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Code-mixing patterns of commercial advertising in Sri Lanka: With special reference to food and beverage advertising

U.P.N.N. Pathirana^{1*}

¹Library, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Abstract

Most advertising is intended to be persuasive to boost the promotion of an idea, product, or service. One marketing strategy employed to influence bilingual consumers is using code-mixed messages. This research aimed to find how code-mixing is employed in Sri Lankan television commercial advertising on food and beverages. The study analyzed code-mixed television commercials on food and beverages to examine morphological processes and code-mixing patterns in their jingles. This research aimed to investigate morphological processes and scrutinize code-mixing patterns utilized in commercial advertising in Sri Lanka. The results revealed that the code-mixed language of television commercials, about morphological processes and code-mixing patterns, identified nominalization, hybridization, alternation, and coinage as highly productive morphological processes employed by advertisers in Sri Lanka. Nativization was found to be less productive. The author confirms that there is no conflict of interest in the study. Creative writers believe Sinhala's English syntactic styles make the marketing message more effective. This is a morphological strategy to attract upper-middle or dominant Sri Lankan English-Sinhala bilinguals.

Keywords: Advertising language, Code-mixing, Code-mixing patterns, Morphological processes, Television advertisements

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ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-3371-819X>

*Corresponding author:

E-mail address: nishayapathirana@sjp.ac.lk (U.P.N.N. Pathirana)

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Introduction

The expansion and global spread of the use of English as an international language has significant socio-cultural and linguistic implications which have become the borrowed linguistic component in most of the languages. Across cultures, English is frequently used in daily activities and it appears to be the preferred lingua franca in code-mixed advertisements. When writing advertisements, the language and attitudes of the target audience must be considered.

Consumers have specific associations with different languages. These associations then influence their attitudes toward commercials written in that language. In Sri Lanka, English words or phrases are often embedded into Sinhala in daily practices or routines for bilinguals, an aspect which is reproduced in advertisements. The selection of this topic depends on the interest in investigating how language mixing is used as a creative strategy in advertising, particularly commercials on food and beverages in Sri Lanka.

Statement of Problem

Attitudes of Sri Lankans towards mixed language variety have affected the language spoken in Sri Lanka today, as well as societal expectations, in shaping the interface of advertising. It can be understood that the language change in society is apparent in language change in advertising. It is vital to investigate the interaction between language and society, an aspect that needs to be probed more in the Sri Lankan context. Moreover, this study aims to achieve two objectives; to investigate morphological processes employed in commercial advertising in Sri Lanka and to scrutinize code-mixing patterns utilized in commercial advertising in Sri Lanka. In addition, this study focuses to answer following two research questions; what are the morphological processes employed in commercial advertising in Sri Lanka? and what are the code-mixing patterns utilized in commercial advertising in Sri Lanka?

Literature Review

Code-mixing' is one of the mixed-language approaches that is often used to target consumers with knowledge of two or more languages. According to Grosjean (2010), code-mixing refers to the insertion of linguistic elements of one language into another language. Code-mixing phenomenon took place as a result of the growing number of people around the world being bilingual and multilingual. Code-mixing is common between closely related languages as well as between totally unrelated ones. Bilingualism (multilingualism) refers to the coexistence of more than one language system within an individual, compared to monolingualism. Bilinguals or multilinguals, generally need to be able to communicate confidently in more than one language, otherwise they are considered to be monolingual.

The mix has many explanations and connections. In linguistics, the study on patterns in language mixing focuses more on a major language that affects bilingual verbal expression. According to Scotton's (2001) terminology, the primary language is called the 'embodied language' and the embedded language is called the 'embedded language'. The theory holds that a code-mixing speaker alternates between the Matrix Language (ML) and an Embedded Language (EL). The ML is the more active and more frequently used language, which restricts the utilization of the EL. It is common, though not necessary, for the ML to correspond with the unmarked choice during a

typical interaction. Scotton (2001) suggests that bilingual data has an abstract framework governed by a predominant language. The dominant language or the model language, provides the morpho-syntactic framework for bilingual articulation. The other language that participates in communication is 'embedded language'. Word order is controlled by figurative language. The theory assumes that in bilingual discourse one language is always more motivated than the other. The matrix framework is based on the local/ indigenous language and the embossed language is borrowed from the donor language.

The "Englishization" proposed by Kachru (1986) proposes that the Englishized mixed code exists as a common mode of communication among the middle class, specifically in his study Indian middle class. This is the code that elevates Indians to a higher social class. However, this applies to the Sri Lankan context provided that it was a British Colony same as India, where people tend to mix English and Sinhala to express power and prestige. Thus, mixed language defines modernization, socio-economic status, and membership in an elite group. Stylistically, it deliberately highlights a style and is defined as a productive and grammatical process. The language variants spoken in the former colonies were not a 'mistake' but a departure from the Standard English variant, which led to the development of linguistics according to the concept of 'World Englishes'. Kachru asserts that nativization, hybridization, neutralization processes result in such language mixing.

Mysken (2000) aims to explain how bilingual speakers switch from one language to another in the course of conversation. To deal with this question, Muysken distinguishes between the three sorts of code-mixing patterns: (a) insertion, (b) alternation, and (c) congruent lexicalization. Both 'insertion' and 'alternation' specialise in structural constraints on mixing. The former views constraints in terms of the structural properties of language, the matrix language; the latter (alternation) views constraints in terms of structural equivalence between the languages involved. Mixing is possible only where it does not violate the structural integrity of either of the participating languages. Insertion is spontaneous lexical borrowing and, it can contain single bare nouns, bare noun phrases or adverbial phrases. 'Alternation' entails a real switch from one language to the opposite, and involves both grammar and lexicon. 'Congruent lexicalization' refers to a situation where the participating two languages share a grammatical structure which may be filled lexically with elements from either language. It is said to resemble style shifting and variation within a language.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative framework as it chiefly targeted at examining the morphological and syntactic aspect of advertising language with explanatory interpretation. Observation of television commercials was the primary data collection technique. For the morphological analysis, 15 code-mixed advertising slogans on food and beverages were selected utilizing purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling method. Data were taken from three Sri Lankan television channels; Derana, Swarnawahini and Hiru. The recorded data ranged throughout January to April, 2020, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. The qualitative approach helps to describe and interpret advertising slogans in order to understand creativity involved with its language.

Results & Discussion

Table one (01) displays commercial slogans considered for analysis.

Table 1: Commercial Slogans

Selected slogan	Product	Food type	Morphological process employed
<i>“Town eke thiyana aluthma restaurant eka, mom’s kitchen”</i>	<i>Knorr BiryaniMix</i>	seasoning	Nominalization
<i>“wena widihaka puff ekak”</i>	<i>Munchee kariPuff Biscuit</i>	biscuit	Nominalization
<i>“Marmite...freelankikayanta”</i>	<i>Marmite</i>	spread/drink	Hybridization
<i>“Crunchy rasayata asaayata”</i>	<i>Munchee Crunchy Biscuit</i>	biscuit	Hybridization
<i>“Mood fix karanna maruinguru “</i>	<i>Munchee Ginger Biscuits</i>	biscuit	Alternation
<i>“Kama jathi jam karamu”</i>	<i>MD Fruit Jam</i>	jam	Alternation
<i>“Kottu mee”</i>	<i>Kottu mee</i>	noodle	Coinage
<i>“Kottu mee”</i>	<i>Kottu mee</i>	biscuit	Coinage
<i>“Prima Kottu Mee...FunThamai”</i>	<i>Prima KottuMee</i>	noodle	Emphatic forms and particles accompanying English items
<i>“Podi badaginnata super”</i>	<i>Munchee SuperCream Cracker</i>	biscuit	Emphatic forms and particles accompanying English items
<i>“Maliban InguruBiscuit”</i>	<i>“Maliban Inguru Biscuit”</i>	biscuit	Nativization
<i>“Maggi Seasoning cube”</i>	<i>Maggi Seasoning cube</i>	seasoning	Nativization
<i>“Cargills Food City – OnYour Way Home”</i>	<i>Cargills FoodCity</i>	food vending store	Advertisements with mixed lexical elements written only in Sinhala
<i>“Burger King – YourWay”</i>	<i>Burger King</i>	burger	Sinhala Syntactic styles in English advertisements
<i>“Real Coconut Milk Powder – Niyama pitikala pol kiri”</i>	<i>Maggi CoconutMilk Powder</i>	Cooking milk	Sinhala Syntactic styles in English advertisements

Nominalization

In linguistics, the term “nominal” refers to the category required to group together nouns and adjectives and shared properties. Nominalizers are grammatical forms used in the process of nominalizing. One of the most productive processes used in bilingual advertising is singular English nouns followed by **eka**, which acts as a nominalizer (Senaratne, 2017). The below two slogans, slogan 1 and 2 are identified with the form of nominalization as a morphological process for creative writing.

Commercial slogan 01:

*“Town eke thiyana aluthma **restaurant** eka, mom’s kitchen”*

Town/ (one/a)/ located (in)/new/ restaurant/ one/, mom's Kitchen
 The newest restaurant in the town is Mom's Kitchen.
 (Knorr Biriyan Mix)

Commercial slogan 02:

"wena widihaka **puff** ekak"
 Different/ kind of/ puff/a
 A different kind of a puff
 (Munchee Kari Puff Biscuit)

Languages with overt nominal agreement vary in how and to what extent agreement is required. One of the most productive processes used in bilingual advertising is singular English nouns followed by "*eka*". In the commercial slogan, "**town** eke thiyana aluthma restaurant *eka*", "**town** eke" refers to belonging to some element; in this context, it is the new restaurant that belongs to the town. "**Restaurant** *eka*" has a sense of nominal grouping of nouns where it refers to the restaurant; the new restaurant that belongs to town. In the commercial slogan, "**wena widihaka puff** ekak", "**puff** ekak" refers to the nominal grouping of a noun, a puff. The data above illustrated how effectively the messages were delivered in the following code-mixed slogans using nominalization as a creative strategy.

As exemplified in above two commercial slogans, nominalizers are grammatical forms used in the process of nominalizing. In code-mixed data, most inserted English nouns follow this pattern, while *eka* is syntactically productive and its nominalizing capacity is phenomenal. In Sinhala, they occur as affixes or independent lexical forms, while *eka* also acts as an independent nominalizer in colloquial Sinhala. The process of using *eka* is analyzed as a strategy that is indicative of insertion code-mixing. The following are some other jingles found in the form of nominalization on television food and beverage products which demonstrate the excessive capacity of nominalization in advertising language;

- "Elephant House Wonder Berry- **Fun** eke **next level** *eka*" (Elephant House Wonder Berry- The next level in fun)
- "Elephant House Orange Cush – *Hitha illana* **crush** ekak" (Elephant House Orange Crush – A crush heart is demanding)
- Lipton Green Tea – *Anga athulta yana* **pollution** ekata rasa hatharaka **solution** ekak (Lipon Green Tea – A solution with four flavours for the pollution that enters the body)

Hybridization

Hybridization in its most basic sense refers to mixture. In language contact situations, hybridization is a common factor as well as a productive morphological process used in advertising in Sri Lanka. The following commercial slogans are explained in relation to hybridization.

Commercial slogan 03:

"Marmite...**freelankikayanta**"

Marmite/ free/lankans
 Marmite.. for freelankans
 (Marmite)

Commercial slogan 04:

“Crunchy rasayata asa ayata”
 Crunchy/ taste/like/ people
 For ones those who love crunchiness
 (Munchee Crunchy Biscuit)

Hybrids may occur as hybrid nouns or hybrid verbs or hybrid modifiers as in the slogan **“Marmite...freelankikayanta”**. In this jingle, the word “Sri Lankan” is partially replaced with “freelankan” which is a very creative and innovative way of utilizing hybridization. Mixed or hybrid language as Sinhala and English words together can be seen as puns in some advertisements for better attention span as code-mixing makes people remember, further, it makes the commercial interesting. In the commercial slogan, **“Crunchy rasayata”**, *crunchy* and *rasaya* (taste) are brought together to make it rhythmic and make it an attention grabber. At the same time, the taste is reiterated.

The following are some of the observations made on hybridizaion in television food and beverage products.

- **“Maggie- Jambo chicken kaeta”** (Maggie- Jambo chicken cubes)
- **“Knorr umbalakada powder mix”** (Maggie maldiv fish powder mix)

Alternation

Alternation commonly occurs when individuals wish to express a sense of belonging with a particular social group. **Alternation** mixing pattern is employed in the commercial slogans below, which is visible in the bilingual corpus. In bilingual data where the Sinhala auxiliary verb *karanawa* and *wenawa* follow an English verb stem. This strategy is indicative of a form of hybridization where elements from two languages are brought together.

Commercial slogan 05:

“Mood fix karanna maru inguru”
 “Mood/fix/do/great/ginger
 Fine/ first-class ginger to fix the mood
 (Munchee Ginger Biscuits)

Commercial slogan 06:

“Kama jathi jam karamu”
 Foodstuff/jam/let’s do
 Let’s jam/mix foodstuff
 (MD Jam)

The word “fix” in “**mood fix** karanna maru inguru”, is a morpheme that can stand alone in English, nevertheless, in Sinhala- English code-mixing. The word “karanawa” in Sinhala refers to “do/ does” in English. When the word “fix” is altered in Sinhala language, it carries the “fix” and karanawa both to make the term localized. Hence, with almost all English verbs when code-mixed with Sinhala, karanawa follows. Thus, in this slogan “Mood fix karanna” refers to “in order to fix the mood”. In “Kama jathi **jam** karamu”, the word “jam” again is a morpheme that can stand alone in English, not in Sinhala- English code-mixing. The word “karanamu” in Sinhala refers to “let’s do” in English. When the word “jam” is altered in Sinhala language, it carries the auxiliary “karanamu” to make the term localized. Accordingly, in this slogan “jam karamu” refers to “let’s jam/mix”.

Thus, “**mood fix** karanna” and “**jam** karamu” in the above jingles with their mixed items create a bilingual verb. The following are some other observations made on alternation of television food and beverage products.

- o “**Prima Toppz** samagin **spice up** wenna” (Spice up with Prima Toppz!)
- o “Elephant House cool drinks – sitha **cool** karai” (**Elephant House cool drinks** – will calm heart)
- o “Goldi Hot and Spicy Chicken Meat Cubes – rasyata **set** wenna” (GoldiHot and Spicy Chicken Meat Cubes – join in with/ enjoy the taste!”

In alternation in Sinhala and English code-mixed advertising, wenna, karanna and karamu are more often used as they are syntactically productive and their alternating capacity is remarkable.

Coinage

Coinage is the word formation process during which a replacement word is made either deliberately or accidentally without using other word formation processes and sometimes from seemingly nothing (Senaratne, 2017). Often trademark names are adopted by the masses, and they become common words in the language of the society. “**Kottu mee**” and “**Lemon Puff**” as described below are two of the best examples of media and trade’s creation and promotion of new words.

Commercial slogan 07:

“**Kottu mee**”

(Kottu mee)

Commercial slogan 08:

“**Lemon Puff**”

(Lemon Puff)

Since, the words have entered the day-to-day vocabulary of Sri Lanka, the two words’ social connotations are significant in discussing their morphological importance. In nature, it is a type of noodles with seasoning and flavours included. However, rather than noodles, consumers treat it as a different type of noodles. It has replaced a packet of noodles and often we can observe

people asking for “**kottu mee** ekak denna” (Give me a packet of Kottu mee). At the same time, rather than it being a biscuit, “**Lemon Puff**” as a brand name has more popularity among its consumers. It can be heard that the customers demanding the product by its brand name rather than asking for biscuit; ex: “**Lemon puff** ekak denna” (Give me a packet of Lemon Puff). Hence, its meaning is broadened and replaced its original food type.

Apart from the two data selected for analysis, it can be found some other food and beverage products in Sri Lanka produced through coinage, such as, *Maggi* (noodle), *Pepsi* (soft drink), *Tiara* (cake), *Ginger Beer* (soft drink), *Smack* (fruit drink), *Cream Soda* (soft drink) *Coka Cola* (soft drink) etc.

Emphatic forms and particles accompanying English items

Emphatic forms are used to stress an utterance or a message delivered. The below two commercial slogans exemplify the use of emphatic forms and particles accompanying English items. This is a creative mixing pattern used by creative writers to attract the viewers and possible consumers.

Commercial slogan 09:

“*Prima Kottu Mee...**Fun** Thamai*”
Prima Kottu Mee/ fun/ total
Prima Kottu Mee... totally fun
(Prima Kottu Mee)

Commercial slogan 10:

“*Podi badaginnata **super***”
 Little/hunger/super
 Great for a snack (*Munchi Super Cream Cracker*)

In this morphological mixing pattern, it is common to use the question marker from Sinhala. Focus marking forms in Sinhala include the question marker “*da*” and emphatic “*thamai*” frequently found in phrases used in bilingual advertisements that are exemplified in the commercial slogan, “*Prima Kottu Mee...**Fun** Thamai*”. The bilingual catchphrases grab the attention of the viewer straightaway. In “*Podi badaginnata **super***”, the emphatic or the exclamation is in English language as opposed to the Sinhala one. However, this English word has successfully merged into the Sinhala setting, where speakers use the word to talk about something excellent parallel to the usage of *niyamai* in Sinhala. It is noteworthy that the emphatic form is in Sinhala as the matrix language in this context. Further to the above two slogans, the research found another slogan of this type;

“*Aluth nil raella – Munchee Nice – Very Nice*” (New trend in blue – Munchee Nice – Very Nice)

Nativization

This definition essentially means that elements from the donor language are integrated into the base language and the donor language acts as an additive source of linguistic material in the development of a specialized register (Senaratne, 2017). The above example from the product is taken in view of explaining nativization as a mode of code-mixing in Sri Lankan TV channels.

Commercial slogan 11:

“Maliban Inguru Biscuit”

Maliban Ginger Biscuit

(*Maliban Ginger Biscuit*)

The word biscuit is a very general, common word that is being used by all Sri Lankans irrespective of their mother tongue. The word biscuit in Sinhala is *wiskothu*. Yet, the Sinhala term is preferred and used mostly. Nativization here is used to re-express and redefine what has already been stated in the native language. Code-mixing with English will occur to express neutrality and therefore as an automatization strategy to distract attention. The aim is to use more neutral and less suggestive words in speech. The English word ‘biscuit’ is preferred to *wiskothu* or the local word, as the Sinhala word does not reflect formal or colloquial connotation. Hence, this is a good example to showcase the use of nativization in food advertising.

Advertisements with mixed lexical elements written only in Sinhala

Observations show that certain food advertisements have mixed items in both Sinhala and English language which are written or presented only in Sinhala. The following is one such example from a television advertisement.

Commercial slogan 12:

“Maggi Seasoning Cube”

(*Maggi Seasoning Cube*)

It was noted that certain product running lines/slogans in English written only in Sinhala and appeared in Sinhala advertisements. This may be due to the fact that the appearance of the words in Sinhala has more effect on the viewer. They can relate to the language and the target audience and the message is effectively communicated. “**Maggi Seasoning Cube**” written in Sinhala may be to suggest that the product is Sri Lankan, to boost its demand. Again, if it had been advertised in English only, it would not have been popular between lower levels in the social strata.

Sinhala Syntactic styles in English advertisements

Sinhala syntactic styles in English advertisements is an effective communicative method to adopt Sinhala syntactic styles. However, in this case, the entire advertising slogan will be written in English. “**Cargills Food City – On Your Way Home**” and “**Burger King – Your Way**” are perfect

examples to show English commercials adopting Sinhala sentence structures to attract the English bilingual community.

Commercial slogan 13:

“Cargills Food City – On Your Way Home”

Cargills Food City – *Gedara Yana Gaman*
(*Cargills Food City*)

Commercial slogan 14:

“Burger King – Your Way”

Burger King – *oya kaemathi widiyata*
(*Burger King*)

The commercial slogan, ***“Cargills Food City – On Your Way Home”*** when translated becomes ***“Cargills Food City – Gedara Yana Gaman”***. The phrase ***“Gedara Yana Gaman”*** is very much familiar in the Sinhala corpus. However, rather than presenting the slogan in Sinhala, the advertisers put it in English to attract the bilinguals and firstlanguageEnglish speakers in Sri Lanka. The phrase, ***“YourWay”*** in ***“Burger King – Your Way”*** is highly Sri Lankan. The term when translated to Sinhala is ***“oya kamathi widiyata”*** (the way you like it). Creative writers believe that using syntactic styles in English communication make the message more effective. This is a morphological strategy to attract the upper -middle and the upper class or the dominantly Sri Lankan English-speaking people.

Sinhala and English translations in slogans

Referring to both Sinhala and English versions is another strategy used in bilingual advertisements. Observations show that mainly food that is in flavour of household cooking (home-made) is more often advertised this way. This may be because it is required to go into the households of modern, suburban and somewhat rural areas. These products suggest that with the advertised products one can easily prepare food while saving time. Additives and fast food are predominantly being advertised through both Sinhala and English translations. Without making a separate product presentation (cover or a product advertisement), the company can advertise to both language speakers.

Commercial slogan 15:

“Real Coconut Milk Powder – Niyama piti kala pol kiri”

(*Maggi Coconut Milk Powder*)

In the commercial slogan, ***“Real Coconut Milk Powder – Niyama piti kalapol kiri”*** is an interesting phenomenon where the two languages are brought together to attract the three types of speakers, English monolingual speakers, Sinhala monolingual speakers and Sinhala- English bilingual speakers. ***“Real coconut milk powder”*** is directly translated to Sinhala here as ***Niyama piti kala pol kiri*** which explains what the product is to all three types of speakers mentioned above.

Conclusion

The study of the code-mixed language of television commercials in relation to morphological processes and code-mixing patterns identified nominalization, hybridization, alternation and coinage as the highly productive morphological processes employed by advertisers in Sri Lanka. One of the most productive processes used in bilingual advertising justified in this research is singular English nouns followed by *eka*, which acts as a nominalizer. In commercial slogans recorded for analysis, most inserted English nouns follow this pattern. Hence, *eka* is syntactically productive and its nominalizing capacity is phenomenal. Hybridization in its most basic sense refers to mixture. In the morphological analysis, hybridization was found to be a common factor as well as a productive morphological process used in advertising in Sri Lanka. Hybridization is one of the main strategies of the emerging code-mixed advertising. Nativization was found to be less productive. This may be because; this study was narrowed down to code-mixing in food and beverage advertisements in Sri Lanka. As a morphological strategy, creative writers attempt to use more code-mixed language to attract dominant upper-middle class with the growing Sri Lankan English- Sinhala bilinguals. The findings thus will be useful for the marketers to understand the language choice of the consumer in persuasive advertising.

Conflict of Interest

The author confirms that she has no conflict of interest.

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