaari(ya)	a female cyclist (indefinite)
		kaariya+k[2]	bicycle-kaariyak	a female cyclist (definite)
		kaariyo	bycycle-kaariyo	female cyclists
		kaaraya	bicycle-kaaraya	a male cyclist
		kaarayo	bicycle-kaarayo	male cyclists
Thing	car	eka	car-eka	a car
		s[3]	cars	cars
		eka-ta[4]	car-eka-ta	to the car
Place	China	wala-ta	china-wala-ta	to China

Note: All the substitutions are used in colloquial spoken style.

1 *kaari can be used with or without ya.*

2 *suffix -k is a definite marker.*

3 *Pronounced as in English plural s.*

4 *Dative ta showing a direction.*

Table 2. Patterns of English lexical substitution in Sinhala language – *verb substitution*

Original properties	English origin	Verb	Embedded form	Tense
Action (transitive)	develop	karanawa	develop-karanawa	develop/ developing (present)
		kara/kala	develop-kara/kala	developed (past)
		karanna	develop-karanna	request to develop (future)
		karai	develop-karai	will develop (future)
Action (intransitive)	develop	wenawa	develop-wenawa	developing
		wuna	develop-wuna	developed
		wenna	develop-wenna	to develop (future)
		wei	develop-wei	hope development/ing (future)

Table 2 illustrates how Sinhala has substituted English lexicons (in this case verbs), into Sinhala context. An English verb "develop" is embedded in transitive case and intransitive case. Both patterns show that the verb "develop" immediately suffixed with Sinhala verb *karanawa/ wenawa* In order to adjust the foreign word into the context. The verb *karanawa* in Sinhala language semantically represent the meaning of "do", while the verb *wenawa* represents happen. According to Dissanayaka, (2007), these two types are the most highly used pattern in verb substitution. Similarly, the study done by Kanduboda, (2009), also posited the same ideas on the issue. However, this study has given evidence on a further noun class which was not mentioned in Dissanayaka, (2007). According to Kanduboda, (2009), there are some limited uses of English adjectives such as teaching, working, swimming in the conversations.

As a final point, we can conclude that Sinhala substitution system has two unique aspects. First, there are three main

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7 The examples in table 1&2 are retrieved from Dissanaya, 2007, pp26-39.

parts of speech that are substituted into Sinhala context; nouns, verbs, adjectives. Second, although English lexicons are substituted into Sinhala context, in most cases, the original meaning remains unchanged regardless to the nature of lexicons[8].

III. ENGLISH LEXICONS IN *JAPGLISH* AND *SINGLISH*

As noted in section 2, although transition of English lexicons in Japanese language occur mostly in different meaning in the usage, this process bears its pros and cons in many means. The biggest advantage can be noted as it allows Japanese language to intensify lexical capacity through this process. For example, there are many *Japglish* that represent distinctive concepts which are not presented by *hiragana* or *kanji* writings (e.g., *manner-mode* 'silent mode' for cell phones, *morning-service* 'breakfast special' (Shibasaki et al. 2007)). Another point is posited according to some previous studies (for example, Ozaki, 2005; Kawaguchi, 2004), through transition process, Japanese native speakers are motivated to learn and increase their own vocabulary capacity.

However, despite above advantages, many have argued that *Japglish* cause lot of disadvantages not only for Japanese native speakers, but also for the learners of Japanese language as a second or foreign language. The transition system is criticized by some studies since it causes Japanese native speakers to practice mistaken English to a great deal (Wainwright, 2004; Walsh, 2005). Since the transitioned concepts differ from its original English concepts, it is assumed to produce gaps between real English and fake English which eventually holds back of English improvement among Japanese learners who are willing to acquire English proficiency. In addition, the transition system also assumed building blocks among Japanese leaners especially when they encounter *Japglish* as they sound English yet represent different. However, despite the controversies regarding the system, some scholars give credit to the system as a linguistic uniqueness which outlines Japanese language among other languages. The substitution system in Sinhala language, *Singlish* on the other hand, possesses its pros and cons again in many means.

As viewed in section 2.1, *Singlish* also illustrates its uniqueness to a great degree. The biggest strong point in *Singlish* is that the substituted lexicons do not undergo any alterations in meaning during the process. For example, nouns, verbs, and adjectives are mostly adapted to Sinhala context while the original meaning in English remains unchanged. Accordingly, it also allows native Sinhala speakers to broaden their English lexicon capacity without semantic misunderstandings.

However, the substitution system also comes up with its disadvantage for Sinhala language itself. As mentioned in previous studies (Dissanayaka, 2007; Premawardhana, 2003), some substituted lexicons possess no Sinhala counterparts (e.g., *apple*, *bus* etc.). As mentioned in (Appel & Muysken, 1987), it can be assumed that this may cause loss of linguistic aspects in Sinhala language if substitution takes place for long period of time.

IV. CONCLUSION

Since Japanese and Sinhala are said to possess many identical aspects in linguistic perspective, this study examined two phenomena that delineate both languages; transition system in Japanese language and substitution system in Sinhala language. The main purpose of this survey was to seek any typological factors between the phenomenons. In this study, the transition system is noted as *Japglish*, while the substitution system noted as *Singlish*. In order to ascertain the characteristics of *Japglish* and *Singlish*, data from previous studies were analyzed in both cases.

The results showed that both *Japglish* and *Singlish* possess unique aspects that outline each other. In *Japglish* for example, the transition system has adopted English lexicons through changing their semantic properties in accordance to Japanese language contexts. On the other hand, in *Singlish*, although the substitution process has not caused to alter semantic properties of the origins (in most cases), it has developed a unique grammar system (especially with relation to suffixes) which enables any English lexicon to smoothly fit-in to the Sinhala sentence' structure. Overall, this study concludes that, Japanese transition system alias *Japglish* and Sinhala substitution system alias *Singlish* demonstrate incongruence in the process and usage of adaptation; Japanese converts English into *katakana* and alter the meaning, while Sinhala does not alter the meaning but restructure the syntax.

Although this study was able to reveal whether Japanese language and Sinhala language are identical in the given phenomenon, there are many other topics that are not taken into consideration in the scope of this study. For example, from a Japanese pedagogical perspective, it is important to seek information on how Sinhala native speakers who are learning Japanese language deal with *Japglish* during their studying process. In addition, from sociolinguistic perspective, since *Singlish* appears to play a major role in daily conversations, it is important to gather data on how Sinhala native speakers segregate the use of *Singlish* with that of normal Sinhala conversation. Upon these limitation of the present study, the author plans to conduct further research on *Japglish* and *Singlish* with relation to Japanese pedagogy, second language acquisition, and sociolinguistic area.

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