FEATURES

Computer imbroglio in keeping with Sinhala language

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In the circumstances, why should lengthy Sanskrit words be preferred to shorter Sinhala terms? Why, Sanskrit 'අස්ථිපඤ්ජරය' be given pride of place compared to the Sinhala 'ඇටසැකිල්ල' defies all logic.

6. (b) The word itself to contain an indication of its intended meaning:

For instance, a rainbow which is produced due to the refraction of light passing through raindrops, is denoted in Sinhala as . දිය + දුන්න In Sinhala 'ඉ + අ' combines to form 'ඒ'. Thus දිය + දුන්න = දේදුන්න similarly ලිය + තා = ලේතා, පිය + කඩ = පේකඩ

Here, the composite term can be readily broken up to indicate the meaning thus serving as a mnemonic. Supposing, we have to find a suitable Sinhala equivalent of the English verb "transmit". The English verb has been formed by combining the Latin word "Trans" which means "across" and the latin word "mit" which means "to send".

Similarly, we can combine the two Sinhala words 'තරා' (to go across) and 'හරී' (to send) to form the new Sinhala verb තරාහරී.

By identifying the meanings of the two component words an indication can be obtained of the meaning of the composite word as "to send across". Such mnemonics are a great asset in arriving at the meanings of technical terms. Ignoring such elegant ways of creating the new terms, the academics preferred to pay homage to Sanskrit by borrowing the word සම්ප්‍රේෂණය to represent the noun "transmission". The very "transmit" will then have to be සම්ප්‍රේෂණය කරනවා !According to them, සම්ප්‍රේෂණය is automatically understood but the Sinhala term, තරාහැරුම baffles the Sinhala mind!

6. (c) Ensuring the flexibility of the Sinhala technical terms:

Consider the very word "transmit". The cognoscenti are pointing out that the borrowed Sanskrit noun සම්ප්‍රේෂණය can be converted into a verb by using the additional Sinhala verb 'කරයි'.

What a real mess? Because we are incompetent to coin a term based on a Sinhala verb, we tamely borrow a word from the Sanskrit lexicon and because it is devoid of verbal attributes when domiciled in the Sinhala langauge, attach to it an extra Sinhala verb. What these lexicographers point out is that it is a feature already existing in the Sinhala language: 'බැට් කරයි' 'බෝල් කරයි' 'ඩ්‍රයිව් කරයි' and so on. When the required millions of technical terms are borrowed from Sanskrit in this manner our technical langauge will, suffer from linguistic cramp in addition to getting impaired due to verbal elephantiasis! By the way, this ingenious ruse is not an exclusive discovery by the present day pundits.

Several decades ago, this device was used, not only to accommodate a borrowed English verb but also to admit a borrowed English noun by using 'කර' and 'එක' respectively.

This device was made popular by none other than the professor of comedy, Eddie Jayamanne. He used this ingenious method to great advantage. As an example, one line of a song of his follows. 'පාර්ක් එකේ වෝක් කරමු රත්තරන් සුදේ' There was, of course, a difference Eddie Jayamanne had the good grace to used English terms and not unfamiliar Sanskrit terms. It would be helpful to follow Jayamanne's example and adopt English terms. Indeed, CINTEC has also done so, whenever they were unable to find a suitable Sanskrit word. A few examples are as follows:

English	Sinhala
Record	- රෙකෝඩය
Accumulator	- ඇකියුමිලේටරය
Routine	- රුටිනය
Terminal	- ටර්මිනලය
Micro	- මයික්‍රෝ
Byte	- බයිටය
Bit	- බිටුව
Loop	- ලූපය

It appears that, where the Sanskrit langauge is deficient, this method of word formations is also acceptable to CINTEC.

In view of this, we need not burden ourselves with the massive undertaking of forming million of Sinhala technical terms. Instead, we can emulate this process, which has the blessings of CINTEC itself. Accordingly, we can borrow the English term and add 'කර or 'එක' as the case may be!

I see a decided advantage in this method. For instance, the Sinhala term for "transformer" will be ට්‍රාන්ස්පෝර්මරය, the Sinhala term for "insulator" will be ඉන්සියුලේටරය the Sinhala term for "Synchronous generator" will be සින්ක්‍රොනස් ජෙනරේටරය.

When our students become familiar with these terms it will be a blessing to those proceeding for higher studies to the UK or to the USA, as they will promptly recognise what the English term refers to!!

7. Some essential characteristic in coining Sinhala technical terms:

The very essential characteristic of the Sinhala technical term is that it should be based on a Sinhala verbal root. Why is such action necessary?

In Sinhala, the verbal root creates words such as nouns, adverbs etc with related meanings.

Also, unlike in English, the Sinhala verbs are capable of being conjugated. Arising from this feature, when a term is created basing it on a verbal root a high degree of flexibility is assured. Otherwise, in usage the terms become very unwiedly. For instance, several years ago, a verb called "peoplise" was introduced.

It was rendered in Sinhala as ජනතාකරණය කරනවා (Janathakaranaya karanava). There was an instance where the term "non-peoplisation" was rendered as 'ජනතාකරණය කිරීම නොති-රීම'. Today we hear of such expressions as 'ප්‍රතිවත්තිකරණයකරයි' as the equivalent of the English verb 'recycle'.

In order to avoid such ridiculousness we can select an existing Sinhala verb 'සිසාරයි' meaning "to go round". Then the equivalent of the English term "recycle" can be rendered as පිළිසාරයි where 'පිළි' is a prefix. So, instead of using the Jawbreaker 'ප්‍රතිවත්තික-රණයකරයි' we can readily say 'පිළිසාරයි'.

Another feature we should make use of is adopting prefixes to create new verbs from an existing verb. In Sinhala there are thousands of verbal roots. Further, new verbs can be formed by the permutation and combination of these roots with prefixes and suffices. As an example, the verbal root 'ගනී 'which means "to take", has been used to generate a number of new verbs amalgamation with prefixes as indicated below:

To take	-	ගනී
To welcome	-	ස + ගනී = සගනී
To reject	-	නි + ගනී = නිගනී
To acquire	-	පිරි + ගනී = පිරිගනී
To receive	-	පිළි + ගනී = පිළිගනී
To learn	-	උ + ගනී = උගනී
To favour	-	අනු + ගනී = අනුගනී

ස, නි, පිරි, පිළි, උ, අනු being the prefixes. Thus, there is no need to borrow words from any other language. This feature of spontaneous generation should be exploited fully. An example is the term which was introduced by me for the English term "refine". Here the prefix "re" was replaced by the Sinhala prefix පිළි, and the verb "to make fine" by the Sinhala verb 'පහදි', the compound verb thereby being 'පිරිපහදි'. (refines). The other shades of meaning can be conveniently derived as given below:

English		Sinhala
Refine (verb)	-	පිරිපහදි
Refinery	-	පිරිපහදුව
Refinedly	-	පිරිපැහැදිසුරු
Refinedness	-	පිරිපැහැදියාව

The other day, Professor Tissa Vitharana at a television program was explaining in Sinhala the early warning system in relation to the occurrence of a tsunami or kindred natural disaster.

His explanation was extremely lucid and as usual clarity itself. But, when it was required to explain the function of the buoy he was faced with difficulty, as a proper Sinhala term was not available.

To avoid such contretemps the new technical term should be formed or selected with care. In this instance we can select an existing Sinhala verb for the purpose. One of the verbs having the meaning of "floating" is 'ඉපිලෙයි'. Being a verb it automatically gives rise to the other related concepts as follows:

Buoy	-	ඉපිලිය
Buoyage	-	ඉපිලියාය
Buoyancy	-	ඉපිලියාව
Buoyant	-	ඉපිලිසුලු

8. Towards essential success of the project envisaged by Professor Vitharana:

Professor Tissa Vitharana, the Honourable Minister of Science and Technology, has in all good faith directed that the rural folk too should have the benefit of modern technology through the medium of their langauge.

The achieving of this will raise the living standard of the many who are today deprived of their birthright. An earlier attempt to create Sinhala technical terms spawned only a host of nouns. These yielded a so-called Sinhala technical langauge which was impotent in expressing precise technological thought. Space does not permit a comprehensive treatment of this aspect. The book referred to earlier deals with these matters.

Those who are of the view that the necessary words may be haphazardly borrowed and used in an ad hoc manner, as was done based on the efforts of CINTEC, should be called upon by the Minister at least to answer the queries raised herein regarding the shortcomings which have been enumerated.

To make the project as success it is essential to initiate a public dialogue on the issue of creating Sinhala technical terms. In this regard organisations such as the Institution of Engineers, the Architects Institution, the Sri Lanka Association for the advancement of Science and more importantly the national Science Foundation should actively pursue the establishment of an acceptable Sinhala technological language if they desire to popularise science and technology. It is therefore incumbent on them to extend to the the Minister of science and Technology all assistance to make his project the success it deserves. **(Concluded)**