The Metaphor of Cricket in Shehan Karunatilaka’s *Chinaman*: Sri Lankan English and Sri Lankan National Consciousness

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ABSTRACT

Chinaman – The legend of Pradeep Mathew is the debut novel of the Sri Lankan English writer Shehan Karunatilaka. The novel, which is often labeled as a “cricket novel,” uses actual as well as fictional cricket events to comment on the status of Sri Lankan cricket, and by extension on socio-cultural realities of Sri Lanka. As a result, cricket, in Chinaman is often read as a metaphor for the nation. The present study takes as its point of departure the argument that cricket in Chinaman can be read as a metaphor for English as much as the nation, which opens up a critically significant discussion about the ideological links between the discourses of World Englishness and Nationalism though the domain of cricket. In turn, the discussion of this metaphor leads to merge the issues in the linguistic ecology of Sri Lanka with those in the country’s political climate. In order to identify these links, the study conducts a qualitative content analysis of the primary text Chinaman using the “Conceptual Metaphor Theory” proposed by the cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003). Conceptual Metaphor Theory argues that establishing a metaphorical mapping involves mapping of properties, knowledge and logic in the source domain onto properties, knowledge and logic in the target domain. The study’s attempt at mapping of such ideological links between cricket, English and the nation in the Sri Lankan context indicates that while (anti)imperialist,
class and ethnic tensions inform the discourses of both Sri Lankan English and Sri Lankan national identity, the tensions in each domain condition and are conditioned by each other.

**Keywords:** Chinaman, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Cricket, Sri Lankan English, Sri Lankan national consciousness.

**INTRODUCTION**

Chinaman – *The Legend of Pradeep Mathew*¹ written by Shehan Karunatilaka is a Sri Lankan English novel that has garnered both national and international recognition, winning literary awards such as the Commonwealth Book Prize and DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2012. Perhaps its popularity derives from the fact that it takes off from a rather less hackneyed motif in ‘postcolonial’ writing, which is cricket – a sport that is to Sri Lankans what football may be to Brazilians. The novel is presented as the last attempt of a dying alcoholic sports writer to compile “a halfway decent documentary on Sri Lankan cricket” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p. 5). A large part of the story features WG the narrator and his friend Ari chasing behind the elusive figure of Pradeep Mathew – a genius Chinaman² bowler of Tamil origin, the unsung hero of Sri Lankan cricket. However, as the narrator’s son Garfield points out, “the story, like the man himself, seems to forget its point” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.467) and plunges into a discussion of the political turmoil and ethnic conflict³ of late 20th Century Sri Lanka. As a result, *Chinaman* is often read as a novel that takes cricket as a surrogate for the nation (Rambukwella, 2010; Kesavan, 2012; Yothers, 2012). The present study takes as its point of departure the argument that *Chinaman* is as much a documentary of Sri Lankan English as of Sri Lankan cricket and Sri Lankan national consciousness. Here, cricket in *Chinaman* is taken as a construct that forms metaphorical links with both Sri Lankan national consciousness and (Sri Lankan) English. In this context, the

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¹ Chinaman – *The Legend of Pradeep Mathew*, originally published in 2010, henceforth will be referred to as Chinaman
² In cricket terminology, “Chinaman” is an unorthodox spin bowling technique where “a ball bowled by a left-arm wrist-spin bowler that breaks from off to leg when bowled to a right-handed batsman” (Rundell, 2006, p.34). Pradeep Mathew’s style of bowling can be compared to his tricky and elusive presence in the narrative.
³ The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. The largest ethnic group of the country is Sinhalese (or Sinhala), second largest, Tamil and others, Muslim, Burgher and Malay. The religious faiths followed by these communities include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. With the complex texture of the country’s ethnic and religious composition, and the added stimulation of the nationalist movement in the aftermath of colonisation, tensions have sprung up particularly between the “Sinhala-Buddhist” majority and other “minority” groups including Tamil and Muslim over the ownership of the nation. The thirty year long civil war (1983-2009) between Sri Lankan government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) can be considered one of the most tragic outcomes of such ethnic tensions.
study conducts a qualitative content analysis of its primary text Chinaman based on a theoretical framework that draws from “Conceptual Metaphor Theory” (2003) proposed by cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Cricket, a sport that originated in the 16th C England (Rundell, 2006, p.40) and spread rapidly into its Empire through colonisation and consequently to other parts of the world through globalisation, forms interesting parallels with the spread and decline of the British Empire, the emergence of “nationalisms” (McLeod, 2010, pp.97-119) in its former colonies and also the spread of the English language. Cricket carries contradictory meanings for the postcolonial subject, with its implicit “Britishness” (MacLean, 2009, p. 537) as the idyllic “gentleman’s game”, and its role as a site of “anti-colonial/postcolonial ‘playing back’ across former imperial regions” (Westall, 2016, p.245) upon which a “sporting cultural nationalism” (MacLean, 2009, p. 542) is constructed. Wagg notes that this idea of a communal “playing back” has a far stronger hold on the national consciousness of the once colonized nations than the elitist practise of “writing back”: “cricket has had far greater purchase on the popular imagination of Indian society than Rushdie or any other writer” (Wagg, 2005, p.3). Thus, parallels are already being drawn between the imperial and anti-imperial overtones of the British game and language in the context of the postcolonial nation.

Chinaman is often read as a ‘cricket book’ that that uses cricket as a “proxy” for the nation state and the post-independence political environment of Sri Lanka (Rambukwella, 2010; Kesavan, 2012). For instance, Kesavan in his analysis of Chinaman notes how “cricket in Sri Lanka is sometimes a surrogate for the nation” (2012, p.1813), while Khalid points out that Chinaman is not “just a personal odyssey but portrays the state of modern cricket – the scandal, intrigue, the schadenfreude and, through the game, the state of the nation” (2013, p.78). Harshana Rambukwella commenting on the novel’s departure from the realist tradition, states that the postmodern structure of the novel is a step towards a criticism of holistic nationalism that is reproduced in the realist tradition popular in Sri Lankan writing (2012, p.12). Thus, it is evident that much of the literary criticism on Chinaman focuses on how the game of cricket relates to the larger postcolonial political concerns of Sri Lanka.

However, what has eluded many critics’ attention is that Chinaman is a documentary of Sri Lankan English as much as of Sri Lankan cricket. On the one hand, through his quest to find the mysterious Tamil spinner Pradeep
Mathew, which is set against the backdrop of Sri Lankan cricket and the country’s ethnic conflict of the late 20th century, the narrator explores the dreams, fears and internal contradictions not only within himself but also within his nation. On the other hand, in documenting the his colourful interactions with people from different social strata in pursuing his obsession, the narrative also provides a tolerably authentic cross-section of the varieties of English used in Sri Lanka. Thus, the ‘cricket book’ Chinaman is an exploration of both Sri Lankan English and Sri Lankan national consciousness. In this context, it is evident that cricket in Chinaman can be read as a metaphor for not only the nation but also the English language.

While creative writing contributes the establishing of language varieties as such, such linguistic realities can be considered a product and a production of socio-cultural realities. In this context, the creative metaphor of cricket in the Sri Lankan English novel Chinaman performs a crucial role in representing the links and the dialectic relationship between these linguistic realities and socio-cultural realities, i.e., Sri Lankan English and Sri Lankan national consciousness, how Sri Lankan national consciousness influences the understanding of and the discourse on Sri Lankan English and vice versa. This is the rational as to why the study selected the text Chinaman as its primary text. Therefore, the larger objective of the study is to explore through the metaphor of cricket how Sri Lankan English, which forms the linguistic content of the novel, relates to the contemporary Sri Lankan national consciousness, which constitutes the thematic content of the novel. Here, the study poses the following research question, how does the metaphor of cricket in Chinaman bring together the issues of Sri Lankan English and Sri Lankan national consciousness?

**METHODOLOGY**

In order to address this research question, the study conducts a qualitative content analysis of the primary text Chinaman within a theoretical framework that draws from the “Conceptual Metaphor Theory” forwarded by Lakoff and Johnson.

**Theoretical framework: Conceptual Metaphor Theory**

Metaphor in a general sense refers to “a word or phrase used to describe somebody/something else in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful.” (Oxford, 2017). Cognitive linguists Lakoff and Johnson in Metaphors We Live by observe that metaphor, in essence, “allows us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another” (2003, p.118) and that its function is “not based on similarity [but] on cross-domain correlations in our experience, which give rise
to the perceived similarities between the two domains within the metaphor” (2003, p.245). Thus, establishing a metaphorical mapping involves mapping of properties, knowledge and logic in the source domain onto properties, knowledge and logic in the target domain (Lakoff and Turner, 1989).

Lakoff and Johnson’s theorization of “conceptual metaphor” (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003) makes a clear distinction between what they identify as “conceptual metaphor” and “poetic/linguistic metaphor” (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). The Conceptual Metaphor Theory which is based on the school of cognitive linguistics argues that human cognition is assisted by conceptual metaphorical mappings conditioned by cultural experiences (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003), and that “metaphor resides in thought, not just words” (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p. 2). This implies that our understanding of the world through language is largely based on a set of basic metaphors “whose use is conventional, unconscious, automatic, and typically unnoticed” (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p. 80). Lakoff and Johnson argue that the naturalized conceptual mappings in these conventional metaphors can motivate an infinitude of linguistic metaphors. While this implies that every poetic or creative metaphor is motivated by a basic metaphor, it in turn means that a typical poetic metaphor can be traced back to conceptual mapping of the basic or conventional metaphor that gave rise to it. This is true of the metaphorical connection between cricket, nation and the English language in Chinaman that is explored in the present study.

However, rather than to trace the basic conceptual metaphor that gives birth to the metaphorical links between cricket, English and the nation, the study uses the Conceptual Metaphor theory to draw ideological connections between these three domains. Through this, the study seeks to merge the domains of ‘Sri Lankan English’ and ‘Sri Lankan national identity’ through the metaphor of cricket in order to produce a fuller image of the intricate postcolonial language/national situation in Sri Lanka as portrayed in Chinaman. Thus, the discussion of Sri Lankan English does not draw to a close within the linguistic boundaries of world Englishness, but moves on to merge the linguistic issues with issues of nationality and ethnicity in post-independent Sri Lanka that are addressed in Chinaman.

FINDINGS

In an interview, Shehan Karunatilaka states that “cricket seemed like a harmless thing. It seemed that I could talk about Sri Lanka without addressing these things head on” (Karunatilaka, 2012). He has also stated that “metaphorically, state of literature in Sri Lanka is similar to the state of cricket during 1980s” (Karunatilaka, 2013, p.3). This may lend itself to an
interpretation of *Chinaman* as an allegory of both Sri Lankan national consciousness and Sri Lankan English, with their multitude of political concerns coalescing in and into the metaphor of cricket.

In the traditional sense, an allegory is a narrative that can have both a literal and figurative meanings dedicated to convey a moral, spiritual or political message (Wheeler, 2007, n.p). Metaphor plays a central role in constructing allegorical connections to the extent that allegory is sometimes called “extended metaphor” (Copeland and Struck, 2010, p.2). For instance, as Lakoff and Turner point out, the allegory of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is based on the metaphor of “life-as-a-journey” (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p. 9). However, the modern take on the concept refuses the idea of allegory as a “genre in itself” and seeks to establish it as “one of the ways in which other genres behave” (Hawks, 1965). This understanding in turn opens up fresh approaches to reading multiple layers of meaning even into texts such as *Chinaman* that are not “allegories” in the traditional sense.

In the case of *Chinaman*, the layers of meaning in relation to Sri Lanka’s postcolonial national consciousness, Sri Lankan English and – though it is not the focus of the present study – the narrator’s own battle for self-realization, are yielded through the metaphor of cricket.

I think of Pradeep Mathew, the great unsung bowler. I think of Sri Lanka, the great underachieving nation. I think of W. G. Karunasena, the great unfulfilled writer. I think of all these ghosts and I can’t help but agree. (Karunatilaka, 2010, p. 41).

Thus, the allegorical aspect of *Chinaman* constitutes and is constituted of a metaphorical mapping between Sri Lankan cricket, ‘Sri Lankan identity’ and ‘Sri Lankan English.’ As A. Fletcher points out, “the whole point of allegory is that it does not need to be read exegetically [because] it often has a literal level that makes good enough sense all by itself.” (2012, p.7). *Chinaman* likewise can be read lightly as a “detective story” (Karunatilaka, 2012) of chasing the “ghost” of Predeep Mathew. However, that is to abandon the much richer interpretations gained through exploring the metaphorical mappings charted between “all these ghosts” (Karunatilaka, 2010, p. 41). Furthermore, it is important to note that meaning produced through such exegetical readings rely on the process of reading and the subjectivity of the reader as much as the writing process.

As mentioned in the literature review, while the comparison between cricket and nationalism seems rather straightforward, parallels between cricket and World Englishness are novel and are rarely discussed. Among the many unexpected parallels between cricket and English, their colonial origins, the elitism associated with their practice, their stratified nature – from street
urchin level to “national side”, their quality of being a communal product, the presence of political tensions within each team, and the creative competition between different “cricketing/English speaking nations” with their unique “local action” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.142) are some instances.

As a matter of fact, cricket has an idiomatic presence in English, both British and Sri Lankan. Idiomatic expressions such as “playing with a straight bat” which means honest and “gentlemanly” behavior, and its opposite: “that’s not cricket”, which implies unjust or “ungentlemanly” behavior, and even the Sri Lankan English expression “bat on” which means to “slog on with something” (Meyler, 2007, p. 21) are some examples for this. It is evident that postcolonial national consciousness, cricket and English language are intricately interwoven entities. Therefore, the metaphor of cricket in Chinaman brings together the political concerns of defining a “Sri Lankan English” and a “Sri Lankan identity”. This connection between national consciousness and Sri Lankan English that is fashioned though the metaphor of cricket can be traced across the palimpsestuous literary medium of Chinaman, particularly in relation to the 2 themes of 1) (anti)imperialism and 2) tensions inherent in defining “Sri Lankan” (be it cricket, English or the nation) as a coherent concept in the face of ethnic and class differences.

**Cricket, English and the nation: Imperial and anti-imperial sentiments**

As a sport, cricket carries both imperial and anti-imperial implications to its players as well as spectators located in the former colonies of England. While there is an implicit “Britishness” (MacLean, 2009, p.537) in the game of cricket, and thus an almost anglophelic respect towards the game, cricket also functions as a sight of postcolonial resistance, as the critic Westall points out, as an “anti-colonial/postcolonial ‘playing back’ across former imperial regions” (2016, p.245). For instance, in Chinaman, Ravi de Mel who is a bowler in the Sri Lankan national side is anxious to “show the world that we are gentlemen, worthy of the gentleman’s game” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.248). In contrast, Pradeep Mathew who is another bowler in the national side, and who is the target of the narrator’s obsession, believes that Sri Lankan players who are trained not to respond to sledging “like gentlemen” should strategically “talk back” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.377) to the sledgers.

These imperial and anti-imperial sentiments implicit in cricket can be mapped into the domain of Sri Lankan English. For instance, at one point of

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*Sledging in cricket terminology is “a form of gamesmanship in which a close fielder attempts to unsettle the batsman at the crease and make him lose his concentration, especially by making abusive comments” (Rundell, 2006, p.167)*
the narrative, the narrator WG and his Burgher friend Ari argue about what should be “proper Sri Lankan English” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.195). While WG argues that the ‘non-standard’ English that their taxi driver Jabir speaks is “proper Sri Lankan English”, Ari contends saying “there is no such a thing as Sri Lankan English [and] even if there was, it wouldn’t be proper” (Karunatilake, 2015, p.195). This argument seems to echo the opinion gap between Paradeep Mathew and Ravi de Mel regarding the “Britishness” (MacLean, 2009, p.537) of the game and “being worthy of the gentleman’s game” (Karunatila, 2015, p.248).

This reverence for the ‘gentleman’s game’ and ‘Queen’s English’ can be identified as vestiges of anglophilia in Sri Lankan national consciousness. Similarly, the indigenization of cricket and English language as sites of resistance may articulate the anti-imperial sentiments in post-independent Sri Lanka. The narrator himself brings out this link between cricket and national consciousness when he states “back then I believed in the glory of the West and in our own savagery. No longer” while watching the Sri Lankan captain Arjuna Ranatunga defying the “umpire’s word” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.390) during the no-ball controversy in 1999\(^5\). Thus, one of the main metaphorical links between cricket, English and the idea of the nation is that in the postcolonial context, all three have been adopted as sites of resistance, as tools of “playing back” and “writing back” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tifffin, 1989) in spite of being colonial legacies.

**Cricket, English and the nation: Cohesion and difference**

Romesh Gunesekera’s *the Match*, which is another ‘cricket book’ written by a Sri Lankan author, provides a different outlook on the metaphorical link between cricket and nationalism. Unlike *Chinaman*, *The Match* looks at the sport from a cosmopolitan diasporic location; from the point of view of “a spectator who is both inside and outside the space of ‘the nation’” (Perera, 2000, p.15). Here, cricket becomes both a colonial legacy and a nostalgic link with the “home” left behind – “a roots thing” (Gunesekera, R. 2006, p.296). It also juxtaposes cricket victories, defeats and the ethnic solidarity among the diasporic spectators against the ethnic turmoil of the “homeland” in order to portray the sport as a promise of reconciliation. Thus, cricket in *The Match* performs a paradoxical role as both a way back to one’s national roots and as a way out of the internal tensions that make up the fabric of that very ‘nation’.

\(^5\) Here, *Chinaman* refers to an actual event that took place surrounding the controversy of Muttiah Muralitharan’s ‘chucking action’. In a one-day match played between Sri Lanka and England in 1999, Sri Lankan captain Ranatunga challenged the decision of the umpire to no-ball Muralidaran four consecutive times by leading the team almost off the field. (The Guardian, 1999)
In contrast, cricket in *Chinaman* is portrayed as a sport that is infested with class and ethnic prejudices even though it has the potential of bringing the nation together. However, before exploring how *Chinaman* discusses the issues of class and ethnic prejudices in Sri Lankan national consciousness and Sri Lankan English through cricket, it would be useful to outline the contemporary postmodern understanding of national consciousness and Sri Lankan English.

As the critic McLeod points out, historically, the concept of nationalism “has afforded colonized peoples the chance to conceive of and represent themselves as coherent imagined communities, bonded by common qualities and attributes” (2010, p.97). However, this search for a coherent national culture can quickly turn into a continued oppression because, implicit in “national identity” is the “contestation between those who seek a fully coherent narrative of the community’s existence and those whose presence, ideas, colour or culture undermine the possibility of that coherence” (Kramer, 1997, p.537). Thus the contemporary postmodern accounts of nationalism, national identity and national consciousness highlight “the ambivalent relationship between a much desired coherent or pure national identity and the ‘other’ that makes this coherence impossible” (Kramer, 1997, p.537).

The contemporary understanding of the concept of Sri Lankan English also contains such attempts to negotiate the tension between coherence and diversity. For instance, the recent understanding of “Sri Lankan English(es)" as discussed by Mendis and Rambukwella (2010) endorses the pluricentric and inclusive spirit of the contemporary discourse on world Englishes. Other prominent critics such as Manique Gunesekera (2010) and Michael Meyler (2007) also acknowledge that the definition of Sri Lankan English encapsulates different sub varieties such as ‘Standard SLE’, Lankan English, Jaffna English, Burgher English and ‘not-pot’ English. Therefore, the term Sri Lankan English is often understood as one that conceives ‘Sri Lankan English’ as Sri Lankan (rather than an offspring of a foreign language), and also acknowledges ‘Sri Lankan English’ as a volatile flux of linguistic identities affiliated with competing varieties.

This tension between coherence and difference is also observed in the portrayal of cricket in *Chinaman*. Cricket is presented as a sport that will “bring an entire nation to its feet” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.18), but at the same time is intolerant of difference as represented by characters such as Pradeep Mathew, whose partially erased traces the narrator attempts to unearth. As the critic Allen in his essay on South African cricket points out, “from the outset, cricket has been associated with elitism and segregation in terms of social status as well as race” (2008, p.450). Similarly, *Chinaman*s portrayal of
cricket brings out how class and ethnic prejudices inform the status of the sport in Sri Lankan society despite the narrator’s claim that “cricket as a sport refuses to be segregated” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.345).

a. **Class in cricket, English and the nation**

As represented in *Chinaman*, class is implicit in Sri Lankan cricket which favours “Colombo school Sinhala Buddhist” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.39) players in terms of toleration. The class hierarchies of the Sri Lankan cricket circle that is evident in the wedding of the “Great Lankan Opening Batsman” or the “GLOB” can be taken as one instance of class prejudices that pervade the sport.

The deluxe section features the national team, some minor celebrities, film stars, models and people wealthy enough to own film stars and models. The middle section is filled with aunties and uncles, media and business types... And then there are us. The journalists, coaches, ground staff, B-grade cricketers, C-grade friends. (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.11).

This seating arrangement seems to be a replication of the class hierarchies of Sri Lankan society at large. This link between cricket and Sri Lankan society in terms of class prejudice is further reinforced by the prominence given in both domains to the “old school tie” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.55). As the narrator WG points out, “before the 1990s, two schools in particular fed Sri Lankan cricket [and] fed Sri Lankan politics” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.55). The class hierarchies and prejudices embedded in Sri Lankan cricket are thus mapped into the domain of Sri Lankan national consciousness.

The same schemata of socio-economic stratification can also be traced in the composition of Sri Lankan English as presented in *Chinaman*. Just as cricket is stratified from street cricket level to ‘national side’, Sri Lankan English is also constituted of different layers of prestige, from “not-pot” English to “elite English”? (Gunesekera, M. 2010). Furthermore, just as in cricket, class and social prestige are implicit in English. According to Manique Gunesekera, in the Sri Lankan context, “English is power, and those who wield power have access to English” (2010, p.13). *Chinaman* in documenting Sri Lankan cricket, represents speakers from different class and educational backgrounds, capturing “elite English” (Gunesekera, M. 2010), of characters such as Sir Nihal, the elite cricket coach as well as “not-pot English” (Gunesekera, M.

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6 “Not-pot English” is a derogatory term used to identify a low prestige variety of Sri Lankan English. The signature characteristic of this variety is the use of the mid-back vowel /o/ instead of half-back vowel /a/, and so the name “not-pot” (Gunesekara M, 2010).

7 Elite English is the opposite of “not-pot” English, the high prestigious variety that uses the vowel /ɔ/ instead of /o/ (Gunsekara M, 2010).
2010, p.36) of characters such as Jabir the taxi driver. The following is an exchange between Jabir, the uneducated Muslim trishaw driver, and Ari, a Burgher and a Thomian⁸:

'\text{I am the fixing his wiring. I know the electrical}'
This time Ari cannot be restrained.
'I am the person fixing his wiring. I am an electrician' (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.195)

The distance between the two grammars can be taken as a representation of the distance between the two classes and educational backgrounds. Furthermore, Jabir’s attempt to use English may showcase his desire to bridge that gap and belong to the class that English represents; his desire “for capital, power, and images that are associated with English; for what is believed to lie beyond the doors that English unlocks” (Motha and Lin, 2014 cited in Pennycook, 2017, p. xii).

b. Ethnicity in cricket, English and the nation

In addition to socio-economic stratification, Chinaman's portrayal of cricket also shows how ethnic prejudices shape the composition of Sri Lankan cricket and Sri Lankan national consciousness. For instance, one of the main reasons why Pradeep Mathew was not easily accepted as a member of the ‘national side’ was because he was not a “Sinhala Buddhist” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.39), and as Pradeep Mathew’s former coach Gokulanath observes, “Tamils have to be twice as good as a Sinhalese to be recognised” (Karunatilaka, 2015, p.83). This connection between Sri Lankan cricket and Sri Lankan national consciousness in terms of ethnic prejudices can be identified as one of the portals through which the novel enters into the dialogue on the postcolonial national consciousness of Sri Lanka.

The strain of ethnic conflict that forms a link between cricket and Sri Lankan national consciousness can be traced in Sri Lankan English that constitutes the literary medium of Chinaman as well. Chinaman captures a colourful mixture of language variations coming from different not only ethnic but also religious, economic and political locations. Its collection of social locations includes English educated Burgher (Ari), children from Sinhala-Tamil inter-racial marriage (Pradeep Mathew and his sister), children from Sinhala-Burgher inter-racial marriage (Garfield), Jaffna Tamil (Gokulanath), upper-class Muslim (the Marzookqs), uneducated working-class Muslim (Jabir).

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⁸ Thomian – A pupil/former pupil of S. Thomas’s Collage, Mount Lavinia, Sri Lanka. S Thomas’ Collage is typically considered one of the most prestigious boys’ schools in Sri Lanka catering to the upper-class English speaking “Colombo elite”. 
Colombo 7 elite (Sir Nihal), and even foreign characters such as Graham Snow. The voices coming from these different socio-political locations are observed as constituting the palimpsestuous literary medium of *Chinaman*.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Creative writing in world Englishness can be taken as a major catalyst in the process of validating and legitimizing a language as an independent variety. In this context, *Chinaman* is a significant contribution to the development of the canon of Sri Lankan literature in English, particularly because, as discussed in the present study, the novel can be taken as a documentary of Sri Lankan English. In the context of critical studies conducted on *Chinaman*, it was observed that whereas the connection between cricket and Sri Lankan nationalism in *Chinaman* has been discussed by many critics (Rambukwella, 2010; Kesavan, 2012; Yothers, 2012) the connection it forms between cricket and English has not been adequately discussed. Therefore, the study looked at *Chinaman* as a documentary of Sri Lankan English and examined how the texture of Sri Lankan English is a product and production of Sri Lankan national consciousness, mainly by analyzing the novel’s central metaphor - cricket.

One of Britain’s favorite pastimes, cricket, found its way into the national spirit of the former colonies the same way their language did – through colonization. Cricket in *Chinaman* can, in fact, be interpreted as a metaphor for the English language itself – its spread, diversity and its decisive role in the postcolonial condition as well as criticism. As Pennycook points out, “the history of international cricket forms a very interesting parallel with the history of international English” (2017). Thus, Sri Lankan cricket may represent ‘Sri Lankan English’ with all its internal tensions stemming from postcolonial issues such as race, ethnicity and legitimacy. Furthermore, the metaphor of cricket gives literary expression to the questions of the ownership of the language in both national and international contexts. Accordingly, cricket in *Chinaman* performs an interesting dual function as a metaphor for English as well as for the national consciousness in the postcolonial context.

The study set out to unearth the conceptual links that exist between cricket, Sri Lankan English and Sri Lankan national consciousness under the sub-themes of (anti)imperialism and the impact of class and ethnicity in forming a ‘Sri Lankan’ identity both in the context of language and nationalism. In the context of the paradoxical imperial and anti-imperial sentiments surrounding cricket, English and the idea of the ‘nation’ in postcolonial countries, it was evident that all three have been adapted as tools of
resistance despite being colonial legacies. In terms of the novel’s desire to define a cohesive ‘Sri Lankan’ identity, be it in relation to cricket, English or the nation, differences of class and ethnicity were presented as resisting such possibilities of cohesion.

Sri Lankan English has been promoted as a site of resistance against the Imperial standards of English, striking a similar chord to nationalist movements in the aftermath of colonization. However, just like the contested ground of a unified Sri Lankan national identity, the task of defining Sri Lankan English is ridden with tensions between different class and ethnic communities. Codification attempts of Sri Lankan English can be considered as one example. Codification is considered an important step in standardizing a language variety. In the context of codifying Sri Lankan English, Michael Meyler’s *A Dictionary of Sri Lankan English* (2007) and Manique Gunesekera’s *The Postcolonial Identity of Sri Lankan English* (2010) can be considered two of the most comprehensive and influential documentations. These two works as well as the expansive academic literature surrounding the topic of Sri Lankan English undoubtedly have contributed to the establishing of Sri Lankan English as a variety in its own right. However, it also appears that the voices of the Tamil speakers of Sri Lankan English are obscured by the overwhelming documentation of characteristics and opinions of Sinhala speakers.

For instance, a vast majority of the lexical borrowings and loan translations recorded in Meyler’s dictionary of ‘Sri Lankan’ English, are derived from the Sinhala language. Similarly, Manique Gunesekera in *The Postcolonial Identity of Sri Lankan English* also equates what is defined “Singlish”, or the “English influenced by the majority language, Sinhala” (2010, p.21)” with Sri Lankan English:

Sri Lankan English, when acknowledged by its users can be a factor in establishing a national identity. However as long as we are ashamed of acknowledging it as our own, or laughing at it as “Singlish”, it will remain a language of the few, not lending itself to forge a national identity. Gunesekera, M. 2010, p.21).

While this claim is justified by her argument that the ‘Standard Sri Lankan English’ is the variety spoken by the Colombo elite, a majority of whom are Sinhalese (Gunesekera, M. 2010, p.37), it might be seen as a duplication of the tendency to impose the hegemonic narratives of ‘Sinhalese history’ as the source of a ‘true’ Sri Lankan national identity in the aftermath of independence – the ‘Sinhala only’ policy9 being one such example. In its turn, Sri Lankan

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9 The ‘Sinhala Only’ Act of 1956 is a Sri Lankan language policy reformation that had far reaching consequences. The Act specified Sinhala as the only official language of Sri Lanka
English(es) (Mendis and Rambukwella, 2010), with the different levels of prestige associated with different variations, create fractures in the national identity since the ability to use English and the type of English one uses (for example whether one speaks not pot English, Burgher English or Elite English) become markers of class and ethnicity.

In conclusion, it can be noted that the exploration of the metaphorical links between Sri Lankan cricket, Sri Lankan national consciousness and Sri Lankan English indicated that the connection between these three domains are not so much about the competition, winning or losing that is associated with sports, as about the negotiations taking place through them, their stratified composition, and their ideological engagements. It was observed that all three domains are ‘indigenized’ with anti-imperial motives to construct a collective identity and a site of resistance. At the same time, the composition of all three is ridden with internal contradictions and differences that make such a unified identity impossible. The analysis of the metaphor of cricket indicate that while (anti)imperialist, class and ethnic tensions inform the discourses of both Sri Lankan English and Sri Lankan national identity, the tensions in each domain condition and are conditioned by each other.

REFERENCES


