The 'Racecourse' of Then and Now: Evolution of the Sri Lankan English Vocabulary Over Two Generations of SLE Speakers

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ABSTRACT

Sri Lankan English (SLE) has unique phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic features which have gradually developed since the introduction of English to Sri Lanka. Vocabulary is one of the first features to develop in SLE. Although the SLE vocabulary has been studied and recorded, its generational difference has not been examined. The objective of the study was to investigate if the 'generational change' observable in the SLE vocabulary could be considered an evolution. This was done through a qualitative, comparative analysis of the vocabulary used in the decades 1955 – 1965 and 2005 – 2015. The theoretical base of the research was defined using two theories of language evolution: the apparent-time hypothesis and age-gradedness. The primary data was taken from the Ceylon Observer of the decade 1955 – 1965 and the Sunday Observer of the decade 2005 - 2015. The words were used in a questionnaire survey of 60 participants of which 30 were of the age 15 – 25 years and 30 were of the age 65- 75 years. The results of the survey were then analyzed in detail through 10 interviews. The surveys and the interviews were conducted to prove / disprove the age-gradedness of the SLE vocabulary and to prove / disprove the apparent-time hypothesis in relation to the SLE vocabulary. Most of the vocabulary used disproved age-gradedness. The usages of these terms were found to be generation specific, which supported that the SLE vocabulary is not age-graded. The interviews supported the apparent-time hypotheses as the older generation showed that their vocabulary has not changed significantly over the years. From these observations, it

could be concluded that within the scope of the research, the generational difference observable in the SLE vocabulary over 60 years could be termed an evolution.

KEY WORDS:

Sri Lankan English, Generational Change, Evolution, Age-gradedness, Apparent-time Hypothesis

1.   INTRODUCTION

SLE has been used in the country for several decades and there is an apparent change in the SLE vocabulary. The present study examines if this change could be identified as an evolution. There are two theoretical requirements to be fulfilled to prove language evolution in SLE vocabulary. They are the age-gradedness and the apparent-time hypothesis. The present study examined if SLE vocabulary was age-graded and if the apparent-time hypothesis could be proved true of the SLE vocabulary.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

At present, English has become a means of developing a linguistic identity in the nations that have adopted the language outside Britain. SLE has become a necessary tool to express the experience of the Sri Lankan speakers. In such a context, researchers believe that the "Sri Lankan variety of English should be validated alongside other more established varieties" (Meyler, 2010).

The status of English in Sri Lanka has changed since its introduction in 1796. English was the "*de facto* official language" until 1956, when Sinhala became the "sole official language" (Mendis and Rambukwella, 2010, p.181). Official recognition was not accorded to English again until 1987 (Mendis and Rambukwella, 2010, p.181).

SLE is accepted as a distinct variety of English. The identity of SLE as an independent language is proven by the fact that there are "native speaker[s]" of Sri Lankan English (Gunesekera, 2005, p.23). Research has been conducted on SLE by C. Fernando (1982/2010), S. Fernando (1985),

Gunesekera (2005), Meyler (2007), Wijetunge (2008), Mendis and Rambukwella (2010) and S. Fernando (2012).

Since 1796, English in Sri Lanka has expanded its vocabulary to accommodate local expressions (Fernando, 1982/2010: Fernando, 2012). Nevertheless, at the initial stages, the British were conscious of maintaining the "colonial identity" of English (Fernando, 2012, p.164), and vocabulary expansion was done out of compulsion. At present, however, SLE speakers seem to be quite free with adding new words into the language and as a result, SLE has expanded rapidly.

The previous researchers identify vocabulary as one of the key features of SLE. Gunesekera (2005) has recorded 576 entries of SLE words and Meyler (2007) has recorded approximately 2,500 examples of SLE vocabulary. These entries made in the years 2005 and 2007 respectively have undergone many changes. Moreover, Meyler documents the language usage "corresponding roughly with the quarter century from 1980-2005" (Meyler, 2007, xxvii). Hence it is clear that the most recent changes in SLE are yet to be examined. At the international level, a 400,000 – word written corpus has been completed on the "Sri Lankan component of the International Corpus of English" (Meyler, 2010).

The studies made on the SLE vocabulary so far identify a difference in the language of the older generation and the younger generation. Although the studies refer to generational gap as a cause for the change in vocabulary, they do not explain the nature of the differences seen in the vocabulary of the older and the younger generations.

Holmes (2001) comments that the generational difference in language usage is clearly seen through the vocabulary of the user. According to Holmes (2001), younger interlocutors propagate "vernacular forms" and "non-standard" verities of a language (Holmes, 2001, p.169). Hence the generational gap among the speakers is clearly reflected in the language they use.

The researchers who have studied the relationship between language change and age have identified that certain linguistic features of language are "age-graded" (Radford, Atkinson,

Britain, Clahsen, & Spencer, 1999, p.18). This means that certain features are "associated with a particular age group, generation after generation" (Radford et al., 1999, p.18). Boberg (2004) states:

> The question is not whether generational change exists: this is obvious from the fact that all languages change over time. Rather, the question is whether age-grading also exists, in which case we cannot reliably conclude in a given instance that generational differences indicate change in progress. (p.251)

Thus, as Boberg (2004) and Holmes (2001) state, the study of language evolution should be on the lookout for instances of age-grading. If generational evolution of the language is to take place, there should be a difference in the language that was used by the older generation during their youth and the language used by the younger generation at present.

Secondly, the language of the older generation should remain unchanged, at least to a certain extent, over the decades. This is called the apparent-time hypothesis in language change. The apparent-time hypothesis is "the assumption that people do not significantly alter the way they speak over their adult lifetimes, so that each generation of speakers reflects the state of the language when they acquired it as children" (Boberg, 2004, p. 250, p.251). Disproving age–gradedness is partly favorable in proving the apparent-time hypothesis. The present study was conducted based on these theoretical requirements of language evolution.

3.   OBJECTIVES

It is evident that a comparative study of speakers belonging to varying generations reveals the evolution in the vocabulary. Meyler (2007) states that the "language spoken by today's younger generation is very different from the language inherited by the British at independence" (p.xxvi).

Thus, the study was conducted with the following objectives.

a.   To find out whether the generational change in SLE vocabulary observable from 1955 to 2015 could be considered an *evolution*

b. To examine the characteristics of evolution in SLE vocabulary.

4. METHODOLOGY

The present study is a qualitative, comparative analysis of the vocabulary used in newspapers belonging to two decades. The primary data; i.e. the words, were taken from the *Ceylon Observer* of the decade 1955 – 1965 and the *Sunday Observer* of the decade 2005 - 2015. The *Ceylon Observer* was accessed through the Department of National Archives and the online newspapers of the *Sunday Observer* were used for the study. The time difference of the two decades examined is 60 years. The words were then used in a questionnaire survey of 60 participants of which 30 were of the age 15 – 25 years and 30 were of the age 65- 75 years. All the respondents in the survey were Sri Lankans who used English as either the first language or the second language. The results of the survey were further tested through 10 interviews. The surveys and the interviews were conducted to prove / disprove the age-gradedness of the SLE vocabulary and to prove / disprove the apparent-time hypothesis in relation to the SLE vocabulary.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire survey was conducted with 60 respondents. The use of English for domestic communication was high in the older generations. The younger generation also appear to be competent in both Sinhala and English as both languages are used for domestic communication. All the participants were bilingual or trilingual. This shows that bilingualism (or trilingualism) is a quality of a native speakers of Sri Lankan English (Gunesekera, 2005, p.23).

5.1.1 Semantic Differences in the Vocabulary

The following responses show the difference in the usage of the selected words in the two generations[1]. The words considered are 'booty', 'wired' and 'gay'.

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[1]All the words of the survey and the interviews were selected from the newspapers from 1955-1965 and 2005-2015. A total of 22 newspapers were used for the study and 11 were from 1955-1965 while 11 were from 2005- 2015.

Table 01: Meaning of the word 'booty'

	What are the meanings of the word 'booty'? (Open ended question)		
	Buttocks	Treasure	Infants' Shoes
15-25 years	53.33%	20.00%	0.00%
65-75 years	3.33%	50.00%	26.67%

'Booty' is not an SLE term. However, it shows generational change in usage. It was used in the *Ceylon Observer* as;

> "Action taken by the village headman of Tunkamay led to the arrest of an alleged thief with his booty." (1955, p.1)

The word was used to mean 'treasure' 60 years ago. The above data shows that the majority of the older generation use the word to mean 'treasure' and 'infants' boots'. The younger generation uses the word to mean 'buttocks'. The meaning 'treasure' is more specific to the older generation than the younger generation. Thus, the word is not age-graded but is generation-specific. The use of 'booty' to mean 'buttocks' is a new addition to the language which is not common among the older generation.

Table 02: Meaning of the word 'wired'

	What are the meanings of the word 'wired'? (Open ended question)			
	Crazy	Electrical wiring	Connected	Send a telegram
15-25 years	50.00%	0.00%	30.00%	6.67%
65-75 years	26.67%	60.00%	13.33%	10.00%

The word 'wired' was used in the *Ceylon Observer* as:

> "Dr. Naganathan has wired the Prime Minister stating that the up-country Tamils in estates were indignant

and deeply resentful of the Hitlerian conduct of the Police and Immigration authorities." (1964, p.1)

The meaning in the newspaper was 'to send a message via telegram or telephone'. The respondents of the older generation identified with this meaning (along with other meanings of the term). Only 6.67% of the respondents of the younger generation associated the meaning 'send a telegram' with the term 'wired'. The most popular meaning for them was 'crazy'.

Although 'wired' is not a SLE term, its meaning has changed over the two generations. The older generation associated the term with 'electrical wiring' which was not in the responses of the younger generation. Thus, the term does not seem to be age-graded.

A similar pattern is observed in the responses for the word 'gay'. The original meaning associated with the term 'gay' is 'happy' while the modern meaning attached to the term is 'homosexual'.

Table 03: Meaning of the word 'gay'

	What are the meanings of the word 'gay'? (Open ended question)	
	Happy	Homosexual
15-25 years	56.67%	86.67%
65-75 years	80.00%	80.00%

The word 'gay' was used in the *Ceylon Observer* as:

"Who will be the Miss Gay 90's on the night of November 1[....] They will be on parade at the Gay 90's Ball organized by the American Women's Committee at the Mt. Lavinia Hotel next Friday." (1957, p.1)

As seen above, the term is used by both the younger respondents and the older respondents but the meanings associated with them are different. However, there is only a slight difference in disparity in meanings between the two generations.

The words 'booty', 'wired' and 'gay', have generation-specific meanings. Such terms show that the vocabulary of the speakers is not age-graded and that it has changed over the 60 years under examination.

5.1.2 Lexical Difference in the Vocabulary

Institutional names such as 'Radio Ceylon', 'Air Ceylon', 'Ceylon Government' and 'Vidyalankara University', which constituted the SLE vocabulary were revised after independence. The older respondents mentioned that the use of such words dropped after the Swabhasha act in 1956 (Survey Comments). However, the data given in the tables below show that the older generation is aware of the older usages, even up to date.

Table 04: Other names used to refer to the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation

Other names used to refer to the SLBC (Open ended question)		
	Radio Ceylon	Don't Know
15-25 years	6.67%	73.33%
65-75 years	63.33%	30.00%

Table 05: Other names used to refer to the National Airlines of Sri Lanka

Other names used to refer to the National Airlines of Sri Lanka (Open ended question)			
	Air Ceylon	Air Lanka	Don't Know
15-25 years	13.33%	16.67%	53.33%
65-75 years	30.00%	43.33%	30.00%

Table 06: Respondents' Familiarity with the term 'Ceylon Government'

	Familiarity with the term 'Ceylon Government'	
	Yes	No
15-25 years	50.00%	50.00%
65-75 years	73.33%	26.67%

Table 07: Respondents' Familiarity with the terms University of Kelaniya and Vidyalankara University

	What is the term you are most familiar with out of the choices give below?	
	University of Kelaniya	Vidyalankara University
15-25 years	100.00%	0.00%
65-75 years	70.00%	30.00%

The data shows that the older generation is more familiar with the institutional names. The lexical difference between generations could be further observed through the example given below.

Table 08: Use of the words Wheeler / Trishaw / Tuk Tuk

	Usage of Three Wheeler / Trishaw / Tuk Tuk		
	(More than one response was possible)		
	Three Wheeler	Trishaw	Tuk Tuk
15-25 years	90.00%	33.33%	46.67%
65-75 years	90.00%	73.33%	3.33%

The term 'trishaw' seems to be a term of the older generation and 'tuk tuk' seems to be a term of the younger generation. Although they are used interchangeably (along with the term 'three wheeler', which is equally popular among the respondents of both generations), each generation has a preferred term. Thus, trishaw and 'tuk tuk' could be called generation-specific.

The lexical difference is also seen among the different words used to refer to the 'washroom'

Table 09: Other terms used for 'washroom'

	Other terms used for 'washroom' (More than one response was possible)		
	Toilet	Latrine	Loo
15-25 years	70.00%	50.00%	20.00%
65-75 years	86.67%	66.67%	40.00%

The word Latrine appeared in the *Ceylon Observer* as:

> "Each house will have a verandah, a hall two rooms, a cooking place and the most important among all for health and sanitation, a latrine – a necessity..." (1959, p.1)

Unsurprisingly, the older generation used this word more, while 'toilet' was widely used by both generations.

The above examples show that the evolution in vocabulary takes place in two ways,

    a) Through the appropriation of new meanings to terms that already exist in the vocabulary

    b) Through the addition of new words into the vocabulary.

Hence it could be concluded that there is both a semantic change as well as a lexical change in the vocabulary used by the respondents.

5.1.3 More recent SLE vocabulary

This section discusses the words that constitute the SLE vocabulary. The terms 'bus mudalalis', 'tigers', 'white van', 'lions' and 'Racecourse' appear in the data from 2005-2015. The usages of these terms are given in the tables below.

'Bus mudalalis' was used in *Sunday Observer* as:

> "They have failed to get the bus mudalalis to issue bus tickets to passengers" (2005, p.1)

Table 10: Meanings of the term 'bus mudalalis'

	What are the meanings of the word 'bus mudalalis'?	
	People who own busses	People who sell busses
15-25 years	63.33%	36.67%
65-75 years	96.67%	3.33%

Most of the respondents from both generations showed familiarity with this word and there was only a slight disparity in meaning.

The word 'tigers' was found frequently in the *Sunday Observer*. Two instances are given below:

> "Tigers have discovered the art of metamorphosis through the good offices of the international community....." (2006, p.1)

> "....he could not halt the advancing Security Forces who are closing in on the Tiger den" (2008, p.1)

Table 11: Meanings of the term 'tigers'[2]

	Meaning of the term 'tigers' in Sri Lankan context	
	(Open ended question)	
	LTTE	Don't know
15-25 years	96.67%	3.33%
65-75 years	93.33%	6.67%

The *Sunday Observer* records a use of the term 'white van' as:

> "Definitely this white van concept was orchestrated by the previous government" (2015, p.1)

Table 12: Meanings of the term 'white van'

	What are the meanings implied by the term 'white van'	
	(More than one response was possible)	
	A white coloured van	Abductions
15-25 years	36.67%	73.33%
65-75 years	43.33%	86.67%

The terms 'tigers' and 'white van' have political connotations and both generations were familiar those meanings. The recent SLE vocabulary examined so far was known to speakers of both generations. However, this trend changes with SLE words such as 'lions' and 'Racecourse'.

The word 'lions' was used in the *Sunday Observer* as:

> "[I]t provided a better option for the lions to beat the West Indies in the semi finals" (2014, p.1)

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[2]The meaning of 'tigers' to refer to the animal was also included in the question-naire and almost all the respondents were familiar with that meaning

The usage of the term 'racecourse' in the *Sunday Observer* was as follows:

> "The racecourse complex was opened yesterday by Minister of Economic Development" (2012, p.1)

The survey results that investigated the meanings of the two words are given in the table.

Table 13: Meanings of the term 'lions' [3]

	Meaning of the term 'lions' in Sri Lankan context		
	(More than one response was possible)		
	Sri Lankans	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Cricket Team
15-25 years	63.33%	30.00%	63.33%
65-75 years	43.33%	33.33%	36.67%

Table 14: Meanings of the term 'Racecourse'

	What are the meanings of the word 'Racecourse'?		
	(More than one response was possible)		
	Colombo 07	Horse Racing	Nuwara Eliya
15-25 years	63.33%	40.00%	26.67%
65-75 years	36.67%	93.33%	46.67%

The older generation used 'lions' to mean Sri Lankans while the younger generation associated it with Sri Lankans and the Sri Lankan cricket team. The respondents belonging to the older generation associated the meanings 'horse racing' and 'Nuwara Eliya' with the term 'Racecourse'. However, the younger respondents mostly identified Racecourse as a place in Colombo 07 which is used for meetups and leisure activities. They expressed familiarity with 'horse racing' and 'Nuwara Eliya' but those meanings were less popular.

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[3] The meaning of 'lion' as the animals was included in the questionnaire but is not included in the data analysis. Almost all the respondents were familiar with the use these terms to refer to the animal.

The examples discussed above show that some newly added SLE words do not display evolution. Such SLE terms are used by respondents from both generations (E.g.: Tigers, White Van). However, certain others have started to appropriate new meanings, with regard to the younger generation (E.g. Lions, Racecourse).

The data of the questionnaire surveys point to the fact that most of the words which were used in Sri Lanka in the period of 1955-1965 have appropriated new meanings at present. The respondents from 65 to 75 years of age might be aware of the new meanings, but they are more comfortable with the old meanings (E.g. associating 'happy' with the word 'gay') and prefer to use the old words (E.g. Using 'trishaw' instead of 'tuk tuk'). On the other hand, the younger speakers have either appropriated new meanings to the old words or use new words instead of the old ones.

Within the context of the words in the research, there is a clear generational preference towards certain words and meanings. This proves that the observed change in SLE vocabulary is not age - graded. It is a generational change and certain words have grown old with the generation they belong to. At the same time, the younger generation uses words with newly appropriatedmeanings or new words to replace the old ones. To further clarify the observations made so far, the results from the interviews should be analyzed.

5.2   Analysis of Interview Data

Ten interviews were conducted to get a better understanding of the results from the questionnaire survey. Five participants were selected for each age group. The participants were Sri Lankans who were fluent in English. The interview focused on the participants' individual language use. The questions were designed to investigate if the vocabulary of the participants of 65-75 years has significantly altered during their adult lifetime (Boberg, 2004, p. 250, p.251). In other words, to investigate if the words that they acquired as children have remained unchanged (Boberg, 2004, p. 250, p.251). This information was used to test the apparent-time hypothesis with regard to the SLE vocabulary over the two generations.

Twelve words were used for the interviews and the participants identified the meanings that they attach to the words.[4] In addition, the older participants were asked to comment if they used the words in the present meaning 50 years ago. The results of the interviews are given below.

5.2.1 Words That Display Semantic Evolution

The following words are not SLE. However, they prove the evolution in the vocabulary of SLE speakers.

Table 15: Interview participants' response to the word 'wired'

	Meaning as understood by the participant	Use of the word in the said meaning at present	Use of the word in the said meaning 50 years ago[5]
65-75 years	Sending a telegram	60.00%	60.00%
15-25 years	Crazy	100.00 %	-

The participants of both generations mentioned that they use the word. However, as the results denote, the participants of each generation attribute different meanings to the word. The meaning 'sending a telegram' has remained unchanged for 60.00% of the older participants. This supports the apparent-time hypothesis. The participants also mentioned meanings such as, thinking differently, connected by wires, electrical wiring, transferring money between bank accounts, but only the two meanings that were most popular were included in the analysis.

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[4] The words for the survey and the interviews were selected from the newspapers from 1955-1965 and 2005-2015

[5] This question is applicable only to the participants of 65-75 years of age

Table 16: Interview participants' response to the word 'credit'

	Meaning as understood by the participant	Use of the word in the said meaning at present	Use of the word in the said meaning 50 years ago
65-75 years	Credit Pass	40.00%	40.00%
	Pre-paid balance in a mobile phone connection	0.00%	0.00%
15-25 years	Credit Pass	20.00%	-
	Pre-paid balance in a mobile phone connection	60.00 %	-

The word 'credit' too was used by participants of both generations. However, the meaning 'credit pass' was more popular among the older participants (along with credit card) while the younger participants associated 'credit' with 'pre-paid balance in a mobile connection'. 40.00% of the older participants have not changed the meaning they knew 50 years ago. The younger generation in contrast, know the meaning 'credit pass' but, as seen by the responses, they associate the word more with the new meaning.

Table 17: Interview participants' response to the word 'booty'

	Meaning as understood by the participant	Use of the word in the said meaning at present	Use of the word in the said meaning 50 years ago
65-75 years	Treasure	40.00%	40.00%
15-25 years	Buttocks	40.00%	-

The word 'booty' has also undergone a semantic evolution. 40.00% of the older participants claimed that they use the word 'booty' to mean treasure. In addition, they also stated that they used the word in the same meaning 50 years ago. Thus, the usage of the 40.00% of the older respondents have not been strongly affected during the years.

Table 18: Interview participants' response to the word 'gay'

	Meaning as understood by the participant	Use of the word in the said meaning at present	Use of the word in the said meaning 50 years ago
65-75 years	Happy	0.00%	60.00%
	Homosexual	40.00%	0.00%
15-25 years	Happy	20.00%	-
	Homosexual	100.00%	-

The older participants were very particular in responding to the word 'gay'. Majority (60.00%) said that they used 'gay' to mean 'happy'. All the older participants were reluctant to accept that they were aware of the meaning 'homosexual'. Only 40.00% of the older respondents have changed their understanding of the word. One participant said that the word 'homo' was used to refer to homosexuals during his youth (Interview comments).

'Wired', 'credit', 'booty' and 'gay' are used differently by the two generation of SLE speakers. In addition, some of the older participants stated that the meanings in which they use these words have not changed, and that some of the new meanings are unfamiliar to them. This shows that the older participants reflect the state of language they acquired as children (Boberg, 2004, p. 250, p.251). This observation supports the apparent-time hypothesis.

5.2.2 Words That Display Lexical evolution

A lexical evolution was observed in the survey data results as the older generation had used words such as Radio Ceylon, Air Ceylon, Ceylon Government and Vidyalankara University before the new terms were introduced for these institutes. The interview data specifically examined if the older participants are in the habit of using the old terms even at present. The results are as follows.

Table 19: Usage of the Term 'Ceylon'

	Use of the word at present	Use of the word 50 years ago
65-75 years	20.00%	100.00%
15-25 years	0.00%	-

Table 20: Usage of the Term 'Ceylonese'

	Use of the word at present	Use of the word 50 years ago
65-75 years	20.00%	80.00%
15-25 years	0.00%	-

Table 21: Usage of the Term 'Radio Ceylon'

	Use of the word at present	Use of the word 50 years ago
65-75 years	20.00%	80.00%
15-25 years	0.00%	-

Table 22: Usage of the Term 'Vidyalankara University'

	Use of the word at present	Use of the word 50 years ago
65-75 years	40.00%	80.00%
15-25 years	0.00%	-

The interview results show that a minority still uses the old terms. The term 'Vidyalankara University' is used by 40.00% of the participants and the other old terms are used by 20.00% of the participants. The terms are not age-graded but they are gradually being removed from usage. This shows that the

older generation shifts to the new vocabulary in instances where institutional names have been changed officially.

The terms 'three wheeler', 'tuk tuk' and 'trishaw' are commonly used by Sri Lankans. The survey results show that the 'three wheeler' is used commonly by both generations and the interview data confirms this.

Table 23: Usage of the Terms 'three wheeler', 'tuk tuk' and 'trishaw'

	Preferred word		
	Three Wheeler	Tuk Tuk	Trishaw
65-75 years	40.00%	0.00%	80.00%
15-25 years	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%

The popularity of 'trishaw' among the older participants remained unchanged in the interview. Commenting on the use of 'trishaw', a participant of the older generation explained that it is more popular among his contemporaries, as it is closer to the term rickshaw (interview comments). According to the results from the survey and the interviews, the term 'trishaw' seems to be specific to the older generation.

5.2.3   SLE vocabulary of the decade 2005 – 2015

The data from the survey showed that there was no significant evolution in the vocabulary which is recently added to SLE. Except for the terms 'lions' and 'Racecourse', both generations associated similar meanings to the other terms.

During the interview, the terms 'lions', 'Racecourse' and 'office train' were used to study the meanings that the younger participants associate with these terms and to examine if the older participants are influenced by the semantic changes. The results of the interviews are given in the tables below.

The term 'lions' displayed semantic change over the two generations; 43.33% of the older respondents of the questionnaire survey said that it means 'Sri Lankans', whereas 63.33% of the younger respondents said that the term means 'Sri Lankans' and the 'Sri Lankan cricket team'. A similar result was obtained for the term 'Racecourse'.

Table 24: Meanings and Usage of the Term 'lions'

	Meaning as understood by the participant	Use of the word in the said meaning at present	Use of the word in the said meaning 50 years ago
65-75 years	Lions Club Members	60.00%	60.00%
15-25 years	Sri Lanka Cricket Team	40.00%	-

Table 25: Meanings and Usage of the Term 'Racecourse'

	Meaning as understood by the participant	Use of the word in the said meaning at present	Use of the word in the said meaning 50 years ago
65-75 years	Horse Racing	60.00%	60.00%
15-25 years	A place to have informal meet-ups situated in Colombo 07	100.00%	-

The interview results further confirmed that the terms 'lions' and 'Racecourse' have undergone semantic change. Also, most the older participants have not changed the meanings they associate with the terms over a period of 50 years. This supports the apparent-time hypothesis.

Table 26: Meanings and Usage of the Term 'office train'

	Meaning as understood by the participant	Use of the word in the said meaning at present	Use of the word in the said meaning 50 years ago
65-75 years	Train used by daily commuters	100.00%	100.00%
15-25 years	Train used by daily commuters	100.00%	-

The term 'office train' was known to all ten participants and this result was similar to the survey results of the terms 'bus mudalalis', 'tigers' and 'white van'. Speakers from both generations identified the term in a similar meaning.

Hence it is seen that some of the SLE terms have undergone semantic evolution over the two generations while some others have remained unchanged.

6.   CONCLUSION

The data from the newspapers, questionnaire survey and the interviews provide sufficient proof in favour of evolution of the English vocabulary over two generations of SLE speakers. Hence, within the scope of the research, the generational change in SLE vocabulary observable from 1955 to 2015 could be considered an evolution. In addition, the following characteristics were observed regarding the evolution in SLE vocabulary.

1. There is a semantic evolution in the English vocabulary in the two generations of SLE speakers.

2. There is a lexical evolution in the English vocabulary in the two generations of SLE speakers

3. Most of the words that have been recently added to the SLE vocabulary have not undergone evolution.

4. A limited number of words that have been recently added into the SLE vocabulary, however, have evolved and have appropriated new meanings.

Thus, it could be concluded that the English vocabulary of SLE speakers that was studied in the research, has significantly evolved over the past 60 years. However, only some words that are identified as SLE, i.e., words which represent specific meanings in the Sri Lankan context, have undergone an evolution. By analyzing the evolution of the SLE vocabulary over the past 60 years, it is evident that the SLE vocabulary will continue to change and that its composition would significantly vary in the decades to come.

The present research had a limited number of interview participants (10) and questionnaires respondents (60). In addition, only a limited number of words were examined in the research. Hence the conclusions are drawn within the scope of the research and generalizing the findings to SLE vocabulary in general should be done with caution.

7.   ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to sincerely thank all the interview and survey participants for their assistance in conducting this study, and the colleagues of the authors for their feedback throughout the research.

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