



Sri Lankans' Views on English in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Eras

Subathini Ramesh
Mitali P. Wong

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Subathini Ramesh

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In the South Asian context, the concept of postcolonialism has been defined and interpreted by various writers as controversial due to its semantic features. After Sri Lanka's (then Ceylon's) independence in 1948, the indigenous languages of Sinhala and Tamil were reintroduced as official languages, but English has often served as the *lingua franca* on the island and is typically the language of choice in contemporary governmental policies and practices. These policies altered further in postcolonial years, most notably with the 1956 Language Act that established Sinhala Only as the nation's official language.

The term 'post-colonial' is interesting and has a double-edged sharpness. It implies that the country and the people in question are no more under a colonial rule. This would mean that they are politically 'independent'. The term independent here only means independent of the colonial authority and are perhaps in a position to take their decisions. The other dimension of the word is more far-reaching. It argues that the colonial era is not completely over and there are very factors at work, which link these actions somehow or other to that colonial past. (Sivathamby 120)

The word 'postcolonial' may refer to the status of a land that is no longer colonized and has regained its political independence (e.g. postcolonial India). In this sense, 'postcolonialism' will pertain to the set of features (economic, political, social, etc.) which characterizes these countries and the way in which they negotiate their colonial heritage, it being understood that long periods of forced dependency necessarily had a profound impact on the social and cultural fabric of these societies (the postcolonial condition). It may also apply to the former colonizers inasmuch that both their extended contacts with the alien societies they conquered and the eventual loss of these profitable possessions deeply influenced the course of their economic and cultural evolution. This process raises several kinds

of conceptual and pragmatic problem. Crucial questions which are relevant in this respect are:

- a. What were the forms of resistance against colonial control?
- b. How did colonial education and language influence the culture and identity of the colonized?

Phillipson (2008) argues in his paper “English, panacea or pandemic?” for the maintenance of multilingualism, with English in balance with other languages. He explores these concepts by considering whether the continued use of English in postcolonial contexts and its current expansion in Europe is purely positive – the lure of the panacea – or life-threatening for other languages and cultures, symptom of a pandemic. Thiru Kandiah of Sri Lanka sees countries in the postcolonial world as trapped in a major contradiction—one which raises ethical issues for English-dominant countries. On the one hand, postcolonial countries need this “indispensable global medium” for pragmatic purposes, even for survival in the global economy: a panacea for the privileged. On the other hand there is the fact that the medium is not culturally or ideologically neutral, far from it, so that its users run the “apparently unavoidable risk of co-option, of acquiescing in the negation of their own understandings of reality and in the accompanying denial or even subversion of their own interests”: pandemic (Kandiah, 2001:112). What is therefore needed in relation to English is “interrogating its formulations of reality, intervening in its modes of understanding, holding off its normalising tendencies, challenging its hegemonic designs and divesting it of the co-optive power which could render it a reproducing discourse” (ibid.). Kandiah advocates authentic local projections of reality, and emancipatory action (Phillipson 9).

Before we take up the question of Sri Lanka, we shall speak of colonial rule in India. It is the British rule that counts. The British did not use the term ‘colony’; the British monarch called herself/himself ‘Empress/Emperor of India’. The British looked down upon many of the social traditions, even the educational traditions, prevalent in the country prior to subjugation as not befitting a modern civilized community. Lord Macaulay wanted to civilize India: thus, his ideas of education influenced colonial education in that country.

Colonial Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, British rule was more direct and, in a way, even unpretentious. Ceylon was a crown colony and after the Kandyan war of 1815 and the

settlement of 1817, the entire island of Ceylon came under one single rule. The relative freedom that was available within the British set-up of the historic communities was used to assert the sociocultural identity of the Sinhalese, the Tamils and the Muslims. Chronologically, the upper caste Hindus of Jaffna were the earliest to assert their identity as a distinct group during British rule. Not opposed to British rule, in fact even welcoming it, they did not want to be Christianized and to be brought onto a par with the socially oppressed and the downtrodden.

The assertion of Hindu identity also meant conserving social traditions and conventions. They took over from Protestant Christianity all the trends of modernization. They wanted English education without Christian influence. The Saiva English schools were the answer. Protestant Christian strategies were employed to take Hinduism to the newly literate. It has been argued that even the type of Saivism which Arumuga Navalar, the protagonist of this movement, explicated was puritanical in character. One of Navalar's last acts as leader of the Saiva Tamils was to promote Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan as the nominated representative of the Tamils. The Ramanathan legacy is a Hindu legacy (Sivathamby 2005:123).

The history of Buddhist revival is too well known to be repeated here. Significantly enough, Buddhist resurgence emanated more from the south than from the central highlands. The role of the Buddhist Theosophical Society and its efforts in introducing modern education brought a new awareness. Anagarika Dharmapala is a key figure in the Buddhist resurgence. The need for a Buddhism based on Sinhala culture was present very much because of the cultural changes brought about by the Portuguese and the Dutch rules, and even the early British impact was not only seen as Christianizing but also de-Sinhalising the Sinhalese. Thus, there was the necessity for underlining Sinhala identity as much as the Buddhist legacy.

The 1870s saw the assertion of Muslim consciousness in Sri Lanka. Inspired by the movement in Egypt, the Muslims of Ceylon, ably led by M.C. Siddi Lebbe, a Muslim from Kandy, set themselves on the path of forging an identity separate from the Tamils. Here again we could say that Muslims' consciousness had become a political reality by the first two decades of the 20th century.

Unlike the case of India, assertions of identity did not play a major role in the pre-independence era. Whereas India could enfold its cultural diversities within a single polity, in Sri Lanka after 1948 those pluralities

that were taken as part of Sri Lankan life were not heeded to when the process of Sinhalese administration began. There were a number of reasons for this, including a feeling among the Sinhalese that they were the minority in comparison to the Tamils, whom they identified as part of India. As the insistence on Sinhalese increased, Tamil consciousness and Muslim consciousness started developing too (Sivathamby 2005:124).

To come to the main argument, postcolonial Sri Lanka wanted to bring into existence the ideological constructs it made for the Sinhalese and for Buddhism within a colonial set-up. What is interesting in the colonial period was the mutual appreciation of the identities of different groups. Ramanathan was keen on the question of Buddhists' rights. The state council pressed for Sinhala and Tamil to be the official languages. Postcolonial Sri Lanka, in trying to erect a colonial construct, has come to the verge of destroying the entire country. The searching question is how much of the colonialist ideology has determined postcolonial politics in Sri Lanka.

Western influence

Due to the length of British rule, the English language influenced the society and the languages as well. Consequently, certain linguistic features appear in the society when they use English and they have to be brought out properly. Further, the influence of English on the Tamil and Sinhala languages is also an important feature; apart from the linguistic power, it could be discerned through the socio-cultural, political and economic power of a particular language. The Portuguese language was introduced during the Portuguese period in Sri Lanka. A large number of words entered into the Sinhala and Tamil languages. The main contribution of the Portuguese to Sri Lanka was to introduce the Christian faith to the society; therefore, the primary task of their education was to satisfy the religious needs of the converted people.

During the Dutch period, the status of Sinhala/Tamil was not affected. There is evidence that the Dutch priests also learnt Tamil/Sinhala in Sri Lanka to develop public relations. Therefore, we can conclude that the hegemony of Tamil/Sinhala was challenged only by the introduction of British language policy and planning in Sri Lanka. The policy was initiated during the British period. Thereafter, English gradually gained prestige in this country.

The Colebrook commission also did not consider the mother language of this country. It emphasized that English education should be seriously taken into consideration. This policy directly enhanced the status of English and lowered the status of Tamil and Sinhala in this country. The Colebrook policy also led to the closure of the many government vernacular schools in Sri Lanka. A few years later, a committee led by Richard Morgan in 1865 recommended the extension of vernacular schools in every village to provide primary Sinhala education in Sinhala regions and Tamil in Tamil regions (Godge 421). From this time, the government concentrated on vernacular schools and the development of the status of the native languages Sinhala and Tamil, and gave away the English schools to private agencies. On the other hand, the government encouraged the start of private English schools and indirectly supported the maintenance of the status of English.

The Sri Lankan government also decided to elevate the status of the two national languages by parliamentary act; the government declared the vernacular languages as the official languages (Sinhala: the Official Language Act no 33, 1956; and Tamil Act no 28, 1958). Due to these fresh measures, the status and position of the English language gradually declined. But after the declaration of the national languages as official languages, all activities should be officially carried out entirely through the medium of the national languages, initially Sinhala and then gradually Tamil as well. Due to this, English began to play a dwindling role in the educational system.

The activities of the colonial rulers brought about a great deal of other changes, not only in the status of the native languages but also in the entire linguistic behavior of the masses. Where the local culture and languages came into contact with Portuguese, Dutch and English, western influence on lifestyle and culture resulted. These invaders brought their culture, traditions and religions, in addition to their languages.

The postcolonial history of Sri Lanka in the late fifties and sixties was beset with trouble between inter-ethnic groups and political instability and uncertainty. The first event in this instability was the 1958 communal riots, followed by a series of such riots in 1977, and finally again in 1983, an event which is now referred to by political scientist and politicians as a 'pogrom' (Thiruchandran 2006, Somasundram 1998, Santhan 2010). Although there are some ethnic differences between Tamils and Sinhalese, there is some commonness, especially in social customs, manners, practices, beliefs and linguistic behaviors. Sinhalese and Tamils have co-

existed and reciprocally interacted in Sri Lanka for several centuries. Consequently, Sinhala has incorporated many linguistic traits of Tamil and vice-versa. This helps to strengthen the fact that a bilingual group must have existed in the early society of Sri Lanka.

Hindu tradition in Sri Lanka

In the British period, there was close parallelism between education in India and Ceylon. The resilience, dynamism and absorbent qualities of Hindu traditions in education were well illustrated in the way in which it withstood the storm and stress of religious and cultural onslaughts by the missionaries backed, both directly and indirectly, by the Government of the time. With the first gleams of independence, it emerged triumphant, waiting to effloresce with fresh vigour during the present century. Of neo-educational traditions in India, it may be necessary to mention the Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj movements, the educational visions of Ramakrishna which have also spread into Sri Lanka, the experimental work of the great sage Rabindranath Tagore at Shanti Niketan, the Yogoda System of Swami Yogananda Paramahansa of Bihar, the Theosophical movement of Dr. Annie Besant and the basic system of education of Mahatma Gandhi (Somasegaram 1131).

There is ample incontrovertible evidence to indicate that there was close contact between Sri Lanka and India through the ages. History begins in Sri Lanka with the arrival of Vijaya and his followers. He came from North India with the traditions prevalent in his country and there can be no doubt that he was a Hindu by birth and Brahmanical in training (“Revolt in the Temple” 4). When the enlightened one set the wheel in motion and the great Emperor Asoka sent the royal missionaries Mahinda and Sanghamitta to spread the message in Sri Lanka, the reformed Buddhist traditions in education came into this land.

Within a couple of centuries, this religion and its attendant culture spread throughout the length and breadth of the land and became firmly established. Buddhist monasteries and temples of learning were established here. Eloquent testimony is found in the Mahavamsa about the well-developed social and educational institutions in Sri Lanka. Though epigraphically, records are available in plenty for the existence of Hindu educational institutions in South India; corresponding evidence, however, is totally absent in respect to Sri Lanka. Invasions and colonisations there were in plenty, but the invaders were almost always thrown back. The immigrants and those others who chose to remain behind in Sri Lanka

were duly assimilated into the local community. They had brought with them their Hindu traditions, and these enriched the Sinhala traditions in the country.

Postcolonial /Independent Sri Lanka

The status of the English language in post-independence Sri Lanka has been an iteration of the political dictum that history repeats. The agitation for ‘Swabasha’ education became strong because, during the colonial time, English education excluded many native people from social opportunities and advancement. In the thirty years or so from the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s, English was to all intents and purposes not recognized officially, and the use of this language was not condoned for administrative or educational purposes. Gradually, the country was pushed in the direction of using national languages for education. But in 1977, when the country opened its economy for all, there was a need for English. The private sector flourished, and it needed English-educated personnel for trade, commerce and international relations.

The lifestyle of Sri Lankans was also modified by the culture and language of the British. In order to maintain international contacts, to use it in education, science, technology and business, and to lead a modern life, there was a need for Sri Lankans to study the English language. The report of the Education Reforms Committee of 1979 elaborates on the role of English: “In the context of the rapid growth of knowledge in modern times and the speed with which this knowledge is communicated, it is not possible for students pursuing studies at higher level to achieve and maintain proper academic standards without the first and knowledge of an Report of the international language. For us in Sri Lanka English is the obvious choice” (Education Reform Committee of 1979 (1981)). The amended educational code of 1947 and the Education Act No. 5 of 1951 declared that English was to be the second language for Sinhalese and Tamils, and for Burghers, whose mother tongue was English, either Tamil or Sinhala was to be the second language. In this way, in Sri Lanka, English served as an instrument of integration. Therefore, the education system of the country must, willingly or unwillingly, accommodate English in the curriculum.

Today, Sri Lankan English arises as a result of the situations and circumstances that came into being to express key cultural concepts and linguistics identities which are not available in English. The speakers of Sri Lankan English often resort to a process of borrowing from and

altering local languages. As a result of this, Sri Lankan English has emerged with vocabulary, expressions and syntactic structures that have their origins in the Sinhala and Tamil languages. It is a good sign of promoting the Standard variety of Sri Lankan English for the integration of different communities. The “English” used by Sri Lankans has very much been a Lankanized form since the time the British landed on our land and propagated their language here.

Outline of the Research

This is a study of attitudes towards the English language from Sri Lankan society who have distinctive cultural identities in Sri Lanka. The study of Sri Lankans’ attitudes towards the English language during the colonial to the postcolonial period is to evaluate the attitudes of different ethnic groups towards different languages in the country. Research on this area has contributed substantially to the development of the field of postcolonial studies. There is a strong relationship between the languages used in the society and the attitudes of individuals towards language use. The underlying assumption is that in a society, social groups have certain attitudes towards each other, relating to their differing social positions. These attitudes affect attitudes towards the English language of that society and carry over towards individual members of the society. This study focuses on the Sri Lankan context both in colonial times and today.

A rich mixture of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers live on the island. English has often served as the ‘Lingua Franca’ and is typically the language of choice in contemporary governmental policies and practices. English in Sri Lanka is incredibly politically charged. Given the inability to remove this colonial past, and given present domestic political tensions and international pressure, the use of English in Sri Lanka is far from straightforward.

Generally, the status and functions of English in the Sri Lankan society have been and are governed by the language policy of the government. The societal attitudes too have been responsible for the position of English to date. English had to continue to be the official language, even in free Sri Lanka, until 1956. It was difficult to replace English with native languages immediately after independence. After independence, the status of languages and the societal attitudes have differed in some marked ways. Generally, English bilingualism has differed in the political, social, cultural, linguistic, and attitudinal networks of these societies in which it developed and flourished as a dynamic communicative tool.

This study will examine notions and attitudes on English that prevail in Sri Lanka today among writers, language planners, teachers and students, habitual speakers and infrequent users, as well as elite and non-elite groups in the country.

The influential scholarly research cited comes from the publications of Prof. Thiru Kandiah, Prof. D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, Prof. Wimal Wickramasinghe, Prof. Arjuna Parakrama, and Prof. Manique Gunesekera. All have done partial analyses on this subject, but not full-fledged analyses. The primary criterion for the selection of the above Sri Lankan writers' works is that they provide valuable background for this analysis. On the model of these earlier studies, we can assume that a few English texts written from the other communities, such as Burghers and Muslims, also invite close analysis. This study also selectively examines colonial and postcolonial writings in three communities. The Sri Lankan Diaspora's works are included in this study because of their growing concern with use of the English language.

List of the major books:

1. Kandiah, Thiru- published articles in *Journal of Linguistics*, *Language Learning*, *Navasilu*, *Journal of South Asian Literature*, *Multilingual*, *English World Wide*, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, and *Papers in Linguistics*, among others, and contributed chapters to various books including *English Around the World: Sociolinguistic Perspectives* (ed. J. Cheshire), *Perceiving Other Worlds* (ed. E. Thumboo), and *Honouring EFC Ludowyk* (ed. P. Colin-Thomé and A. Halpé).
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Objectives

The present study aims to focus Sri Lankans' views on English language during the Colonial and Postcolonial eras. The following objectives have been aimed at:

- a) Studying in detail the Sinhalese's views on English.
- b) Studying in detail the Tamils' views on English.
- c) Studying in detail the Muslims' and the Burgers' views on English.
- d) Exploring and correlating the social factors which can influence the language change.
- e) Exploring English language as a signifier of social stratification in the literary texts of Sri Lankan writers.

Problems to be investigated

This study attempts to discuss the views of different categories of people towards the English language in this multi-ethnic and multicultural country. As a preamble, a historical view is presented of the position occupied by languages during the colonial period, especially before the independence of Sri Lanka. Generally, the status and functions of English in the Tamil society and the Sinhala society have been and are governed by the language policy of the government. The societal attitudes of various social factors are found in both these communities.

Methodology

The present study uses the direct method to measure the language attitudes of the main societies: Tamils and Sinhalese. All the information will be gathered from both the communities. In addition to quantitative and descriptive analysis, this study uses comparative and information analysis to strengthen the research. The methodology has to be modified to suit the nature of the study.

The primary sources and secondary sources were used through library research. Qualitative research methods have been developed in this study to enable the study of social and cultural phenomena of both communities. Qualitative research methods were designed to help the researchers

understand the people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live. Qualitative data sources of this research include interviews/personal communication (semi-structured face-to-face), discussions, documents, reports and texts, and the researcher's impressions and reactions.

Significance of the study

After independence, the status of languages and the societal attitudes have differed in some marked ways in the two major societies in Sri Lanka, namely Sinhala society and Tamil society. Generally, English bilingualism has differed in the political, social, cultural, linguistic and attitudinal network of these societies in which it developed and flourished as a dynamic communicative tool. According to social psychology and anthropology, language, primarily the first language, has great influence on perception thought process. In learning English, a Tamil student usually perceives a Tamil model of English. Similarly, a Sinhala student perceives a Sinhala model. So, it is pertinent that separate studies are made on Sri Lankans' attitudes towards language during the Colonial and Postcolonial eras.

Scheme of the study

The present study has been classified into the following chapters:

Chapter One - Introduction

Chapter Two - Cultural History of Sri Lanka

Chapter Three - Sinhalese views on the English Language

Chapter Four - Tamils' views on the English Language

Chapter Five - Muslims' and Burghers' views on the English Language

Chapter Six - The English language as a signifier of social stratification in the literary texts of Sri Lankan writers

Chapter Seven - Exploring and correlating the social factors

Chapter Eight - Conclusion

Bibliography

Research book composition

The research consists of eight chapters, including the “Introduction” and “Conclusion.” In the first chapter, an elaborate introduction is given which covers the position of Sri Lankan majorities and minorities in the colonial and postcolonial periods and explains the need for this research with a conceptual framework of the study.

According to the above-mentioned scheme, the second chapter of this study is the cultural history of the study and it reveals the history of Tamils, Sinhalese, Muslims and Burghers; their socio-economic, cultural, and political backgrounds.

The third chapter is “Sinhalese views on English”, which gives a broad description of the Sinhalese people’s attitudes towards the English language.

The fourth chapter is the views of Tamils, which gives a broad description on English language.

The fifth chapter is the “Muslims’ and Burghers’ views on the English Language”. Like the previous chapters, attitudes from the Sinhala and Tamil Muslims are also discussed elaborately from their different perspectives. The focus is given to the minority community’s attitude towards the English language.

The sixth chapter is “English language as a signifier of social stratification in the literary texts of Sri Lankan writers”; it also explores the Diaspora’s contribution by their writings in English.

“Exploring and co-relating the social factors” is the seventh chapter. This chapter explores and correlates the social factors which can influence language change. It has been found that the two communities are similar in their social factors.

The eighth chapter is the conclusion and sums up the findings of this study. This conclusion briefly elaborates the findings of the present work and points out the areas to be explored further.

The texts, reports, Hansards and all the other materials collected for this study have been incorporated as “Bibliography”.

The above chapters are to throw light on the attitude of Sri Lankans towards English and its status and position in society. As a result of this, Sri Lankan English developed with vocabulary, expressions, pronunciation, and syntactic structures that have their origins in the Sinhala and Tamil languages. The findings reveal the efforts that the Sri Lankans have taken to maintain their own attitudes towards English in postcolonial years up to modern times.

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CHAPTER TWO

CULTURAL HISTORY OF SRI LANKA

The Need for English

The need for English in Sri Lanka now does not stem from its colonial legacy, but from various other factors, which are to some extent determined by the role of English as an international language. As Lee McKay puts it, “as a language of wider communication, English is the international language ‘par excellence’” (*Teaching English* 1). And in many instances, it is a language of wider communication, both among individuals from different countries and between individuals from one country. In this way, English is an international language in both a global and a local sense. This study invariably necessitates the analysis of the factors which put a demand on the local population to learn and use English. Smith, as quoted by Lee McKay, in defining English as an international language gives four reasons for its status:

1. As an international language of communication between countries and in a local sense as a language of wider communication within multilingual societies.
2. As it is an international language, the use of English is no longer connected to the countries where English is the primary language (native speakers).
3. As an international language in a local sense, English becomes embedded in the culture of the country in which it is used.
4. As English is an international language in a global sense, one of its primary functions is to enable speakers to share with others their ideas and culture (12).

One cannot dispute the fact that English tends to establish itself alongside the local languages Sinhala and Tamil in multilingual contexts composed of bilingual speakers. In this context, David Graddol gives some very interesting facts “based solely on expected population changes. The number of people using English as their second language will grow from

235 million to around 462 million during the next 50 years. This indicates that the balance between L₁ and L₂ speakers will critically change, with L₂ speakers eventually overtaking L₁ speakers” (62). What he meant in this comment is that learners of English as their second language will outnumber the native speakers of English. Linguists such as Kachru, Crystal, Graddol and others have identified three types of English speakers in the world. These three types can be arranged in concentric circles:

1. The inner circle refers to what we identify as native speakers in the USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
2. The outer circle refers to the non-native speakers of English who use English as their second language in countries such as Singapore, India, and Malawi and over fifty other countries. Sri Lanka also falls into this category.
3. The expanding circle or the outermost circle includes speakers of English in countries like China, Japan, Greece, Poland and a steadily increasing number of other countries. These countries do not have a history of colonization by members of the inner circle. English is studied or used as a foreign language in these countries.

The Languages of the Colonial Rulers

Language use in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) society after the advent of the Colonial rulers marks a significant phase in its history. Sri Lanka was under foreign rule for nearly 450 years. The Portuguese (1505-1658) were the first to invade Sri Lanka and the Dutch (1658-1796) ruled over the island for about another 150 years. The British Empire took control of Sri Lanka in 1796 and its rule continued until independence in 1948.

The activities of the colonial rulers brought about a great deal of changes, not only in the status of the native languages, but also in the entire linguistic behaviour of the masses. When the local languages, Sinhala and Tamil, came into contact with the Portuguese, Dutch and English languages, multilingualism resulted. People had to learn these languages to adapt and adjust themselves to the needs of the times. These invaders brought with them their culture, tradition and religions, in addition to their languages.

It cannot be disputed that the interference of these languages, though temporary, led to their development as well, from the local languages to social life. The major local languages, Sinhala and Tamil, became enriched and resourceful because of borrowings from these languages.

Portuguese Period (1505-1658)

The Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka in 1505. This period marks a very significant phase in the status and role of national languages. For the first time, history saw an entirely alien language coming into contact with the un-spoilt indigenous languages of the East—particularly the Sinhala and Tamil languages in Sri Lanka. This was not merely an introduction of another medium—a common medium—between the invader and the invaded, it was a formidable force in full swing unleashed on the unsophisticated, almost monolingual communities.

Portuguese became the language of administration. The officials had to employ interpreters for communication with local inhabitants. Direct communication became possible only when the Ceylonese (Sri Lankans now) had learnt Portuguese and not by the reverse process of the Portuguese officials learning the languages of the country. It was, in fact, the Ceylonese who became lusitanized, accepted the religion of the Portuguese, learnt their languages and adopted their culture, customs and language manners. Consequently, they won the favour of the Portuguese and were promoted to positions of importance.

The Portuguese ruled over Ceylon for a little over one century and a half. During their rule, the activities of the missionaries and those in administration were more intensified in Jaffna than in any other parts of the island. There were many reasons for this and these reasons were instrumental as to the widespread use of Portuguese in these areas.

Sri Lankan (Ceylonese) parents themselves were, doubtless, glad to have their children educated in Portuguese as it was the language of the ruling power and of administration, and because knowledge of it brought opportunities for securing better positions of importance under the foreigner, for trade and social intercourse with him and for rise in social status (Ruberu 21).

The Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries introduced an educational system in Sri Lanka to suit their needs and purposes. These missionaries gave importance to their language, Portuguese, and to Latin, which was the language of the church. The vernacular languages were not obliterated. But the impact of Portuguese on them was great.

Dutch Period (1658-1796)

The Dutch were the next to capture Ceylon. They adopted somewhat different policies, but they were nonetheless significant in their own way. The Dutch engaged themselves in proselytizing activities with greater enthusiasm from the time they seized power in 1658. They, in turn, made Dutch the language of power and administration, and the Dutch missionaries set up schools and built up their contacts with people through both political and religious activities. They were not much concerned about thrusting their language over the masses. Schools were opened to the natives and they were converted to Christianity (Protestantism). The Dutch 'Predikants' (preachers) followed the methods used by the Catholics in their work. Rev. Philip Baldeus, who came to Ceylon in 1656, was the spiritual leader of the final stage of the Dutch conquest of Ceylon. As language was a barrier in this missionary endeavour, Baldeus asserted that all Predikants should learn the indigenous languages (Anton Matthias 15; Ruberu 34). The Dutch had close cultural and religious ties with people living in the islands and the coastal areas of Ceylon. Those who sought power and positions in the administration had to study Dutch.

The Dutch believed that the surest way of reaching the people was through the medium of their own language. Unlike the Portuguese, they adopted a liberal policy towards the medium of instruction at schools and the use of the native languages in the country.

British Period (1796-1948)

The period of British foreign rule in Sri Lanka is an important part in the history of Sri Lanka. The British imperialists who took possession of the island in 1796 were the last of the colonial rulers of Sri Lanka, then known as Ceylon. All the invaders—the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British—worked in a set pattern. They wanted to expand their empire and at the same time propagate their religious faith in the foreign soil. For these purposes, they used their language as the tool or medium. The proselytizing strategies of the British were different from those of the Dutch and the Portuguese. The British colonial rulers wanted very much to serve the needs of the existing religious and educational structures of that time. Alexander Johnston, the Chief Justice of Ceylon from 1805 to 1819, met William Wilberforce, who led the evangelicals in England, and expressed to him his desire to see a Protestant mission to undertake religious and educational activities in Ceylon. The British governors of

that time wanted English to be the “Superior language”. Governor Brownrigg once stated “...the cultivation of the English language must necessarily be a principal objective of any system of education to which I can in a public capacity give my concurrence” (Jeyasuriya 37). The British having brought the entire island under their control, the conversion of as many of the inhabitants as possible to Christianity led, undoubtedly, to the converts occupying all the important places.

Governor Frederick North realized education was, par excellence, the means to this end. This was an idea to which North reverted again and again, emphasizing the distinctive role to be performed by a handful of native young men selected and given a special education in Ceylon and in England (Jeyasuriya 37). This was the beginning of an educated class of locals called the elites—the privileged group of citizens. These men had access to English education and the opportunity to taste the western culture in England.

This clause appears to have made it possible for the Roman Catholics to open schools, whereas Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims had schools in their temple (kovil) or mosque premises. No schools were established by these groups outside the premises of places of worship during this time. Governor North also drew up plans for re-organizing education in Ceylon according to which the Parish schools were to be recognized. In them, the medium of instruction was Sinhalese or Tamil, according to the area in which the schools were situated. A few schools of a superior nature “for the education of the children of Burghers and of those natives whose families are eligible to the office of Mudaliyar (interpreter) and to other dignities and charges given by Government to its native servants” were to be established. These schools would place emphasis on the study of English (Jeyasuriya 141).

Jeyasuriya further describes the elites as “the group of Ceylonese who, having received an English education often with distinction, developed aspirations for recognition in political and professional fields. This led to the nationalist movement, which sought to defend the interests of the natives, to a certain extent the English education given by the British to them proved to be a course of embarrassment to the British themselves” (141). English education nurtured both conformists—loyal British subjects who adored everything British—and dissidents. These dissidents, who constituted the educated class, played an increasingly vital role by participating in agitation for more responsible positions for the Ceylonese,

for a greater share in the management of their own (Ceylon) affairs and, ultimately, and for a move toward independence.

Decline of the English language in the island gathered momentum after Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948. The English language, which enjoyed the prestigious position of being the official language, the language of administration and the medium of instruction at schools, began to lose its importance gradually. The native languages became the medium of instruction from kindergarten up to the university with the introduction of the Swabasha system. W.L.A. Don Peter states “It used to be said that the sun never sets in the British Empire, it is no more. But there is another empire, the empire of the language of the British, which is vaster, vaster than any empire we have known” (156).

The importance of mother tongue cannot be disputed or ignored but at the same time we must take cognizance of the practical usefulness and necessity of a world language such as English. Without English, we cannot communicate with the outside world nor have access to a world of knowledge. The English language continues to hold sway not as an official language thrust on the people by the colonial rulers or a symbol of elitism, but as an international language with added significance.

Whatever the language policy in education, the people have come to realize the value of English and, consequently, there is a big demand for it today. In spite of the system of Swabasha education up to university level, it is still those who have a command of English who are in the advantageous position of being able to secure employment in this country and abroad. Modern mass media have accelerated the spread and use of English throughout the world. W.L.A. Don Peter adds “Not only in countries colonized by the British and in others, which were once under British rule and are now independent, but even in countries which have not been colonially or politically subject to Britain, English is being used more and more, especially in the scientific and business fields” (156).

The English language enjoys an enviable position in the world today. It has now developed into a global language. As David Crystal stated in his book, *English as a Global Language*:

There has never been a time when so many nations needed to talk to each other so much. There has never been a time when so many people wished to travel to so many places. There has never been such a strain placed on the conventional resources of translating and interpreting. Never has the need for more widespread bilingualism been greater, to ease the burden

placed on the professional few and never has there been a more urgent need for a global language (12).

The Postcolonial situation with English

The status of the English language in post-independent Sri Lanka has been an iteration of the political dictum that “history is repeated”. The declaration of independence and the subsequent enthroning of the Swabasha as the official language in 1956, along with the implementation of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in education signalled the decline of the English language, which was supreme in all the spheres in the pre-independent era of the country. Ryhana Raheem and Hemamala Ratwatte, quoting David Hayes in one of their joint research papers, comment as follows:

Within a decade of independence from colonial rule, the status of English in the island was to undergo a radical change from being the dominant language of local society. In the thirty years or so from the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s, English, to all intents and purposes, was not recognized officially, and the use of this language was not condoned for administrative or educational purposes. This, however, was the ‘official’ attitude... The reality, as we are all aware, was far removed. At every level of what we have described as the ‘opinion,’ competing goals, values, practices and beliefs contributed to the continued use of English. (28)

The years that followed immediately after independence saw extensive changes in the language policy of the country and the educational system as a whole. The native languages, Sinhala and Tamil, were enthroned and English was almost relegated to the background with the introduction of ‘Swabasha’ in administration and education. The “Sinhala Only” bill was passed on June 15, 1956. The ‘Swabasha’ (mother tongue) Sinhala, and Tamil, were made the media of instruction from kindergarten up to the university.

The linguistic concomitant of all this is that the English language continued to play a much more significant role in the affairs of the country than the “restoration” of the native languages might have indicated. The Official Language Act of 1956 did replace English with Sinhala as the one official language of the country, while the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act of 1958 did make provision for the use of Tamil too for official purposes. And it is true that, after this, as Sinhala and Tamil began to be used more and more in Government offices, public places, and for communication, education, entertainment and social activities and so on,

English did lose considerable ground to these languages. It is important, however, not to exaggerate the extent of this displacement of English. First, although it does make sense to speak of the displacement of English by Sinhala and Tamil in various spheres of life, we cannot overlook the fact that much of the work that the native languages were now called upon to do was not work that was “taken over” from English, but new work that was thrown up by the social changes of that time, changes that, by facilitating the participation of far more non-English-speaking people in these spheres than earlier, had caused the hitherto-limited scale of operations within them to be greatly extended.

Apart from this, the simple fact was that English continued to be the dominant language at the higher levels in most of the important spheres of society. The de Lanerolle Committee, which investigated the teaching of English in the island around 1972, reported that a knowledge of English was considered to be necessary for effective action, at least at the higher levels, in several important spheres of society, such as Commerce and Industry (both public and private), Banking, Transport, the Postal Services, Medicine, Science and Technology, Law, Broadcasting, International Transport and Communication, and in a considerable number of fields in tertiary education (de Lanerolle, *et al.* 1). There was nothing surprising or objectionable in this. Sri Lanka was, after all, struggling to recover from the disastrous effects of four and a half centuries of colonial rule and to build itself into a truly strong and independent modern nation that could take its place on a footing of equality and dignity among the nations of the world. English, in far greater measure than other languages, had several advantages from this point of view: it was international in character; it provided easy access to modern knowledge and expertise, including, particularly, scientific and technological knowledge and expertise; and it was already familiar in Sri Lanka. Given these advantages that English had, it seemed to be entirely right that it should be given a place of significance, particularly in those areas in which it would facilitate the realization of the aspirations of the nation.

English in Education

Education was in the hands of Christian missionaries when it was not directed and controlled by British officials. Writing in 1907 in “The Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon”, Mr. E. W. Perera, who himself figured prominently in politics two decades later, said that the first articulate clamour for free institutions commenced in the days of the

Ceylon League. Its formation was one of the landmarks in the fight for self-government.

Missionary activity in the field of education became the heritage of the British rulers in Ceylon during the nineteenth century. American missionaries were fully impressed with the importance of rendering the English language as the general medium of instruction, and of the inestimable value of this requirement in itself to the people. Thus, the stage was set for the adoption of a policy that called for a strict adherence to the teaching of English. The first schools established by the British Government in Ceylon were, of course, English schools at central stations. English-speaking communities at these stations were principally composed of the civil and military officers of the Crown, and these schools were established for the education for their children. They needed English for their advancement just as much as the rulers needed them in order to fill the responsible grades of the Government service with local servants who were not only proficient in English but were also conversant with English life and thought, English history and English forms of government. But the demand of English education, with its consequent benefits, began to be clearly appreciated by the natives as well. They felt, and quite rightly too, that if they were to find a 'respectable' place in society, English education was a *sine qua non* for such a status, hence the growing demands by the natives for educational facilities. The emergence of the Anglo-Vernacular schools was the result of this demand. To quote Young Adams, "In course of time the claims of the Sinhalese and Tamil subordinate officers for their children gave rise to the establishment of Anglo-Vernacular schools". Apart from this there was a large body of Sinhalese and Tamils who had hardly any educational facilities at all. They were the class who found it most difficult to fit into the administrative set-up. They, too, gradually realized the importance of education, and particularly of an English education. Probably the Government was not in a position, financially, to meet this demand; however, a few vernacular schools were established for the children of the Sinhalese and the Tamils. And these few schools were admittedly inefficient and failed to impart the education that the people desired.

The missionary societies began to be active mainly after 1812. In 1827, the missionary society established many schools and colleges. It was the intention of the founders of these colleges to impart a broad education based on a curriculum which included English, science, mathematics, and philology, Latin, Greek and Pali. Many other institutions were also established under the auspices of the Christian missionaries. In every one

of these newly established schools, instruction was given in English, and so the Government actively encouraged their continued establishment as they coincided with the accepted Government policy. These schools amply served the educational needs of the upper stratum of the native population, primarily because it was the only way in which their sons could get employment under the Government. The upper layers of society were not concerned too much about the Christian religious bias involved in this education. The people too did not mind, since those who received this type of instruction were definitely at an advantage when it became a question of securing employment. It was not easy, even in those far off days, for the children of the lower stratum of society to secure employment under the Government. But the ordinary people felt, all the same, that an English education was the only opening they had for a better life in society.

Education with some learning in English becomes a magic wand that opens the door to advancement in life, or so the ordinary man felt. Once they had learned this little bit of English, however, boys were often left high and dry when it came to employment. The ordinary man considered, and with good reason, that the only way in which he could better the prospects of his sons in life was to educate them, and with this end in view, he made any sacrifice he possibly could. But those who decided educational policy foresaw even at that time that this system would ultimately produce an army of disgruntled youths, who were ill-fitted to pursue a vocation dictated by the economic needs of the country but depended on getting minor clerical posts, which would not only give them a small income, but would also immensely enhance their prestige among their fellow countrymen. That was the tragedy of the educational policy followed in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Education in English became essential for citizens to have any claim for economic advantages, financial gain, official prestige or favour at the hands of the foreign masters. The Sinhalese and the Tamils reached a stage when they had no compunction—national, emotional, or otherwise—over neglecting their own mother tongue for the sake of learning a foreign language. They learnt to believe that any kind of exercise in the mother tongue would cause irreparable damage to their ability to use the English language the way the English men did.

During the early period of the British administration, the Government's educational policy was based on the view that oriental learning was of little value and that a knowledge of English would lead to the cultural and intellectual improvement of the people and was therefore a necessity if the

people of Ceylon were to emerge successfully from a feudal to a commercial society, and to be acquainted with the modes of thought and the ideas of their rulers. The Government effort was mainly concentrated on English education and, consequently, education in the national languages was sadly neglected. By the end of the nineteenth century, education in the English medium was fairly well established and it was in great demand among the affluent classes in the cities. Because of this, the study of the national languages and the use of the national languages as media of instruction had been confined to the backward rural sector.

For the upper crust of society, however, the position was far better. They were mostly occupying positions under the Government, and the missionary schools and the leading Government institutions provided them with opportunities of getting a better education. Their sons could study not only English, but also mathematics and sciences as well. They could also study the humanities, and those privileged few who had the money could also send their children to universities in England. It was this class of people who formed the intelligentsia of the country. It was on them that the rulers depended for loyal and efficient service for the Government. It was from them, too, that the agitation for constitutional reforms first originated. In the first few decades of the next century, they were the ones who dominated the political life of the country.

In the best Government and missionary schools, students learned about the western classics, English History, Literature, and about English boys their age, but they knew little about the history or literature of their own country. For the greater part, the pupils were Christians. Non-Christian children found it more difficult to enter these schools and, when they did, they came under strong Christian influence. The village child had little prospect of receiving a good education unless his parents were able to get him into a boarding school in town.

On the other hand, during British rule, the national languages were relegated to a lower position in their status, esteem and functions. Vernacular education was not prestigious, and hence not popular; it was received mostly by those who were incapable of following studies in English. There were relatively few prospects for those who studied in the vernacular languages. Those who studied in Sinhala or Tamil had to end their studies at the school certificate level. After school education, some were able to enter the training colleges and become Sinhala- or Tamil-trained teachers and get a salary much lower than that which was paid to the English-trained teachers. For others, the only employment their

education made possible was in the lowest grades of public village administration. Their promotional prospects were poor. Besides, many could not even aspire for higher education because they found the medium of instruction difficult. Language was a major reason for dropping out.

English Education in Schools

Sri Lanka received independence in 1948, along with India, after 152 years of British rule. Thereafter, Sri Lanka had to formulate a sound and effective appropriate language policy. Because, during that time, patriotic feeling among citizens was very strong in Sri Lanka, as this trend emerged it created a need to regenerate the status of native languages and religious aspects in the island.

The declaration of two mother tongues (Tamil and Sinhala) as media of instruction was also a turning point as far as English education in Sri Lanka was concerned. Further, the introduction of national languages (Sinhala/Tamil) as the official languages also made a significant change in English education. Very slowly, but progressively, English was replaced by Sinhala first and by Tamil very recently (*Sinhala the Official Language Act No.33, 1956 and Tamil Act No. 28, 1958*).

The implication of this new system was to make a fine balance in the equality of the educational, socio-economic, and cultural aspects of the native people. Furthermore, this system guaranteed the equality of educational opportunity to every child regardless of his or her social class, economic condition, religion and ethnic origin. This system also helped develop the nation as a whole.

Considering what we have said so far on the students' general background of English learning, teaching English to our school students cannot be considered an easy task or indeed a pleasant one. Teaching English is one of the most difficult tasks in the present context. Perhaps that is why English language teachers have so far not been able to offer an overall convincing proposal to overcome the problems in teaching and learning English in our society. We cannot expect the teachers to do wonders. Teachers may well expose the learner to as large a quantity and variety of duly contextualized language as possible, but the learner must hear and see "language in action". This is unfortunately something not possible in our society at present. Before finding solutions to the problem, we should try to understand the problem as it is in its social, political and attitudinal background. We should be clear in our aims in teaching English. These

aims can be expressed in terms of what we want the learner to be able to do at the end of the course, that is, the roles the learner is to play. In preparing a teaching programme, we have to take into account the needs of learners. After schooling, they may not all need or seek the same level of performance ability or even the same set of linguistic skills in English. Teachers must be prepared to take their task as a challenge and face it with devotion even if they encounter failure after failure. Teachers should be sympathetic towards students and sympathetic in their teaching; teachers should start from where the pupil is. Teachers should remember that even a mother tongue is formally taught (Suseendrarajah 260).

Lack of response, initiative and hard work on the part of students in the English classes may discourage good teachers and make them frustrated at the results of their teaching. This may result in poor teaching and lethargy, which can then make the subject more difficult and complicated and cause frustration among these students learning English. Thus, the whole thing can be cyclical. Good training, experience, efficiency and the competence of the English teacher can contribute to maintaining a high standard of English in the school. We are aware that good teachers make full use of poor-quality teaching materials whereas the best materials yield poor results in the hands of less competent teachers. In fact, this is true of any subject. Although it is assumed that one should have studied physics, economics or history to teach that subject, no such knowledge is required today from an English teacher. Anyone who had his education in the English medium even without having done English as a subject is considered qualified to teach English. Perhaps this may be due to a dearth of qualified English teachers, but it is rather deplorable because herein a wrong remedy is being adopted. Knowing a language is different from knowing about a language, and the English language teacher must know about English more than knowing the language. Even someone's native control of a language does not qualify him or her to be a language teacher.

The Government should look for pedagogically- and linguistically-oriented and trained teachers rather than mere English medium graduates or English scholars with literary sophistication. The focus should be on contemporary English. Students no longer learn English drama, poetry or fiction. It will be helpful and interesting if language teaching materials reflect the cultural orientation the student gets through practical experience. The variety of English we use will naturally have a regional flavour distinguishing it from native standard varieties. The systems of English have interacted with the systems of Tamils and Sinhala in Sri Lanka. Now we have no direct or close contact with the native varieties

and the tendency is to get detached from them. English has now been “indigenized” and norms have developed without reference to the prestigious varieties of Britain or the United States. The variety of English that was in use about fifty years ago was something different from the variety that is now developing. The variety of English that is in use among the English-educated will soon be changed due to the impact of education through the Tamil medium. Soon, the majority will pronounce words like ‘train’ and ‘treatment’ as ‘rain’ and ‘reatment’ and there won’t be any social contempt for such pronunciation.

If someone were to pose a question about whether teaching English is a failure in schools, it may be well answered only after finding the answer to a related question like whether teaching English was a success in the Tamil areas during the pre-independence period. Regardless, it is difficult to measure success or failure. It all depends on what the learner or the teacher perceives as success or failure. There can’t be any absolute frame of reference on which the decision could be made. What is success for one may be failure for another. The individual learner is very much concerned with success in his own terms. Moreover, in answering such questions, a bundle of factors such as the Government’s policy on mother tongue education, targets in English education, needs for learning, facilities, attitudes, etc. have to be considered. One thing is crystal clear: now we have definitely set the target of achievement in English relatively very low and the number of students passing in English and getting distinction in English at the G.C.E. (O/L) examination annually has to be considered in evaluating achievement in English language teaching in schools. This may be compared with the position that prevailed during the independence period. Nowadays, a greater number of students seem to get a distinction in English. Of course, the pattern of the syllabus and the question paper is different today.

At this juncture, it is necessary to raise another important question: will it be honestly fair for us to expect much more in the standard of English today without sacrificing the educational principle that it is best to impart school education, or for that matter any education, through the mother tongue? In other words, can we, in the present context, hope to achieve and maintain the standard of English that we had in schools during the pre-independence days without jeopardizing education through the mother tongue in schools? What an arduous task it will be! The results may not match the efforts taken. Let us recollect that even during the colonial days, generally speaking, the standard of English in most schools in Jaffna was not appreciable in the sense that only three or four urban schools were able

to send merely a couple of students to the University of Ceylon to study English.

However, the struggle should go on to maintain a minimum but effective standard of English in schools, which should form the firm foundation for further development and improvement at post-school or pre-University level, even though it may be difficult to hope to see a uniform standard throughout schools in the Tamil areas for various reasons. Usually there is linguistic inequality among those of the same age or degree of maturity in learning a language. Some people develop language skills faster than others.

School students should be made to co-operate with the teacher so that teaching and learning become successful. Generally, teaching and learning are co-operative efforts. Students should be convinced about the important role of personal experience in the use of language. There can be hardly any doubt that the linguistic items one knows reflect the experience one has had, and that people with different experiences will know different ranges of items. This is particularly obvious with regard to vocabulary. Students should be aware that their uses of language occur in response to their personal needs even though their environmental needs for the use of English are now limited.

The Government of Sri Lanka also increased its interests in vernacular education. Therefore, at present, Sinhala or Tamil is compulsory and acts as the medium of instruction in all the Government schools for all subjects, both Arts and Science. In formal education, up to G.C.E. (O/L), English language is taught as a compulsory second language in schools. To raise the standard of English at school level, English may be taught in the G.C.E. (A/L) classes. The question of making English an examination subject for the G.C.E. (A/L) has to be considered carefully because it can be provocative. But at any rate, students should not be allowed to get out of touch with English in the A/L class for two or more years. That would be highly detrimental because they would need English in their university education. As the G.C.E. (A/L) examination is highly competitive, it will be natural for students to concentrate only on the examination subjects. The possibility of reducing the number of subjects for the G.C.E. (A/L) examination from four to three may be seriously considered to enable students to devote time for learning English. The London G.C.E. (A/L) examination insists on only three subjects.

After 1990, as a result of globalization, the demand for people proficient in English again steadily increased with the (a) introduction of computers, (b) booming development in the private sector, and (c) establishment of many non-governmental organizations in Sri Lanka. This altered situation regarding the importance of English made the Government reconsider its education policy. Consequently, in 1997, The Presidential Task Force on the General Educational Reforms Act (*National Educational Commission*) was passed in Parliament and English was gradually introduced as the medium of instruction in all Government schools from primary (Gr.1-5), Junior secondary (Gr. 6-9) to secondary (Gr.10-13) levels. Now all Government schools in Sri Lanka are compulsorily imparting the general education through the English medium with different, well-developed English language programmes. However, the introduction of English medium instruction depends on the availability of English teachers, students, current proficiency levels and so on. Since universities enjoy autonomy in Sri Lanka, they have been granted freedom to choose their medium of instruction according to their specific needs.

In the formal education system, according to this fresh shift, it was pertinent that English language teaching programmes should be launched at the earliest phase of formal education unlike the previous system. Irrespective of the medium of instruction, whether it is Sinhala/Tamil/English, English language training continues with Activity-Based Oral English (ABOE) in Grades 1 and 2. The chief focus of this ABOE would be on developing the spoken skills of the children. This programme also helps develop the mental lexicon of a child. From Gr.3, formal English teaching takes over and continues up to General Certificate of Education - Ordinary Level, G.C.E. (O/L), and at this stage English is declared as a core subject. In senior secondary education, Advanced Level, G.C.E. (A/L), a new course named as “General English” has been included with a view to improving four language skills in English. This teaching package consists of varieties of units to provide training on four skills adopting the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach.

The present English-language teaching package for the junior secondary level comprises nearly six textbooks along with a teacher’s guide. Even though students are assessed in reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary in the G.C.E. (O/L) public examination, listening and speaking are not tested due to many practical reasons (for example, shortage of physical and human resources, lack of English-trained staff and so on). This is true for the G.C.E. (A/L) “General English” course also. However, at present the Ministry of Higher Education has decided to take serious measures for

an absolute implementation of teaching, listening, and speaking at the primary and secondary school levels. Moreover, these skills will be tested in the island-wide G.C.E. (O/L) public examination from 2013. In general, English language learning is no longer restricted to a group of people, and the purposes for which it is taught are no longer the same as they were in the British period. Currently, the national language medium policy has also been applicable to tertiary level education such as universities and technical institutes. Thereafter, English language received the constitutional status of a second language and, in all Government schools from Grade 3 to Grade 13, English has been taught as a compulsory language.

In the initial stage of the British rule, people learnt English for pleasure and for the prestige of knowing the language. The goal for this kind of learning was because knowledge of a foreign language was thought to be a sign of a rounded education at that time. Now, extrinsic motivational factors play an important role in the learning of English: the language is used on the playground, in professions, administrations, markets, politics, advertisements, armed groups and in the media, alternating consciously or unconsciously with Tamil. Barber wrote an article on “The nature of Scientific English”. After his work, English for specific purposes (ESP) became very popular (Ewer & Latorre).

Language Education in Universities

Language in university education is also bound by Government policy. Generally, the Government permits the use of Sinhala, Tamil and English in university education. Students have the option to follow certain courses in any of these three languages provided medium facilities are available. Medium facilities differ from university to university. No single university provides all its courses in all three languages. Students who follow the courses do not seem to have ever demanded that their courses be conducted in Tamil (or Sinhala) too. There was no instance where a Tamil student left the course being unable to follow it in English. Students consider it prestigious to follow these courses in English. Any move to have these courses in Tamil, it seems, will have a lot of opposition from students as well as teachers.

It will not be out of context to point out here that admission to a particular university is based on certain criteria such as student’s preference, his marks in the G.C.E. (A/L) examination, medium facility and proximity of his residence to the university. The choice of language for university

education is left to the student except in certain professional courses where the medium will be compulsorily English.

Varieties of English

Now we shall consider different terms to denote English, which has peculiar features. In studies on the uses of English in new social contexts, different scholars have applied various terms to identify their special characteristics. For instance, “transplanted English”, “transported English”, and “twice-born English” are some of those mentioned. The chief purpose of employing these terms is to discriminate the functions of those varieties from those in the native country. Generally British English is called “mother English”, “native English”, or “English English”. Anyhow, historically these different varieties around the world are related to mother English. Turner, in 1966, and Ramson, in 1970, introduced the phrase “transplanted English” for Australian English; in 1971, Mukherjee introduces the phrase “twice-born” for English in India.

Apart from these new varieties of English, there is another variety called “local varieties of English”. Gage and Ohanessian (19) and Joshua Fishman have listed twenty-one countries with such varieties of English. However, countries like Canada, Australia and U.S.A. are not included in this list. The people of these twenty-one countries also learn English, and the brand of English reveals a wide range of competence, varying from a pidginized variety to bilingualism (ideal competency level). These twenty-one countries are: India, Philippines, U.S.S.R, Japan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, West Germany, Malaysia, Singapore, France, Indonesia, Mexico, South Korea, Pakistan, Ghana, Brazil, Egypt, Thailand, Taiwan and Sri Lanka.

The varieties of English in these countries have a different history from the new varieties or transported varieties used in Australia, Canada or in North America. In the above-mentioned twenty-one countries, no English native population settled down (for instance, in West Africa and South Asian countries there weren't large groups of native English people who settled there permanently). Especially in Asian countries, the expansion of the British Empire and the spread of Christianity brought English. However, due to the long experience and contact situation in these countries, English has been embedded with the local cultural elements and context and, therefore, it has gradually undergone the development of “nativization” (e.g. India, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka).

In Asian countries, the social contexts are rather multifaceted due to the large socially, politically, ethnically and culturally different speech communities. Therefore, the dimension of language differences is also highly complex. It is not an easy task to illustrate the variety of English within single Indian multi-ethnic communities, for they consist of complex cultural elements.

In the process of developing a local variety, the relationship between an individual and a society plays a major role. Further, one must consider seriously the non-linguistic factors in relation to the development of a local variety. Even though, these non-linguistic factors are external to the language system, they tremendously influence the process of the emergence of a particular variety. The emergence of nativization and the growth of local varieties have faced two types of reactions. Clifford Prator claims that the development of nativization should be eliminated because it prevents intelligibility with native English speakers (459-79). Others claim that these local varieties should be considered in respect to their functions in the contexts. In addition, these varieties are viewed very much as a historical progress, like in Latin and Sanskrit in the past (Tagliavini). Further, the linguistic distance also contributes to the emergence of a local variety. Due to the linguistic distance, there are more opportunities for independent development of a variety. For instance, Australian English has developed as a new variety because of the isolation of two-speech communities. However, Coran Hammarstrom argues that Australian English is simply unmixed 19th century London English. Nonetheless, the current progress of the local variety is mixed due to the isolation of the speech communities (26).

In Asian countries, a type of distinct local variety has developed because of the same principle due to the influence of English in the world and in the life of non-native speakers. Asian speakers also created curious and complex linguistic phenomena. For instance, in Malaysia, India, Singapore and Sri Lanka, there are local varieties. This type of new context determines a pattern of linguistic advancement, which is productive and necessary for the local needs and linguistic requirements of the respective countries to explain certain subtle social elements, and for day-to-day communication. They differ from Standard English or British English or English English or the old variety of English or Australian English (Saravanabava Iyer, 2014:46).

Randolph Quirk claims that the local varieties of English are “so widespread in a community and such long standing that they may be thought stable

and adequate enough to be institutionalized and regarded as varieties of English in like English” (26). When Rao comments on English in relation to the Indian context, he explains, “as long as we are Indian—that is, not nationalists, but truly Indians of the Indian psyche—we shall have the English language with us and amongst us and not as guest or friend but as one of our own, of our caste, of our creed, of our race and of our tradition” (420). He very undoubtedly suggests that “we” non-native speakers of English can have ownership of English since it is one of our important languages, alongside our national languages. Rao predicatively and rightly recognized the “Indianisms” of Indian English and the nativization process.

Braj B. Kachru has made a major contribution to building up the hypothesis of the emergence of a local variety like Indian English. He has continuously carried out research in this field from 1965 to date. He specially conducts research on “Indian English”, generally South-Asian English, in a multi-ethnic society. Usually certain common features in the use of a particular language can be identified in the speech community of the users. Kachru claims that it is equally important to consider the “non-shared culture-bound features” in which each variety has developed, and which signify these varieties as distinct from new varieties of English (Kachru, 1965:311).

To understand the perspective very clearly, we must examine Kachru’s study of Indian English and Kandiah’s study of Lankan English. Previously, research on different varieties of English was conducted by Whitworth in 1907, Goffin in 1934 and Smith Pearse in 1934. However, Kachru, in his 1983 work, *The Indianization of English*, did not completely adopt these pioneers’ model to make a study of Indian English. According to Kachru’s view, in the above-mentioned scholars’ studies on varieties of English and the nativization of English in a particular country, a most imperative aspect was not seriously considered: this process is traditionally called “interference”, and early scholars considered “interference” a negative tendency in the language learning process because it hinders the learning process. Uriel Weinreich defines the notion “interference” as “instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language” (1). Nevertheless, Kachru employs this term “interference” positively to denote linguistic change in a culturally and linguistically different language contact situation. This is also true in reshaping English in Sri Lanka. In other words, the situation of “interference” occurs due to linguistic and cultural influence and diffusion.

Previously, native English speakers have launched research on the growth of local varieties only from a pedagogical point of view. When they spoke about a form of English deviated from the native form, they never considered it to be a positive feat. They frequently expressed exasperation at the “Linguistic flights.....which jar upon the ear of the native Englishman” (Whitworth, 1907). This statement reflects the native speakers’ fallacy well.

Standard English

Standard English is just one variety among many others, though it enjoys social status. R. Hudson (1982) argues that “Standard English subsumes a wide range of varieties and has no clear boundaries vis-a-vis non-standard varieties”. He further remarks that “there is no reason for considering the variety called ‘Standard English’ the best for use in all situations”. As Quirk observes, “all the various kinds of English (determined by differences, in occupation, place, education, and the like) display their variety in terms of the three dimensions of language: vocabulary, grammar, and transmission” (84). There is one notable quality in Standard English: it has a very high degree of unanimity and a small amount of divergence.

However, Quirk argues that “Standard English is basically an ideal... As an ideal, it cannot be perfectly realized, and we must expect that members of different ‘wider communities’ (Britain, America, Nigeria, for example) may produce different realizations” (“What is Standard English” 100). This point is very important in our quest for finding the sort of English available in or suitable for Sri Lanka. If Standard English has its own differences in terms of occupation, place, education and the like, what does one expect from other varieties of English that are supposed to be non-standard?

The definition of Standard English is, in a way, easy. According to the 1982 version of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, it is the “form of English speech used, with local variations, by the majority of educated English-speaking people.” Burchfield (who was one of the most distinguished lexicographers in the world and functioned as the chief editor of the Oxford English dictionaries from 1971-1984 and as the editor of the four *Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* books from 1972-1986), makes a correction to the definition above. Burchfield takes issue with the word “educated”, because Standard English, or, as it is commonly called, “Received Standard English”, is spoken by only a very small

segment of the population, even in Britain. Burchfield's observation is that the aforementioned definition makes it sound as if it is the "speech" of a large number of people, unless we place a concrete definition of the word "educated".

In 1996, Burchfield had the privilege of editing *Fowler* (Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage) for the third time, and in the process he inserted a new head-word called "Standard English". He did not, however, define the term. Instead, he said:

The primary aim of this book is to identify and describe the principal elements of standard written English in Britain, often by contrasting them with non-standard, dialectal, overseas, archaic, or obsolescent features . . . The form of educated English used in their formal programmes by the broadcasting authorities based in London, by the London-based national newspapers, and by teachers of English to young people in this country and to foreigners is the variety presented here. (740)

If Fowler's 1926 work—which was revised as the second edition by Sir Ernest Gowers in 1965—had been written in Standard English (it was, of course, written in Standard English), why did Burchfield remark in the preface to the Third Edition that "Fowler's name remains on the title-page, even though his book has been largely rewritten in this third edition"? This he did for many reasons. One reason is that Standard English has undergone change since 1926. There are also many other reasons which he has cited but they are of no importance to the issue in hand.

One other recent work that examines both Standard English and Received Pronunciation (RP) in the context of teaching is *Cox on Cox: An English Curriculum for the 1990s*, a work based on the National Curriculum English Working Group's final report, "English from ages 5 to 16", submitted in May 1989. Brian Cox argues there that Standard English causes enormous problems. It is not fixed; it changes over time, just as any language does. Standard English should not be confused with "good" English, because speakers of Standard English can use English just as "badly" as anyone else, and because spoken and written Standard English differ considerably in some respects. Cox did not define what Standard English is. While quoting the Kingman Report—a report submitted in March 1988 and published in April 1988 by a committee headed by Sir John Kingman, Vice Chancellor of Bristol University, to recommend a model of the English language as a basis for teacher training and professional discussion—for a definition, the Cox Report also insisted that all children should speak and write Standard English, but it did not involve

any recommendation about RP. In other words, RP and Standard English should not be equated with each other (*Cox on Cox* 25-29).

What do all the details given above mean as far as we are concerned? The face of Standard English is part of the dynamic change of language, and therefore the “standard” cannot be considered as the “standard” for all time. And this “standard” changes not only from time to time, but also from country to country, and therefore, one “standard” or the so-called “Standard English” cannot be imposed on all the speakers over the world. While accepting the fact that Standard English is ideally the best-suited form in both speech and writing, this type of English is now concocted with code-mixing, code-switching, and calques (or loan translations). This is a reality and this reality is considered by us as one of our central themes, not only for adopting the concept of de-hegemonization of “standard,” but also for suggesting codification and standardization of another variety of English in Sri Lanka parallel to Standard English. This last point is only a suggestion and the mechanism may have to be worked out later.

The restricted nature of the use of Standard English, even in Britain, is kept in mind when we pursue a variety for Sri Lanka, particularly for the Sinhala majority; we will be mostly or exclusively concerned with the spoken variety since the variation found in formal writing is minimal. However, even in the case of formal writing, non-native English literature is more susceptible to the blemishes of colloquialism than the normal standard text writing, one reason being that many speech situations—but not all—are reflected in the literature, particularly in the fiction written in English.

Siromi Fernando (160-179), and others, examine speech situations in Sri Lankan English fiction on the basis of a few works of fictional prose of the 1980s. Let us consider a few observations made by her which throw some kind of light on our quest for dialects of English more suitable to the Sri Lankan experience, such as Lankan English and Sinenglish. The characteristics, as seen, are the nativization of the style of writing, the presence of bilingual or multilingual speech situations, the influence of Sri Lankan patterns of discourse, code-switching and code-mixing, and the presence of local diversity or speech varieties such as acrolect (high or prestigious variety of dialect), mesolect (intermediate between acrolect and basilect) and basilect (low or socially stigmatized variety), depending on the social status of the characters depicted in fiction.

All these characteristics amply demonstrate that the style of language—the English language—does, at times or most of the time, depict the Sri Lankan reality and experience, which is crucial for the development of a dialect of English akin to its own society. In other words, though the acrolect or Standard English is preferable, one should not wallow in nostalgia and crave for Standard English, particularly in the context of an alien or non-native English-speaking country. Instead, one should (a) appreciate realism with respect to languages used in a country where English is a non-native language and (b) then strive to make that variety (whether it is mesolect or basilect, or whether it is mesolect cum basilect, “meso-basilect,” as John Honey says, or a mixture of acrolect, mesolect and basilect) intelligible, useful and popular.

This is no doubt a daunting task! For the sake of academic research and exposition, it is not out of place for scholars to engage in abstract theory—the science of linguistics is notorious for it—and explore or construct language paradigms or models in the light of both the prevailing literature and native language experience. Parallel to it is an urgent need to develop a “model language of English for Sri Lanka”, a practical exercise. In doing so, the scholars need not themselves imbibe theoretical notions and disciplines such as, for example, glossogenetics (study of the origins and development of language), dialectology (study of dialects), dialinguistics (study of the range of dialects and languages in a speech community), diglossia (the use of two varieties of a language in a speech community), orschizoglossia (Kandiah’s notion of split varieties of language), and ethnolinguistics (study of language in relation to ethnic groups). It does not, however, mean that these discipline-specific terms and concepts are of no importance, but when one is on a specific mission, one should not lose sight of the intended outcome or one should not, to put it simply, lose sight of the wood for the trees.

The choice of the variety of English that is, or should be, spoken in Sri Lanka is an issue on which Parakrama, Kandiah (in a series of essays), and a few others have expressed views. Another Lankan scholar, D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke (1987), without getting himself involved very much in the intricacies of the varieties’ uses—perhaps because he did not go into it to the extent that Kandiah and Parakrama have done in terms of theoretical apparatuses—speaks of the variety of English to be used. While acceding to Kandiah’s argument (Kandiah, 1981;102, Part II) that Lankan English is an independent, distinctive and fully formed linguistic system adequate for the communicative and expressive needs of its users, Goonetilleke says that “he [Kandiah] has made too much of the differences between Sri

Lankan English and Standard English”. To quote Goonetilleke, “Sri Lankan English has evolved into its own characteristics of phonology, idiom, vocabulary and grammar which are completely intelligible in its social context, but the English-speaking community in Sri Lanka does not seem to be sufficiently large and independent-minded to be capable of evolving a dialect like Australian English”. In fact, Standard Sri Lankan English speech, though it is different from Standard English, is not widely so and is intelligible to speakers of Standard English. In writing, Standard Sri Lankan English is even closer to Standard English and the difference is negligible. Therefore, Sri Lanka has chosen almost as a matter of course to teach Standard Sri Lankan English in its schools and universities and I would argue that there is no need to play up its differences from Standard English (41).

Sri Lankan English

Linguistic studies of English as used in Sri Lanka have over the years distinguished a variety that has been variously labeled “Ceylon English”, “Lankan English” and “Sri Lankan English”. Authors who studied this variety, such as H. A. Passé (1948; 1955), Doric de Souza (1969), John Halverson (1976), Thiru Kandiah (1965; 1973; 1978; 1979), and Chitra Fernando (1976), discuss its phonology, grammar, syntax, vocabulary and stylistic features.

In her article, Siromi Fernando suggests that Sri Lankan English (SLE) is in a state of change today. She outlines the main aspects of this change, and makes a detailed study of the way it is reflected in the phonology of SLE. Such changes demarcate today’s variety of SLE from the variety of the above descriptions. On the other hand, today’s variety is also distinct from the semi-formed varieties of English used by Sinhala learners.

Before analyzing the changes that are taking place today, it is necessary to summarize the main features of the earlier variety of SLE. In her summary, Siromi Fernando draws largely on descriptions given by Kandiah (75-89) and Chitra Fernando (341-60) in their respective works in 1979 and 1976. She keeps closer to the analysis given by Kandiah, who makes the points that this variety is “an independent and viable native linguistic organism which has its own distinctive format and organization and which its habitual users acquired in that form as a first language”.

Earlier Variety of SLE

SLE is a variety that is used as an L₁ (first language) by a large number of its users. Kandiah claims that “to begin with, Lankan English is by no means a foreign or second language, in any real sense of this term, to a considerable number of its users who determine its distinctive nature” (“Disinherited Englishes” 92-113). In support of this claim, he quotes figures given by W. A. Coates. Coates cites Census figures of 1946 and 1951, and on the basis of these estimates that in 1961, when the total population of Ceylon was 10,000,000, the number of English speakers would be 866,585 (8.68%), and the number of monolingual speakers of English would be about 17,370 (0.17%). He then suggests that the number of speakers to whom English would be an L₁ would be “somewhere between” 17,370 and 866,585. In 1985, numbers have changed, with the factors for change being increased, because of population increase, and decreased, because of emigration and the changed linguistic situation in the country (Census figures for 1981 give the total population as 14,850,001, and the number of those able to read and write English in the Colombo District as 368,369). Nevertheless, it would still be safe to say that a body of persons to whom SLE is an L₁ exists.

Kandiah defines SLE in terms of its acquisition by this body of speakers who use it as an L₁. He describes it as a language that is “picked up” “in action” at home, and in school. Examining its structure, he recognizes it as an established variety: “The English that these habitual users of Lankan English ‘pick up’ in this very natural way as the first language of their thought, action and experience in these spheres would, in its spoken form be Lankan, not ‘Standard’ English”. This is different from the situation he describes for an earlier generation in their acquisition of English:

The English that these people sought to learn and use was clearly ‘Standard’ English, the mode taught in schools. Owing however, to the natural and inevitable interaction between the rules of their native languages which they already had built into their minds and those of the unfamiliar language they were now seeking to acquire, there gradually emerged, particularly in speech, the distinctive form of English to which the label ‘Lankan English’ needs to be applied. There is no doubt that during this formative period of Lankan English...all of the psychological processes that Pride mentions would have, in interaction with the functions that the language was called upon to perform in society, played a major role in determining its distinctive nature and character. (“Disinherited Englishes”, Part I, 75 – 89.

Thus SLE, in his definition, is no longer the outcome of an attempt to learn Standard English, but a system and variety that is acquired in its established form.

Kandiah also defines SLE in terms of its function: “a sizable number of users of English in Sri Lanka habitually use the language as an effective first language for several of their purposes, some for more and others for less of them”. Some of the purposes he discusses are polite social intercourse and other spheres of national life, like big business, the import and export trade, shipping and aviation, the use of libraries in higher education, the higher levels in various departments, the spheres of law and medicine at which specialists operate, and the tourist industry. Kandiah does not however, go into the question of which variety of English is used in these spheres. Though English is the dominant language in these areas in 1985, in some of them, e.g. the tourist industry and the use of libraries in higher education, the variety in use is not necessarily SLE. Similarly, in other areas, e.g. big business, the user of English is frequently not a person to whom SLE is an L_1 , and the variety of English he uses conforms only more or less to the SLE system. Thus, in terms of the 1985 situation, to label SLE an “effective first language” seems too hasty.

SLE is also essentially an educated variety. Though Kandiah does not make this point, it is implicit in his analysis of the educated class to whom it became “an effective first language” and his description of the higher-level areas in which it functions. H. A. Passé comments that “English was adopted by many educated people as their first language”. The link between education and the class which used English as an L_1 is clear also in the works of other writers like Doric de Souza and Chitra Fernando.

Sri Lankan English as a local variety

As already indicated, the distinct linguistic characteristics of a variety of English in India arose in multi-ethnic communities, with its own social blend and native flavour in the process of nativization. Over the years, however, the variety of Indian English emerged out of the interaction between the Indian native cultures and the English culture. This situation is called “cultural diffusion” or “acculturation”. In short, the native and non-native elements fused together and created a favourable situation for the emergence of a new distinct linguistic variety of India. From the same principle, a distinct variety of English emerged in Sri Lankan too according to many scholarly researches (Passé, 1955; Souza, 1969; Halverson, 1966;

Kandiah, 1979; Fernando, 1987; Parakrama, 1995; Canagarajah, 1995a; Saravanapava Iyer, 2001; Gunesequera, 2010).

The earliest pioneering contribution to defining Sri Lankan as a distinct local variety was made by Passé in 1955. He points out that “there has grown up in Ceylon [now Sri Lanka] a form of English with a distinct form of its own in regard to pronunciation and, in the case of most people, idiom, grammar and vocabulary as well” (11). Further, he claims that some of the “translated idiom” that characterizes this form of English is not only “defensible and acceptable” but also essential for effective communication. De Souza also identifies certain features of the English-speaking community in Sri Lanka and claims it is “a genuine speech community [who have] developed their own way of speaking English” (“The Teaching” 32). Halverson also made a claim that “English in Sri Lanka is concerned, that it is learned both at home and at school as a native speaker learns it” (61). Therefore, he claims that Lankan English should be accepted for what it is: a dialect. Kandiah also carried out much research on Lankan English. Apart from these pioneers, Le Page makes frequent references to “acceptable and recognizable (varieties) of the model Language” when he discusses that English in the Third World consists of coordinates or branches, each one being an entity, such as “Indian English”, “Ceylon English”, “Philippines English”, “Canadian English” and so on (27). However, both Passé and de Souza have worked on pronunciation only. They could not present a clear explanation about vocabulary, idiom and syntax related factors. In fact, de Souza also makes certain suggestions regarding the teaching of the English Language to Lankan learners in Sri Lanka. When describing the concept of “Sri Lankan English”, Gunesequera briefly elucidates that “Sri Lanka English is the language used by Sri Lankans who choose to use English for whatever purpose in Sri Lanka” (11). In addition, to emphasize the status of Sri Lankan English, she continues to claim, “English is one of the languages of Sri Lanka, although it is constitutionally neither an official language nor a national” (Gunesequera 11). From this explanation, she attempts to argue that English in Sri Lanka plays a central role, which is more than a second language among people at different levels of function. To denote the present status of English in Sri Lanka, Meyler also offers up a definition: “Sri Lanka English is the language spoken and understood by Sri Lankans who speak English as their first language, and/or who are bilingual in English and Sinhala or Tamil” (xi).

The very important question that arises here is: who is the speech community for Sri Lankan English? If we say any particular section, it

may not be appropriate; the speech community of Sri Lankan English consists of all the people of Sri Lanka, irrespective of their class and academic status. Thus, the core elements of Sri Lankan English remain the same for all Sri Lankans. However, regional variations can be recognized with respective special features. In this manner, if anyone checks the special dimensions of Sri Lankan English in Batticaloa, one can observe special features associated with Batticaloa socio-cultural elements to a certain degree. Since language is powerfully connected with human beings, the process of diffusion is inevitable. Therefore, the respective process of diffusion will add another dimension to the existing Sri Lanka English. Hence, via examining the diffusion of socio-cultural constituents, we can recognize new and other essential properties of Sri Lanka English.

Singlish or Sinenglish

In the case of Sri Lanka, the English spoken by the educated Lankan elite, very marginal in terms of the percentage, is not the type of English in which one should be interested. Various Englishes, including Broken English, which is spoken by the general masses who have not only an aptitude for such Englishes but also an inclination (with the help of a crude knowledge of English) to use it as a working apparatus and/or as a conversational aid, must be examined. Our opinion or suggestion on this important issue is no doubt fraught with some difficulties, but it is not impossible. The scholars who have proficiency and expertise in terms of both (comparative) theoretical grounding and pragmatic orientation should form themselves, as language planners, into an apolitical body, either with or without Government fiat, to work out a model for Sri Lankan English or, if narrowly stated, “Singlish” for use in Sri Lanka. This is a suggestion that has to be followed up.

However, the term “Singlish” was confusing in two ways; on the one hand, as the 1996 version of *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* says, “‘Singapore English’ is informally called ‘Singlish’—the English language as used in Singapore, a lingua franca influenced by Chinese and Malay that is fast acquiring a large community of native speakers” (858). Even Kachru, in 1983, refers to Singapore English as Singlish. Another citation for the same can be seen in Robert McCrum et al.’s book, *The Story of English*, where, when the authors refer to Singapore English, they qualify it by explaining that it is “sometimes known as ‘Singlish’” (308).

On the other hand, there is an apparent disagreement as to the nature of “Singlish” in Sri Lanka. It is Chitra Fernando who becomes the centre of the controversy on this subject matter in her article “English and Sinhala Bilingualism in Sri Lanka”, in which she creates academic uproar over this issue. However, the uproar in terms of academic sense is not very pronounced, but it caught the eye of Parakrama. Let us first examine Chitra Fernando’s version:

The Influence of English on Sinhala is much more dramatic and striking than the influence of Sinhala on English. The tendency to introduce English words into Sinhala is much more marked than the reverse ... i.e., Singlish would show a greater proportion of Sinhala phrases and sentences than English ones. In other words, Singlish is a sub-variety of Sinhala, not a sub-variety of English (355).

Let us consider another scholar whose purpose and publication has been directed, of course, at a different audience: to introduce Sinhala in English to those who learn Sinhala. Therefore, the quotation we wish to give below is only a casual observation he has made in regard to Singlish—a one-sentence remark. In J. B. Dissanayaka’s book, *Say it in Sinhala*, he makes the following observation (of course supported by a few examples): “Sinhalese who speak English have produced in this country a new brand of English, which may be legitimately labeled ‘Sinhala English’ or simply ‘Singlish’” (20-21).

Again, in one of his recent publications, *Understanding the Sinhalese*, Dissanayaka dealt with this issue briefly: “On the one hand, the Sinhalese have evolved their own brand of English, which may legitimately be called ‘Sinhalese English’. On the other hand, it has given rise to a brand of Sinhala, which is labeled, rather derogatorily, ‘Singirisi’” (133). However, Dissanayaka’s preoccupation is concerned with finding Sinhala words in English. Although “Sinenglish”, which we propose, is also mixed with calques, colloquialisms, code-mixing and code-switching words and phrases, it is a non-standard version of English whose base is English.

Parakrama’s views may be considered next before that of this study:

This argument for classifying ‘Singlish’ within Sinhala is entirely understandable in certain specific situations but remains too much within the confines of an acceptance of traditional linguistic description that this phenomenon itself calls into question. The term ‘Singlish’ itself points in the opposite direction, both in its use and derivation. I have yet to come across any reference to ‘Singlish’ in everyday conversation that did not refer to the ‘dilution’ of English with Sinhala words and phrases. In

addition, whether ‘Singlish’ has more Sinhala phrases and sentences than English ones is arguable empirically; my experience is that, in terms of individual utterances the relative frequency of Sinhala and English is variable (103-04).

We are more inclined to accept the view of Parakrama; the view in its summary form is given in a footnote on page 103 as: “English is the base language and not Sinhala”. We shall adduce some more reasons in support of this contention. Our approach to identification or naming of a model-type, near-standard or non-standard variety of Sri Lankan English is not based on Sinhala, but on English. In other words, our concern here is not about a dialect or variety which is based on Sinhala; it is an approach to identifying a model English ‘standard’ for use in Sri Lanka, given the realization of the de-hegemonization process, a model or piecing together of colloquial linguistic features of the speech of English in Sri Lanka that would form a model. In such a model, the stress ought to be on English—a variety of ‘localized’ English associated with the crux of the grammar and the form and content of Standard English but sufficiently supplemented with Sinhala-based colloquialism with less harm or no harm to intelligibility (Wickramasinghe, 268).

Besides Singlish or Sinenglish, the latter to be amplified later, we can also find differences between Standard British English and Standard Sri Lankan English, the latter also being identified as acrolect. To quote Suresh Canagarajah, “Most of those [different varieties of Sri Lankan English] in the first stratum [i.e., those who are fluent in English] by no means speak standard British or American English. They too speak a variety of Sri Lankan English which, being the usage of the educated and socially respected is labeled ‘Standard Sri Lanka English’” (123). Or, as Siromi Fernando in her 1990 article “Speech Situation in Sri Lankan English Fiction: Creation of Adequate Style Range” calls them: “acrolectal” varieties.

The English of the third stratum [those who use primarily the native languages with some functional uses of English] is called ‘non-standard SLE’—which includes the basilectal and mesolectal varieties. So even the first stratum speaks some variety of Sri Lankan English, although they may write Standard English (as the writing of English—especially for formal purposes—is intentionally standardized). (Canagarajah 123)

One quality that is stressed in the above paragraph is that the pride of place generally given to Standard British English in terms of its use has been toned down because those who use English almost exclusively speak a

variety of Lankan English. If that is the case, nobody should feel nostalgic about British English, which was once not only the darling of the elite but also the only official language of the country.

One observation is that when novels are written in English or translated into English, some colloquial terms or “Singlish” conversational usages are either deliberately or unknowingly included. That is the sort of conversation found in Sri Lanka when some natives speak in English. Although they are generally not accepted in terms of formal or Standard English, we find them in some literary works. For example, as shown by Wilfred Jayasuriya in translating his own novel, *Dona Kamalawathie*, from Sinhala into English, he makes the following remark in the Foreword to the English version: “About the translation, I must confess, that I tried to give a more or less ‘Singlish’ [Sinhalese-English] translation to give the reader the feeling that he is reading the story in Sinhala rather than a translation in highly polished English”. While showing the effect of Singlish by quoting a section of the conversation found in the English translation, Jayasuriya argues that such examples (for example, the passage quoted) are “a mine of cultural information”. He further goes on to say that “Liyanage’s use of the ‘Singlish’ language involves a form of code switching, which is part of the hybrid, bilingual culture of Ceylon” (134).

We have made use of this quotation deliberately to show that there are writers in English—non-native speakers of English—who use a lot of code switching, code mixing (interference) and calques (loan translations). Whether that language is “Singlish” or “Sinenglish” is a different issue. As shown by Jayasuriya, in Sri Lanka there is bilingualism or code switching in the media, the radio, cinema, newspapers and theatre. Jayasuriya refers to Chitra Fernando’s 1998 novella *Between Worlds* as a work that “uses both types of conversational English, a story [that] moves between Australia and Sri Lanka, since it is a story about emigrants”. Jayasuriya also talks of de-hegemonizing the language and says that it “troubles the theorist who sees language as an analogue of the nation”. But he quotes Homi K. Bhabha’s paper, “Dissemi Nation” to refute this argument in the sense that “different Englishes are not just other kinds of English which stand apart from the hegemonic as different; they are also supplements to make up for a lack in the hegemonic. Though in the context of Sri Lanka, writing in English provides, means of representation which is not available in any other way” (135-36).

It is not very clear what Gunadasa Liyanage meant by “Singlish” which he calls “Sinhalese-English”(42). Liyanage was primarily a journalist who would have used this term as a popular usage. It is, we presume, nothing more than the use of Sinhala words and phrases in English or conversation in English. But what is apparent is that there is some kind of de-hegemonized standard of English that is spoken and written by some sections of the population, though some works (for example, Ediriweera Sarachchandra’s 1978 novel *Curfew and the Full Moon*) use “neutral, standard English in dialogue”. Citing Sarachchandra is an extreme case, for he shows his genius in classical standard writing which stems from his high academic discipline. Yasmine Gooneratna, among some others, may also be another case in point. But many new writers in English and those non-native speakers of English who have not been rigorously moulded in the tradition of language and literature norms in English are prone to make use of a language that can be labeled as “somewhat nonstandard”. This should not be condemned or treated with contempt; there is no other way for such Sri Lankans to depict their feelings and ideas that are inherent to, and associated with, their environment and culture; they naturally fall back on the (or a) substandard variety of English which is now accepted.

Jaffna English as a Variety

There are now many different varieties of English known as “new Englishes.” David Crystal quotes Salman Rushdie as mentioning in one of his essays that “the English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English sometimes ago” (130). And we now speak of American English, Canadian English, New Zealand English, South African English, and Caribbean English, and within Britain, Irish, Scots, and Welsh English. The English used in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are collectively called South Asian English within which we find Indian English and Sri Lankan English as two distinct varieties. Looking closer, we find a somewhat Tamilized kind of English which may be called Jaffna English in Sri Lanka. This is simply a dialectical variant of Lankan English which is used by Jaffna Tamils.

English is not the first language of any family, individual, or any social group in Jaffna society now. It is the second language and plays the roles of a link language and the language of higher education. It is very common for people to think of the interference or impact of the L₂ (second language) on the L₁. That is, we often think of the influence of the English language on the Tamil language and it is indeed true that English as a

global language exerts a powerful influence on the native languages. But very few of the users of English as a second or foreign language think of the influence of the native language on the second language as it is used by a speech community. Bilinguals shape and mould the foreign language according to the norms and features and culture patterns of their mother tongue.

Historically, Jaffna was the first to receive English education in Sri Lanka. Suseendrarajah quotes John Halverson's observation that "The Tamils were the earlier to learn English in Sri Lanka than the Sinhalese" (3). Tamils in Jaffna were exposed to English from the time the Batticota seminary was established by the American missionaries in Jaffna in 1913. In time, the missionaries established a number of English schools in different parts of the peninsula. English education became very popular in the Tamil areas, particularly in Jaffna, from the time it was introduced. It became an industry in Jaffna. The target of every English language learner among the Tamils was "native-like proficiency" and according to many, some scholars like Sir Pon. Ramanathan, Sir Pon. Arunachalam and Rev. Father Percival, to name a few, did achieve native-like proficiency. They used the so-called "Queen's English".

Some of these local bilinguals were more proficient in English than in their mother tongue. Pronunciation, accent, choice of vocabulary, all were near "perfection". In terms of language proficiency, the emphasis was mostly on "full" language aiming at native or near native-like control in writing English (Suseendrarajah 2). It was standard Queen's English, and there was no reference to any variety such as Jaffna English.

After the recognition and advancement of the native languages, the standard of English declined and led to the emergence of a certain variety of English which is distinct from Standard English with respect to pronunciation, accent, and choice of vocabulary and so on. This variety had the features of an "Inter language" (Selinker 209–230), which is very different from the standard variety of English. It may be useful to comment at this juncture that the Jaffna-Tamil English variety is not an accepted variety like Indian English or African English. JTE is simply English as it is used in Jaffna Tamil society.

Conclusion

The findings of the present chapter explain how the activities of the colonial rulers brought about a great deal of changes not only in the status

of the native languages but also in the entire speech community in Sri Lanka. These invaders brought their culture, traditions and religions, in addition to their languages. Consequently, certain linguistic features appear in the vernacular languages when they use English language loan words. The linguistic impact of English on the Tamil and Sinhala languages have also been discussed in this chapter. In Sri Lankan English, Sinenglish or Singlish (Sinhalese English) emerged as a variety consisting of a speech community of Sri Lanka. The Jaffna Tamil community has its own indigenous aspects and national temperament. The Jaffna variety of English has come to signify the peculiarities of Jaffna Tamil consciousness, culture and linguistic richness.

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CHAPTER THREE

SINHALESE VIEWS ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Introduction

The beginning of the sixteenth century saw the first impact of European colonial power on Sri Lankan society and culture. More than four centuries (1505-1948) of colonialism changed the language policy and formal educational system. The National movement in Ceylon may be said to have begun at the moment when the Kandyan Kingdom fell to the British. Thereafter the whole island was subjected to British rule. For three hundred years, the maritime districts of Ceylon were dominated by the Portuguese and the Dutch, and there was a continuous struggle by the Sinhalese in the interior to discard the foreigner. Within the King's territory there was an independent nation which, despite invasion and fratricidal warfare, had lasted twenty-three centuries. After the convention of 1815 with the British, there was no longer a Sinhala nation, and the national culture and the way of life was under constant pressure as is common in all colonial territories.

British rule in Sri Lanka began with their acquisition of the Dutch territories in 1796. After a brief period of administration by the East India Company, the British possessions in Ceylon (which it was then called) were placed under the Colonial Office in 1802. Fredrick North assumed office as the first Governor of Ceylon in 1802, and the power of the coastal provinces was concentrated in the hands of the Governor. In 1815, with the fall of the kingdom of Kandy in the central highlands—the last Sinhalese kingdom, which had maintained its independence under the kings of Kandy—the British managed to bring the whole island of what they called Ceylon under their political control. They soon embarked on a policy based on introducing the English language, and this eventually brought significant sociolinguistic changes.

On the other hand, unlike the Portuguese and the Dutch languages, the history of the English language in Sri Lanka took a different turn. It took

root in the society from the time the British established political power in Sri Lanka. British rule in Sri Lanka began in 1796 and ended in 1947. The long period of stable and powerful rule enabled the English language to become a politically and economically superimposed language. Even after independence, indigenous governments that were in power from time to time could not get rid of English totally. It functions as a link language (lingua franca) among the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka and serves as a unifying force. It serves as the medium of communication at the national and international levels (electronic media and press media). It is also the language of international trade. Though education is imparted in the mother tongue of the students at the tertiary level in Sri Lanka, the use of English appears to be still indispensable in fields of study like advanced science, technology, medicine, engineering, etc. All these factors continue to generate a great demand for the use and learning of English in Sri Lanka.

At the middle of the nineteenth century, leaders in the public life of Ceylon came from this class. Prominent among them were Sir Richard Morgan, C. A. Lorenz, James De Alwis, Sir Harry Dias, and Sir Muttu Coomarasamy. It can be said that they belonged to the “imitative” stage of nationalism mentioned by Dr. Bonn though they sometimes kicked against the barriers. They had to make their way into an Anglo-Saxon milieu by being as well-equipped for their avocations as their British prototypes. But a few were disturbed by the gradual disappearance of a national spirit and a steady deterioration of an indigenous culture among those who received an English education. Educated Sinhalese in the first half of the nineteenth century pursued a policy of “accommodation”. A small group of Sinhalese and Tamils, proficient in English, were able to join their ranks to form an articulate middle class.

The backbone of the educational system during the time of Sinhalese kings was the temple schools. The education imparted during these times was entirely through this institution. After nearly three centuries of foreign rule, the temple school had diminished in importance. Yet the significant fact was that these schools survived the foreign onslaught and remained until British times. Hence the decline of the temple schools was undoubtedly the major cause for the decline of the Sinhala language. The national languages were fighting a losing battle against English, which was growing in importance and prestige. There were many who fought for the cause of English, hardly any who championed the cause of the national languages (Perusinghe 478).

At this time an increasing number of influential Ceylonese were beginning to feel that the mere imitation of the English ruling class was not in keeping with their own self-respect. James De Alwis, who rose to eminence as a lawyer and a Legislative Councillor by dint of his own efforts, was one of them. His greatest claim to fame today is his outstanding contribution to Sinhalese studies. He wrote in his autobiography:

“Everyone knows the preference that was given by the Sinhalese to the study of English. Parents and those who took an interest in the cause of education did not pause to reflect on a change as circumstances changed, they were led away by the force of practice. They confined all the studies to English. They stuck exclusively to English even after Ceylon had been one-third of a century under British rule. They continued the practice even when a change was profitable to the people, and highly desired by the Governor and the Missionary. The ill effects of the system were soon felt; and yet no one noticed them until the Honorable George Turnour exposed the baneful system in his introduction of the Mahawamsa.”

Panabokke, who followed James De Alwis into the Legislative Council, had similar feelings. In a few brief chapters of the autobiography he left, he says:

“It was my great good fortune to have boarded with Pandit Batuvantudawe. Whilst there, I did a great deal of useful work. I regularly translated English into Sinhalese and had these translations corrected, touched up by the Pandit, and published in the Sinhalese paper. Through exercises of this nature my Sinhalese improved by leaps and bounds”.

The Ven Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala, Pandit Batuvantudawe and later, D. B. Jayatilaka were the precursors of modern Sinhalese writing which developed with the establishment of Sinhalese newspapers. But men of this generation did not undervalue the importance of English. James De Alwis says that James Dunwille and himself attended public meetings to listen to practised speakers, the law courts to witness leading advocates conducting cases, and churches to hear learned divines in order to improve their own accent. “We committed to memory” he writes, “some of the best specimens of oratory by Brougham, Erskine, Curran, Philips, Emmet, Chatham, and others”.

The national movement manifested itself in various ways. For example, the Anagarika Dharmapala denounced the tendency common among the class of Ceylonese to regard everything that came from the west, in food, clothes, furniture and sports, as well as language and religion, as necessarily superior to the indigenous ways of life. The Buddhist leaders

were joined by certain Methodists in a temperance campaign which was frowned upon by the overtones.

During the period of Portuguese rule, Portuguese was the language of administration. The officials had to employ interpreters for communication with the local inhabitants. The Dutch dealt with the problem of language in a different way from the Portuguese. They did not succeed in establishing their language as the official language and their policy was to use Dutch along with other local languages (Sannasgala 87). Both Portuguese and Dutch rule did not extend beyond the coastal areas.

The language medium employed in educating the children of the nation was no problem until our western masters—the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English—in turn imposed their own languages as the official languages of the territory and took upon themselves the responsibility for the education of the subject race. At the outset, only a small fraction of the school-going population was concerned with this alien system, but towards the latter part of the British rule it developed into a complex national problem.

At the close of the nineteenth century educationists were convinced that the best language medium for education was the mother tongue of the learner, but in the face of the overwhelming privileges history had conferred on the English-educated minority the educational values had to give way to other more important social and economic considerations.

English in the British colonial administrators' period (Nineteenth Century)

The history of the introduction of English dates back to the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, and it is closely tied to the presence of the British colonial administration and missionary educators. From the start of British rule, the colonial administrators stressed the value of English and Christianity. Fredrick North, the first British Governor on the island (1798-1805) saw that there was some immediate gain in propagating the language and religion of the rulers, and therefore he laid the foundation for a language policy which linked the English language with an elite class (Ludowyk 1966). Later, Governor Edward Barnes (1820-1822) also stressed the indelible link between the “civilizing” mission and the promotion of English:

“Instruction in the English language should be promoted and encouraged as much as possible, when the people would be enabled to come more directly to the evidence of Christianity than they are through the tardy and scanty medium of translations” (qtd. in Gooneratne 5-6).

The colonial administrators realized the functional value of English in creating a class of English-educated officials who would serve as an essential link between the British rulers and the masses. They seem to have expected English to spread gradually and ultimately to become the language of the country. As one Civil Servant later in 1849 pointed out, “It was formerly the policy of the Government to make the natives learn English, rather than to make the public servants learn Cingalese [Sinhala]” (*Select Committee*, “Evidence of Major T. Skinner” 294).

The first official pronouncement relating to language policy in colonial Sri Lanka is to be found in the Colebrooke Report on the Administration of the Government of Ceylon (dated 24 December 1831). Seeing the need for a common language for administrative purposes, it made explicit the position of English as the language of government. As a result, during the years 1832-33, the British decided to encourage the use of English as the language of administration, education and of the courts of law. A former judge of the Ceylon Supreme Court observed: “It is significant that in Ceylon, the native languages are far less used than in India for the transaction of public business, and in the law courts the proceedings are conducted in English” (Clarence 439).

Colebrooke also believed that knowledge of English would lead to the enhancement of the people of the island, and consequently he showed little interest in the local languages of the people. He stressed the absolute value of the English language, and further noticed the importance of “diffusing” knowledge through the English medium schools (Mendis 215). As pointed out by historian G.C. Mendis, in his proposals for the establishment of English schools Colebrooke was “influenced by the view, held by Englishmen at the time, that oriental learning was of little value and that knowledge of English would lead to the moral and intellectual improvement of the Eastern peoples” (I xiii). In general, these policies and attitudes were not unique to Sri Lanka. In some respects, there were close parallels between colonial language policies and practices in India, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong (see Rahman’s *Language and Politics*; Pennycook’s *English and the discourses*; Evans’ “Dispute and deliberations” 47-65; Mir’s “Imperial Policy” 395-427; 6). Two years after the Colebrooke Commission, Lord Thomas Macaulay’s famous “Minute on Education” in India also

echoed this policy of imparting Western knowledge through a Western language (English) and then only to a minority of the population (See Phillipson's *Linguistic Imperialism*; Evans' "Dispute and deliberations" 260 – 287).

In the early period of British rule, however, colonial officers had very little knowledge of the island's languages, customs, and people. They believed that the English language was adequate for their purposes and neglected the study of local languages. In 1833, the Colebrooke Report laid the foundation for a unified administration in the country and envisaged a language policy for colonial governance. Since the majority of the population was not proficient in English, local languages were also used in a limited way at the lower levels of administration. In Gramsabhas or Village Committees, the local languages were used for proceedings, but records were kept either in English or in the local language used in that division. The Government ordinances were published in English and Sinhala and sent to different agents to distribute among the headmen. Therefore, Colebrooke recommended that "a competent knowledge of the English language should be required in the principal native functionaries throughout the country" (Mendis 70).

The linguistic proficiency of Sinhala and Tamil also became a necessary condition for promotions in the Civil Service. Colebrooke too stressed this point in his recommendations. All Europeans who are selected to fill the Civil appointments in the Provinces should be required to obtain a competent knowledge of the Native language (Cingalese or Malabar [Tamil] as the case may be) and when Natives are appointed to such situations they should be equally conversant with the English language (Mendis 214-15). However, in practice, these language requirements were largely ignored by the British Civil Servants, and a high percentage of officials were ignorant of the local languages. Various explanations were offered for this failure, ranging from the difficulty of learning the languages to the burden of regular duties that permitted little time for study (Mills 88). Indeed, Colebrooke remarked on this situation in his report:

"The native inhabitants are required to send with their petitions to the Governor an English translation, and from the ignorance of the translation they generally convey very imperfectly the sense of the original" (Mendis 106).

It was cited in evidence that most of the civil officials were not proficient in the local languages. Giving evidence before a Select Committee, one

official said: “As I cannot speak the language of the country, I could not have any extensive communication with natives” (*Select Committee*, “Evidence of Muddock” 58). At this time, many of the public servants sought the assistance of headmen or interpreters to communicate with the people. The colonial officials themselves often remarked upon this division between the rulers and the natives, and upon the consequence of not knowing the people’s language.

It was in reference to this state of affairs, in 1852, that James De Alwis, a bilingual Sinhalese scholar, mentioned that the study of the Sinhala language was much neglected by Europeans (quoted in Dharmadasa). In the dedication of his work –the *Sidat Satigarava* translation—he pointed out the value of competency in local languages –mainly Sinhala –to the Governor as requisite qualification for those who entered the public service.

Although, from the earliest period of British rule, knowledge of the local languages was considered as an essential requirement of a Civil Servant, until the 1850s there were no fixed rules on these examinations. In 1852, a Minute by the Governor, George Anderson, noted the knowledge of local languages as a condition for promotions in the Civil Service. At this time the Colonial Office made some effort to facilitate the study of local languages. In 1863, Governor McCarthy reduced the work of the Writers or Cadets so that they might have more time to become proficient in the language of the people. In order to obtain the necessary competency in local languages, the Civil Servants were also given a “pundit allowance” of £3 per month to enable them to pay a teacher of Sinhala or Tamil. In 1870, with the introduction of the Civil Service Examination, proficiency in the local languages became an important matter, which attracted the attention of the Civil Service Commission (Dickman 42). In 1872, it was decided that no Civil Servant would be promoted to any higher situation without knowledge of Sinhala or Tamil (Warnapala 42).

Moreover, for the benefit of British officials learning Sinhala, a few Sinhalese scholars and missionaries attempted to publish Sinhala grammars in English. In 1886, C. Chounavel, a Catholic missionary, compiled *A Grammar of the Sinhalese Language* for the use of European students. Commenting on this, the Director of Public Instruction stated that “your Grammar ought to be most useful to civil servants for passing their examinations in Sinhalese, and to all Europeans who desire to learn Sinhalese” (Chounavel iii). And in 1891 a Sinhalese scholar and Government official, Abraham Mendis Gunasekara (1860-1931), also published *A*

Comprehensive Grammar of the Sinhalese Language and pointed out “the absence of a comprehensive Grammar of the Sinhalese Language suited to the requirements of English readers” (iii). Most of these Sinhala grammars were organized in terms of English grammar books, with the various chapters dealing with grammatical categories. At the turn of the century, most of the British Civil Servants who served in the island had a necessary command of local languages in order to carry out their official duties. For example, Leonard Woolf, who served in the Jaffna, Kandy and Hambantota districts as a Civil Servant in the first decade of the twentieth century (1904 -1911), took both Sinhala and Tamil examinations and conversed with villagers in their own language (Woolf).

Since the administration of the country was conducted in English, the local entrants to the Ceylon Civil Service and Government service needed an education in English. The premium position of English as the language of Government in the island necessitated the establishment of English schools to ensure the diffusion of this language. Colebrooke was aware that, for the better administration of the country, the wide gulf that existed between the rulers and the natives had to be narrowed. He felt the need to devise a Government educational policy which could smoothly absorb certain elements of the native population into the machinery of civil administration. In this way, education was one aspect of colonial policy, and language policy was accordingly geared to the production of a limited group of people proficient in the English language.

Education Policy on Language

Colonial language education policy evolved in the nineteenth century through the officials of the Colonial Office in London and of the colonial Government. This was deeply influenced by language ideologies and attitudes (See Ruberu’s *Education in Colonial Ceylon*; Jayaweera’s “British Colonial Policy” 68-90; 153 -155; Jayasuriya’s *Educational policies and progress*). As a part of the plan for educational reform, the first British Governor, North, recognized the importance of providing English education. He stated that the objective was to create a people “connected with England by education and by office and connected by the ties of blood with the principal native families in the country”.

At this time, the teaching of English was also used as a method to diminish the use of Portuguese, which was prevalent in some areas. The English language, it was argued, was indispensable, since “the treasure of the

English” can only “to a small extent” be “transferred to the native languages” (Chelliah 6).

Until 1831 the Government provided very little education in English, but as a result of the Colebrooke report the Government’s attention was shifted to English schools. Colebrooke recommended that Government vernacular schools should be abolished, and that attention should be given to the teaching of English. The establishment of English as the language of administration and the medium of instruction signalled the triumph of the “Anglicist” policy. Endorsing Colebrooke’s proposals, the Secretary of State for the Colonies wrote in 1833 to the Governor in Colombo: “The dissemination of the English language is an object, which I cannot but esteem of the greatest importance, as a medium of instruction, and as a bond of union with this country” (Mendis 277). The only consistent theme in Colebrooke’s recommendations on education was his insistence on English as the medium of instruction. Commenting on the English missionary schools at that time, Colebrooke complained that the “English missionaries have not very generally appreciated the importance of diffusing a knowledge of the English language through the medium of their schools”, and viewed the activities of the American missionaries in the North of the island with admiration (Mendis 73-74). As a result of Colebrooke’s recommendations, by the 1840s the missionaries were in favour of the diffusion of the English language through education.

At this point, it is worth examining the British colonial attitude towards the native educational system and languages. During this time, in most of the villages, the pansala or temple was a school where a resident monk taught the basics of Sinhala writing to native children. However, in the face of colonialism, the language practices of temple education counted little. For example, Colebrooke unhesitatingly dismissed the education provided by “the native priesthood in their temples and colleges” as one that “scarcely merits any notice” (Mendis 74). It is possible that Colebrooke, since he did not know the local languages, was not in a position to appreciate the indigenous system of learning. He further stated: “In the interior, the Bhoodhist [Buddhist] priests have evinced some jealousy of the Christian missionaries; but the people in general are desirous of instruction, in whatever way afforded to them, and are especially anxious to acquire the English language” (Mendis 75).

The debates on education policies within the official circles also created a forum to discuss the matters related to language in vernacular education. As we have seen, after 1867 Government policy favoured vernacular

education, and this paved the way for various language planning activities - particularly with regard to Sinhala. Over the years, language issues related to vernacular education received a considerable amount of attention from the colonial Government and the literary elite. For example, as a Sinhala language loyalist, James De Alwis campaigned for the provision of better facilities for vernacular education and the preparation of a good set of school textbooks in Sinhala. In 1869, a Committee was appointed, including De Alwis, for the purpose of considering the quality of Sinhala books commonly used in the vernacular schools in the island (“Papers on the subject of Vernacular Education”).

In 1871, the Director of Public Instruction recommended the appointment of a Pundit of recognized learning and authority to be permanently attached to the Department, for the purpose of assisting in the “production of vernacular school textbooks” (*Administration Report for 1871*). To promote vernacular education in Sinhala, the Government Press started to print Sinhala textbooks and other works from 1879 onwards, for the Department of Public Instruction. With regard to the compilation of Sinhala textbooks and grammars—mainly for teaching Sinhala—the Government consulted the leading Sinhala scholars, school inspectors and translators of the day. It is clear from this discussion that from the late nineteenth century onwards, the colonial Government became involved in the promotion of Sinhala for pedagogical purposes, and this laid the foundations for the development of the Sinhala language as an educational medium in the colonial context.

Introduction of the English medium in School Education

It should be noted that not all those who were in charge of education and administration in the British period were supporters of education in English. As we will see, there were a number of important shifts in colonial policy, and different officials often had different opinions regarding education in the English medium. Controversy over the medium of instruction reveals that colonial administrators and missionaries took different approaches from time to time, confirming the absence of a single ideology and policy.

After Colebrooke’s reforms the Government embarked on a policy of using English as the principal medium of instruction and maintained the vernacular schools as “subsidiary” to the English schools. Colebrooke also recommended the value of establishing an institution in Colombo to educate native youths for different branches of the public service (Mendis

215). A model institution for English education—the Colombo Academy—was established in 1836. From about 1870, more English education was demanded, and the missions, assisted by the Government, established English secondary schools in the major towns. These schools provided a curriculum that led to rewarding employment opportunities and higher education, while the vernacular schools led to low levels of employment and no opportunities for higher education.

Colebrooke's promotion of English never led to a widespread literacy in that language. Official records suggest that the proportion of the people literate in English has always been small. By 1901, only 3 per cent of the male population was literate in English (*Census of Ceylon 1901*). A major reason for this situation was the uneven quality of the English education provided. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the colonial officials paid some attention to the standard of teaching English in schools, more particularly to the suspicion English teaching of incompetent native schoolmasters.

In the late 1830s the first movement against English began with the controversy between the Orientalists and the Anglicists on the issue of the use of English in education. In this socio-cultural context, Buddhist resistance to Christianity arose as a revivalist movement during the late nineteenth century. Although, as Guruge points out, “one of the earliest acts of overt opposition (to Christianity) was the publication of parodies on Christian tracts as early as 1826”, the Buddhist revivalist activities against the domination of Christianity became stronger during and after the 1860s, from which time the Sinhala merchant capitalist class started to financially support the Buddhist revivalist movement. “With the arrival of Colonel Olcott in 1880, the Buddhists found an efficient leader who was capable of translating their religious and national aspirations to action through a well-conceived plan and program.” Henry Olcott formed the Buddhist Theosophical Society in the same year and he started an island-wide movement to establish a Buddhist school system.

Within a few years, English was considered an unsatisfactory medium of instruction at first for Sinhalese and Tamil children. For example, in 1838, the Governor James Stewart-Mackenzie (1837-1841), a firm believer in the social benefits of education, called for a fundamental change in the language education policy of the Government. He believed that an exclusive dependence on the English language was an obstruction to progress in education, and publicly stated that the “state must educate the masses and not merely an elite” (Corea 151-175).

Furthermore, the Colonial Secretary, Phillip Anstruther, came out strongly against education in the vernacular and his Memorandum of 1840 further stressed the English language diffusion policy: “I do not think that sufficient efforts are made to diffuse the English language, and I am confident that, if English schools were established to a sufficient extent the English language would soon be generally spoken in the country” (quoted in De Silva 185). In 1847 the above policy was changed, and attempts were made by the Government to establish vernacular schools. It was found that many of the students, especially in the village schools, could not benefit from the instruction they received unless it was combined with their own language. By establishing vernacular schools, the Government diverted a section of the population to those schools and thus limited English education to a minority, in particular to children of rich and elite parents. It should be noted that those who advocated education in the vernaculars never turned their attention to the country’s ancient literature, or to the pansala school system because of their Buddhist flavour. In fact, they stressed the cultivation of vernacular languages to promote Western knowledge, as a “prelude to education in the English language” (De Silva 146).

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, as we have seen, the colonial language policy was also affected by the conflicting positions held by colonial officials regarding the respective roles of the vernacular languages and English. Till 1870, there were two educational systems working side by side: Government schools and missionary schools. It should be noted that these two systems were not rivals, the missions having few English schools and many vernacular schools, and the Government having more English schools and fewer vernacular (Gratiaen 1933). During the period 1870-1900, indeed, there was a partial reversal of the Government’s educational policy, in the sense that English education was almost wholly left to the Christian missions, while education in the vernacular became much more directly the concern of the Government. (Jayasuriya 289).

The use of Sinhala in secular writing in the modern period was, accordingly, almost non-existent till well into the nineteenth century. The use of Sinhala for serious expository prose as well as for creative writing increased enormously in the early twentieth century. After Sinhala was declared the official language in 1956, English provided Sinhala with a model for developing registers connected with administration, commerce etc. The language and style of official regulations, letters and reports are all closely modelled from their English counterparts. Modern Sinhala

journalism has been much influenced by the style of British journalism, particularly with regard to reporting and editorials. However, the influence of English goes further than administration documents and journalism. In fact, the spread of English language teaching as a result of secondary school expansion beyond the confines of an Anglicized elitist middle class, together with the “renaissance” of Sinhala and the rise of a new Sinhalese intelligentsia in the late 1950s and in the 1960s, resulted in English and its literature having more impact on Sinhala in the last twenty-five years or so than it ever did in the one hundred and fifty of British rule. Such influence is seen in the further development in Sinhala of relatively new literary genres like the novel and short story, and new developments in existing genres such as the emergence of a *vers libre* style in poetry. There is also the growth of a substantial body of literary criticism influenced by Western critical theory. But, significantly, Sinhala is still not the language of original research. Ferguson uses this particular function of language as a criterion in measuring language development (23-28). As far as Sinhala goes, even research work on Sinhala itself is carried out abroad and written in English!

The study of English as a language was, no doubt, accepted as essential for a complete education, but the practice of employing it as a vehicle for conveying all knowledge, attitudes, and skills was certainly regarded as educationally unsound. The anxiety of parents and managers of schools to make their children fully conversant with English at any cost militated against any effort to introduce the vernacular languages either as subjects of study or as media of instruction. The struggle to secure the rightful place for the national languages in the educational field assumed two different forms. One was to have the national languages introduced into the curriculum of the English schools, and the other was to have them used as a medium for general instruction in all schools.

Even as far back as 1884, the educationists had officially recognized the futility of using a foreign language as a medium of instruction. For instance, H. W. Green made the following comments:

1. At present the state of affairs in too many of our primary and middle English schools is much as if in England, at the Board schools, the boys learnt all the subjects in French paying no attention to English at all; for here a Sinhalese or Tamil boy in our English schools learns all his Arithmetic, Geography, History, etc., in English and (with a few exceptions) receives no instruction in his own language at all.

2. English should be as a language only and should not be the medium of instruction in Arithmetic, Geography, History, etc., which should be taught in the vernacular and I argued that boys would learn a great deal more English in the one hand, while on the other hand they would understand a great deal more about Arithmetic and other subjects in which I have often observed that a boy in an English school will fail by not properly grasping the English of a question whereas if it were put in his own vernacular he would at once understand and answer it.
3. School managers have told me frankly and unofficially that they agreed with me but as a rule there has been a disposition to shirk grappling with the problem officially. It must however be dealt with sooner or later unless we are to go on teaching our slipshod smattering of English and encouraging more generations to ignore their own vernaculars, and the sooner it is dealt with, the better. I trust therefore that the year will not close without serious consideration of my proposal.

Twentieth Century efforts

Towards the close of the nineteenth century positive steps were taken to introduce the national languages at the primary level of education and the rural schools' ordinance for making provision for education in the national languages. In the early twentieth century the national leaders genuinely felt that the education of the youth would be totally inadequate without the knowledge of the national languages. The Ceylon Social Reform Society pointed out that what the society wanted was to see that all boys when leaving school were able to read and write the mother tongue correctly. Under the then-existing system of education, the higher-class youths of the country, owing to their extremely inadequate knowledge of the native languages, found that not only could they not carry on an intelligent conversation with the villagers, but they could not even express their ideas intelligently in their own homes where as a rule the parents spoke the native language, as was quite natural.

Empires have flourished and passed away with their languages and civilizations, but the East still has the password to the common treasure of all, enshrined in a great literature, of science and metaphysics written in Pali and Sanskrit, Tamil and Sinhala, and here must be sought the progress in real life. My own view is that the mother tongue should be enforced in

all grant-in-aid schools if the Government has the real welfare of the people at heart.

The English language held a position of pre-eminence in the educational and administrative set-up of the country, and the languages of the people, Sinhala and Tamil, occupied an insignificant place. Only 7% of the population was, however, literate in English. Within a reasonable number of years, the State Council of Ceylon made English the official language instead of Sinhala.

- a) The first major defect is the existence of two types of education according to the medium of instruction used. The great majority of our pupils are taught in “vernacular” schools where Sinhala or Tamil is the medium of instruction. With a few exceptions, the rest are taught in “English” schools where English is the medium of instruction. The objections to this system are:
 - 1) English has become a badge of social superiority, thus dividing the population into two more or less watertight social compartments, the English-educated and the vernacular-educated.
 - 2) Sinhalese or Tamil, the “natural” medium for Sinhalese or Tamil people respectively, and the best medium through which they can effectively contribute to the world of literature and art, has not been developed.
 - 3) The third major defect is the absence of equality of opportunity, the development of our educational system having resulted in two types of schools – one attended mainly by those who can afford to pay fees, and the other attended by those who cannot afford to do so.

The Ceylon Social Reform Society’s report points out that education through the English medium, available for payment, promises the best material prospects in that: a knowledge of English is required for all the better paid posts; English being the language of Government and all-important commercial establishments, knowledge of English provides the path to affluence; a knowledge of English is required for higher studies.

Moreover, English schools have better buildings, and are better equipped and better staffed than other schools. Perhaps this is because English has become a medium of instruction in Ceylon schools and has given rise to a privileged group. The report goes on to assert that the mother tongue is the natural medium of instruction, and that there is no reason “why English

should be retained as a medium of instruction at any stage in the educational process” except for those, notably the Burgher community, for whom the mother tongue is English.

At the same time, some recommendations were also placed before the Council:

- a) The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the mother tongue.
- b) The medium of instruction in the lower department of the post-primary school may be either the mother tongue or bilingual.
- c) The medium of instruction in the higher department of the post-primary school may be English, Sinhala or Tamil or bilingual.

In introducing these recommendations, Minister of Education, Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara made the following comment:

“.....we have two classes of society in this country divided by English education. The affluent, the rich, the influential, those that can afford to pay, attend one kind of school imparting the higher education which is given in a foreign tongue. They have to pay for it. Why? Because the official language of this country is English, because no one without the knowledge of English can fill any high post.” (H(SC) 1944).

What was the prospect for the poor who had to attend schools providing education in the mother tongue? In general, they had to be satisfied with being:

“hewers of wood and drawers of water”,

while a handful of the most gifted of them could aspire to be vernacular teachers. Mr. W. Dahanayake said, “Knock out English from the pedestal it occupies today, and place thereon our Sinhalese and Tamil languages and we shall soon be a free race”; he urged “the Burgher nominated and his community to join with us even at this stage and adopt either the Sinhalese or the Tamil way of living and the Sinhalese or the Tamil language as their mother tongue”.(H(SC) January 1945). He moved the following amendment:

“The medium of instruction in all schools shall be Sinhalese or Tamil with English as a compulsory second language.”

Mr. J.R. Jayewardene was not prepared to have English as a compulsory second language but wanted English to be optional. His amendment stated:

“The mother tongue shall be made the medium of instruction in all schools, with English as an optional language.” He said, “...our educational structure is divided into two types of educational institutions; some institutions giving instruction through the mother tongue, and the other institutions giving instruction through English. This particular defect has created, to my mind, two different nations; one nation learning Sinhalese and Tamil and speaking in Sinhalese and Tamil, and the other speaking and learning English. I think this has been one of the worst features of British rule introduced into this country. We find 95 percent of our pupils in the schools learning their mother tongue but completely unequipped to take part in the government of the country because the government of the country is conducted in English. We find 5 percent of our schools teaching English; and those who go through those schools are completely denationalized, are out of touch with the people, are ignorant of their history and their customs... if we make English a compulsory subject it may be that after a time we may revert to the bad old system and that Sinhalese and Tamil in Ceylon may not be of economic value and will therefore gradually disappear”. ((H(SC) January 1945).

The amendments by the above two former Prime Ministers, Dhahanayekke and Jayewardene, were defeated, and in so far as the medium of instruction was concerned, the decision was based on the recommendation of the executive committee.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the sociolinguistic significance of the Colebrooke report was that its recommendations paved the way for a definite colonial language policy. English rapidly became associated with colonial administration and served the function of an “official language” as in other colonies. The hegemony of the English language in Government policy prevailed but no provision was made for giving the people at large an opportunity to acquire a knowledge of that language.

Linguistic imperialism was another consequence of colonial policy, and colonial ideologies were reflected in language education policies (Phillipson). However, there was no total agreement among the missionaries and colonial officials on policies relating to language and they continued to hold conflicting views.

It is clear from this analysis that the language policy issue emerged as a public concern during the British colonial rule and was a key element of colonial policy for education, missionary work, and administration. The introduction of English education in the nineteenth century had a profound

long-term impact on the country's language policies and practices. These colonial educational policies inevitably resulted in the creation of a social elite educated solely in the English language. Despite the increase in the number of schools, those who had the benefits of an English education remained in a minority. As a result, the colonial educational system created a new language hierarchy. But we can at the same time also argue that due to the expansion of mass vernacular education, another large literate audience in vernaculars, mainly in Sinhala, was produced by that same educational context.

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CHAPTER FOUR

TAMILS' VIEWS ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Introduction

There were languages thrust on people because of conquests and invasions under the names of administration, education and political reforms, in addition to proselytization activities. The languages in use in the Jaffna peninsula now, with their peculiarities, bear testimony to the results of the different languages being in contact at different times of history.

The Tamils have lived in Sri Lanka from pre-historic times and they have been concentrated from medieval times in the areas that correspond to the northern and eastern provinces (Pathmanathan). Tamils have occupied Jaffna for at least 2000 years (Tennent). There were several reasons for this. Tamil, which belongs to the Dravidian group of languages concentrated mainly in the southern states of India, had developed in South India before the Christian era: "The most significant role that Jaffna filled in the history of the Tamils in Sri Lanka pertains to the fact that, as the nearest to Tamil Nadu, Jaffna is the first region to come under strong social, cultural and political influences from South India, and Jaffna was occupied by Tamils earlier than the rest of Ceylon" (Ragavan, 48).

English was introduced in Jaffna society under different circumstances and it has gone through different stages from the time the Christian missionaries introduced it. They used English as a tool for their proselytizing purposes. In return, they promised better positions and employment opportunities. As Suseendirajah states in one of his publications:

The use of English became supreme and pervasive in several domains of language use. Under the British rule, as stated earlier, English was the language of administration; it was the language of higher education and the most popular language of school education. Generally, people equated "education" with ability to write and speak English. English was also the language of urban trade, business and island wide advertising in most of these domains, English is still actively used (1992:19).

Christian missionaries in Jaffna

In the present study, the aim is not to give a historical account of the activities of the Christian missionaries in Jaffna in a chronological order. Instead, this study includes the factors that led to the dominant role that English played in the Jaffna Tamil society and its influence on the indigenous languages, particularly the Tamil language.

The American missionary

The American mission provided the opportunity to study English, which opened new avenues for the Jaffna population: "...American missionaries are fully impressed with the importance of rendering English Language the general medium of instruction and of the inestimable value of this acquirement in itself to the people" (Ramanathan 230).

Governor Brown was instrumental in persuading the American missionaries to establish themselves in the Jaffna district. At the time of the arrival of the American missionary, "Jaffna had a population that was linguistically homogenous in that it was wholly Tamil speaking" (Jayasuriya 61). Though the main objective of the missionaries was the propagation of their religious faith, their contribution in the field of education can never be underestimated. The orthodox Jaffna population was attracted by the employment opportunities and better positions in life and they needed English education to achieve them, and English education indirectly or directly demanded conversion to Christianity.

The *Batticotta* (now Vaddukkoaddai) seminary was established in 1827. It was known as the American Mission Seminary: "When the first missionaries came to Jaffna, there were only a few Tamil schools here and there and only a few could read and write with the style on *ola* (flat *palmyrah* leaf), but very few could read the printed character with ease and fluency" (Chelliah, 20). The American mission realized what was needed and established a number of schools in various parts of the peninsula. Of these schools, the Jaffna College, which was established in the seminary premises, is the most prestigious. Kailasapathy observed:

There was something unique in the educational facilities available in Jaffna during the middle of the last century [19th century] that have an important bearing on the relation between Tamil and Western Scholarship... Due to a number of factors, some of which were fortuitous and others intrinsically historical, Jaffna was in the forefront of this renaissance. The

educational contributions of some of the Christian Missionaries in Jaffna too, this efflorescence cannot be exaggerated. (85)

Jaffna society was traditionally male-dominated; education and employment were said to be the sole concern of the men. Another contribution that the missionaries made was the education of the female. Shanthakumary states in her postgraduate diploma thesis that, "Due to the untiring efforts of the Missionaries before the end of 1818, the history of the Jaffna woman turned a fresh page" (19). Furthermore, "English education for women prospered earlier and better in Jaffna than in the South... The Jaffna Female Seminary, a model of women's education in 1864, provided a 'complete English Education' that included French, Drawing, Music, Needle Work and the making of artificial flowers" (Gooneratne 68).

The Wesleyan missionary

The Wesleyan missionary, which consisted of five missionaries, arrived in Sri Lanka in 1814. In time, the Wesleyans were not satisfied with merely supervising schools and teaching English, and so they drew up plans for the establishment of a regular chain of native mission schools. The then Governor, Browning, provided every facility to the mission. According to J.E. Jeyasuriya, the Wesleyan missionary established a large number of "Native schools," as they were called. These schools belonged to three categories: the first type was for the mass of ordinary children, and provided instruction in Sinhalese and Tamil only; the second type was for the children of relatively prosperous parents—generally living within close proximity of mission stations—and provided instruction during part of the day in English; the third type provided education for girls.

The Jaffna Central College was established by the Wesleyan missionary in 1817. The school was earlier known as Jaffna English School. In addition to this, the missionaries established schools in *Vannarpannai*, *Kantherodai* and other places. They opened 121 schools in different parts of the peninsula, which included schools for girls and training colleges to train teachers. But in due time, "They did not support English education and they found it inappropriate for this country".

The Colebrook commission, which was liberal in its approach, recommended, "the English Language taught in the schools was to cease; Tamil should be taught" (Anderson Report 110-13). The *Batticotta* Seminary stopped its activities in the North in 1855. "For thirty-one years it had provided the Ceylonese in general, and the Jaffna Tamils in particular, higher education

that was unique at that time in India and Ceylon” (Kailasapathy 87). This led to the vernacular being the sole medium of instruction in schools.

However, English education continued to flourish even after the missionary activities were curtailed in the peninsula. An important outcome of English education in the region is the emergence of the bilingual society. There were two types of educational institutions: the vernacular and the Anglo-vernacular schools. This trend continued up to the independence of Sri Lanka, and for a few more years after independence in 1948.

Bilingualism in Jaffna

Uriel Weinreich defines bilingualism as “the practice of alternatively using two languages”. The degree of bilingualism varies from person to person. Sandra Lee McKay’s term “bilingual users of English” may be used to describe individuals who use English as a second language alongside one or more other languages they speak. Native speakers of English use English for all their communicative needs; bilingual users of English typically use English for more restricted and formal purposes. There is a tremendous variety in language ability among bilingual English speakers, with some speaking English like native speakers and others having a limited English proficiency that meets their particular “communicative needs” (McKay, 46).

As already stated, the role and status of English changed drastically after the dawn of independence in Sri Lanka. But, according to Suseendrarajah, “English continued to be the official language even in free Sri Lanka until 1956 when Sinhala was made the official language” (1994). This was because the native languages were not ready to replace English. However, the general utility value of English within the national context was relatively very much reduced. The place given to Tamil in school education automatically relegated English and limited its role to the school curriculum. The need for learning English for many people is more than employment-oriented and is optional rather than obligatory.

In explaining bilingualism, most of the experts in linguistics refer to the primary dominant language as L_1 and the secondary language as L_2 . With Tamil being the dominant language, English plays a secondary role and its use is limited to certain domains. Due to the strong interference of the second language, there is what is known as code-mixing and code-switching, which are the features of lower level bilingualism.

Another important feature of Tamil-English bilingualism is the phenomenon of passive or receptive bilingualism, which may be defined as the ability to listen or read and understand the language to a certain level, and the lack of ability in productive skills, such as speaking and writing. This situation is very common among bilinguals in Jaffna society today. Hockett refers to this as "Semilingualism" (16).

It is quite fitting, at this stage, to make an observation that there aren't any English monolinguals among the natives of Jaffna society at the moment. English-speaking families are very rare. In recent times, we have seen certain families who have migrated to western countries such as England, US, New Zealand, Canada and Australia sometimes speak to their children in English, which is typical, considering those are English-speaking countries. Balanced bilingualism, that is, the ability to use both Tamil and English with equal ease and fluency, is also not very common. It is fitting to quote Susendrarajah here. In his 1992 paper, "English in Modern Sri Lankan Tamil Society - A Sociolinguistic appraisal," he referred to the use of English in Jaffna society in the following way: "Language is essentially a social activity, but social use of English is... almost a myth" (20). Many who profess to be bilinguals have only a manageable knowledge of English.

Bilingualism exists only among certain sections or groups of people in the Jaffna Society. These include professionals, like doctors, engineers or lawyers, and teachers of English. Their proficiency in English in most cases is wanting in many respects. It is noticeable that these people have had English education at some stage and, in addition to this, it is necessary for them to perform certain functions in English. But on the whole, English has a smaller functional role than Tamil now. Tamil monolinguals outnumber bilinguals in the Jaffna Tamil society.

Kachru, referring to bilingualism in Sri Lanka, set up "the cline of bilingualism to rank bilinguals in terms of their proficiency in English" quoted by Kandiah (1979, 75) (Kachru 1965, 393). This is a kind of scale running from absolute monolingualism at one end, through varying degrees of bilingualism to absolute ambilingualism at the other. Kachru also defined "a standard Indian English bilingual" in functional terms, that is, in terms of his "capacity to use English effectively for social control in all those social activities in which English is used in India". This is true of Sri Lankan bilinguals and he further points out that bilingualism is a "rare if not impossible phenomenon" (1965, 394-5). In reality, what we see in Jaffna Tamil bilingualism is passive bilingualism.

It is necessary to look at the circumstances that have brought about these irrevocable changes. The primary reason for the decline in the use of English in most parts of Sri Lanka, including Jaffna, is that the social conditions which demanded the use of English changed drastically after Sri Lanka's independence. Suseendirajah, in one of his many works on Jaffna Tamil, states: "English became socially restrictive and did not meet the need for popular participation. The day to day use of English in the Tamil society was reduced. Today except in the capital city and in one or two other major towns, it is difficult to witness English in active use" (1992, 22).

He continues to state that:

even among the older generation who had their education through English, the need for the use of English has declined considerably. They have given up using English in their conversations and writings as they did earlier because the younger generation is not in a position to respond in English. In fact, the percentage of people who read in English too has become very low. Among the Jaffna Tamil population, the regional and national Tamil newspapers command the highest circulation as against the national English newspapers and there isn't any English newspaper published in Jaffna at present (23).

One would have naturally expected the English language to lose its importance with the dawn of independence and the subsequent events, such as the Government's implementation of 'Swabasha' (mother tongue) as the medium of instruction in all schools from kindergarten up to university in 1956, and the Government taking control of schools in 1960. Of course, English was relegated to the background in a few spheres like parliamentary politics and state administration. English was no longer required to carry out matters of national interest in the parliament, and even people without any knowledge of English contested in parliamentary elections and took part in the political activities of the Government. English continued its reign in certain other spheres, and its importance is said to be even greater because of the incredible advances in information technology.

English in Tamil Society

The Christian missionaries established several schools in the Jaffna peninsula. The Tamils in Sri Lanka learned English earlier than the Sinhalese because English education became very popular in the Tamil areas, particularly in Jaffna, from the time it was introduced. It became an

industry in Jaffna. For a Jaffna man, completion of the Senior or Junior School Certificate examination of the London University as an external candidate was a great achievement.

In the schools, all the subjects except Tamil were taught in English. Whatever degree of command the students gained in English expression or comprehension could be attributed to the medium used for instruction, rather than through direct instruction from their English teachers in the English language and grammar. In terms of language proficiency, the emphasis was mostly on 'full' language, aiming at native or near native control in writing English. English was taught mostly through the written medium. Students had some contact with British dialects of English; schools used books printed in Great Britain for teaching English and other subjects. Books were abundantly available at an affordable price. At that time, English flourished in the midst of native speakers of Sri Lanka. High officials in the Government services were British. In most Christian schools, principals were native speakers of English. "Speak in English" remained a rule in most Christian schools. Students were fined when they were found speaking in Tamil within school premises. In some schools, students were caned for using their mother tongue within earshot of the headmaster or principal. With regard to English pronunciation, schools made efforts to maintain a Sri Lankan standard pronunciation. For instance, the Tamils never bothered to learn the complex rules for the placement of stress in English words.

The curriculum in the schools were mostly oriented towards western culture. School children learnt English primarily because it was compulsory. At the same time, however, they also had sufficient motivation to learn English. English had become an indispensable tool for higher education and for intellectual pursuits. English served as the only ladder to high positions, and without English no one could have thought of any remarkable achievement in public life. Therefore, school children devoted a good deal of their attention to the mastery of English, up to the standard required for bettering their prospects in life.

During British rule, literacy in English was higher in Jaffna than elsewhere in the island. As a result, Jaffna Tamils were in an advantageous position to get a good number of jobs in the Government service. They were also in a position to go to distant countries, like the former federated Malayan states, Singapore, and Burma where they could get different positions in the Government service, some of which were very lucrative. Some of the migrants returned to Sri Lanka as pensioners, especially after the Second

World War, while others preferred to settle down as citizens of those countries. Most descendants of the latter group have now almost severed close connections with Jaffna.

British culture imbibed through language gained prestige in the society. The urban elite, particularly the converted Christians, were very keen to adopt western culture in food habits, dress, social etiquette etc. A change in cultural outlook naturally required knowledge of English. For instance, at that time anyone in trousers in Jaffna was deemed to have had an English education. No one without an adequate knowledge of English ever dared to wear trousers in Jaffna.

English education divided the society linguistically into two—the bilinguals and the monolinguals—and widened the gap between the elite and the masses. Bilinguals differed among themselves in their command of English. Their command ranged from good fluency to a smattering knowledge of English. The use of English in one's day-to-day life was governed by one's proficiency in English as well as the circumstantial needs that required its use. The different categories of bilinguals who had a fairly good command of English used it in conversations among themselves at home, in work places and in public. They used English mostly in transactional situations such as shopping, banking and travelling by public transport. They did their letter-writing and other correspondence in English. They mostly read English newspapers and books and listened to English broadcasts over the radio. Information broadcasted or written in English was considered more authentic and detailed in coverage.

Among Tamils, English prevailed as the group language in the social and religious life of converted Protestant Christians and Catholic elites. For several Christian families, English was the home language. Most Christians preferred to be known and addressed by their biblical names.

Code-switching and code-mixing were lower levels of bilingualism used mostly among those bilinguals who did not use English. Either or both of these levels were used in certain instances, like discussing matters perceived as causing embarrassment—pregnancy, delivery, abortion, etc—particularly in the presence of both sexes.

Bilingualism in English helped speakers earn some esteem in the society, particularly among monolinguals. In social situations, people spoke English in common or public places intentionally to assert superiority over monolinguals. People, especially those who were in the lower hierarchy in

society, took pride and pleasure in exhibiting their fluency in English in contexts where they felt that others thought them to be totally ignorant of English. That was a time when it was considered a source of shame not to know English. Even a beggar who spoke English got more than one who spoke Tamil. People thus used English because it gave a more educated impression of the speaker.

There were also some bilinguals who felt shy to speak Tamil in public. A small section of society neglected their mother tongue and when situations demanded of them to speak in Tamil, they either declined to speak, pleading ignorance, or spoke Tamil with an alien accent and strange sentence constructions. In a way, they took pride in doing so. On the whole, the English-educated were thus looked upon as the elite and, though they were a minority, they were considered a privileged class with power and influence.

Due to all these factors, all monolinguals as well as bilinguals were conscious of the importance and inevitability of English in their life. Consequently, English was kept alive in the social environs and it was by far the most prestigious and privileged language in almost all walks of life during the British period.

Tamil monolinguals experienced a lot of language difficulties. They had to depend on people who were knowledgeable in English for various matters. They sought the help of those who knew English to be able to understand even telegrams, because telegraphic messages were then only possible through English.

During British rule, English had manifold impacts—some of them beneficial and others detrimental—on the native languages and on the lives of people in general. No doubt English served as a window for higher education, scientific and technological advancement and wider knowledge. It served as the language of intellectual status, commerce and diplomacy. It was (and is) the tool of international understanding. It has left indelible marks on the native languages, resulting in changes to these very languages. Contact with English has caused the syntax, various styles of expressions and lexicon in Tamil to expand to cater to the needs of modern society. Some English words have been fully assimilated and reached the masses. English has influenced both the thought-content of some of our modern literature and the norms for our modern form of language and literature. The impact of English on the development of Tamil prose is great. Bilingual dictionaries, grammars, encyclopedias and other works of

knowledge appeared in our language due to contact with English. For a certain stratum of society, English helped their national mobility. It was an inter-ethnic unifying force too. On the other hand, the indomitable place afforded to English in almost all domains of language use hindered and retarded the growth and development of native languages. The importance given to English had made people believe for a long time that the native languages were inadequate and ineffective for any progress in higher education, science and technology. People rarely realized that, in early times, Tamils who were monolinguals achieved great skills in areas like building and irrigational engineering. The Tamil language served adequately for all purposes in such areas of technology. With the dawn of foreign domination, that adequacy of language was not perpetuated nor improved for posterity. Native speakers made no efforts to experiment with the use of Tamil in various new domains. Foreign domination made the people feel that there wasn't any need for such activities. Further, some aspects of the alien culture and alien values imbibed through English, which is a vehicle of western culture, destroyed some aspects of our own traditional culture and values. English was also associated with the evangelical zeal of the missionaries and with colonial power. The Bible was taught in the English classes and Christian teachers insisted that one had to read the Bible in order to improve one's English, not realizing that modern English is different from Biblical English. So, no wonder a section of the people developed a kind of passive hatred towards the English language.

Language became a sensitive issue in the political arena and the Sinhala radicals championed the use of "Sinhala only" as the official language, barely realizing that language evokes strong sentiments and that it can unite as well divide the nation. Within 24 hours of forming the Government, the cry for "Sinhala only" and the election propaganda that "Sinhala only" would be made the official language of the country in place of English won massive votes in a general election for a political party in 1956; soon, Sinhala was made the official language in Sri Lanka much against the expectations of Tamils. Politically, it was a highly divisive move. It was detrimental to Tamils in many ways. It created an explosive linguistic situation and it was the beginning of bitter struggles between Sinhalese and Tamils. Tamils felt insulted that their language was being rejected and that they were being made second class citizens in the country because it denied them equality in language use. Tamils feared that the position taken by the Government could cause the loss of Tamil language and culture in Sri Lanka in the long run. The loyalty of Tamils to the language and culture in the north and east of Sri Lanka was so strong that,

at least in the northern and eastern provinces, Tamil should have been made the language of administration. Language remained a burning issue for a very long period. The Tamils' agitation in democratic ways failed to bear fruit for a long time. Emotional Sinhala masses could not put up with these agitations. To curb the agitations, the Sinhalese resorted to violence, and in May and June 1958 there were communal clashes, resulting in bloodshed, communal disharmony and hatred between Sinhalese and Tamils. The Tamil language issue, coupled with a few other major issues like standardization in higher education and colonization by Sinhala people in traditional Tamil areas, subsequently culminated in a civil war between the Tamils and the Sinhalese.

English in School Education

After independence, language in education was very much discussed. The mother tongue was considered the best for one's education, especially at the primary level. Educationists realized that the linguistic capacity of an individual, especially productive and receptive capacity, gets manifested completely through the use of mother tongue alone. Tamils were also given the privilege of having their education in schools through Tamil. There were discussions of the problems of replacing English as the medium of instruction and consequent measures were taken to prepare teaching materials in native languages. The Government provided maximum facilities for the use of Sinhala in school education, but relatively sufficient encouragement and adequate facilities were not provided for the use of Tamil. The Government perhaps felt that the Tamils in Sri Lanka could import educational materials in Tamil from Tamil Nadu in India, not realizing that in spite of the core of language and culture being the same, the Sri Lankan Tamils have their own traditions in language and culture that, in time, have become significantly different from the Indian ones. If Americans have developed an American variety of English, it is difficult to understand why the Tamils of Sri Lanka cannot develop their own variety of Tamil and why the Government should not give encouragement to it.

For some time, people questioned the standard of education gained through the mother tongue and suspected it to be low. First, art subjects were taught through native languages. The doubts and questions surrounding the efficiency of the native language for science education were more prominent. Due to political pressure, mainly from Sinhala nationalists, science too was introduced through native languages in

schools. Constant use and improvement in the uses of the Sinhala and Tamil languages have made them adequate and efficient today to serve as media of instruction for all subjects, arts as well as science, up to the G.C.E. (A.L.) classes. A fairly good number of science text books in Tamil are available for use in the above classes, and some of them have been written by university dons. Nowadays, no one seriously doubts the knowledge gained in these subjects at the A.L. Students who do well in the A.L. examination are on par with any British G.C.E. (A.L.) student as far as the knowledge of subjects is concerned, of course giving due allowance for the differences in the two types of syllabi. This is evident from the performance of Sri Lankan Tamil students who join British universities after passing the Sri Lankan advanced level examination.

The Tamil language has certainly been promoted and developed to meet several new demands in school education. There have been attempts to enlarge the functions of Tamil with the intention to develop and modernize it. The contribution towards this was more through private efforts than through Government ones. The compulsory use of Tamil in school education inspired prospective authors to write books competitively on different subjects in Tamil, and these authors were also able to earn some money. Students bought these books unhesitatingly because they were desperate for good books in the Tamil medium. One should herein consider the number of books, mainly examination-oriented texts, that have become available on science and other subjects. To this restricted extent, the writings on science in Tamil are a great success. Until they were written, people were mostly made to believe that subjects like science, politics, law, etc. could not be taught, learnt and discussed in Tamil. This blind idea, which was once cherished by some of the advocates of English, was now proven wrong. Today, an ordinary man can read and discuss internal politics in his language. There are court cases conducted in Tamil or Sinhala.

The place Tamil was given in school education automatically relegated English to a lower position and limited its role in the school curriculum. Today, its role is at a low ebb. As a result of this, English was relegated to a lower position in a few other related domains too. On the whole, English has a smaller functional role than Tamil now. And if not for the decreased use of English, Tamil would certainly not have gained its present status and developed to its present position in school education.

After some years passed, and now after fifty years of independence, we can see a clear gradual decline in the standard of English in our schools

and universities. The decline was inevitable. Social conditions that demanded the use of English gradually changed. This is the prime factor that led to the decline in the use of English. English became socially restrictive and did not meet the need for popular participation. The day-to-day use of English in Tamil society was reduced. Today, except in the capital city and in one or two other major towns, it is difficult to witness English in active use. Even the generation that had its education through English has now almost given up using English in their conversations and writings as they did earlier, because younger generations are not in a position to respond in English. It is presently difficult to speak of any community in Jaffna that has English as its group language in social life, though earlier there were some groups like the Protestant Christian community and a small Burgher community. The number of English-speaking households is now meager among Tamils. English movies are not popular among Tamils, nor are the English programs on television and radio. The percentage of people who read in English has gone down too. Among Tamils, regional and national Tamil newspapers command the highest circulation as against the national English newspapers. There weren't any English daily newspapers that were regionally published.

Among Tamils, the impulse to use their mother tongue seems to be great. Tamil monolinguals have a sentimental attachment to Tamil. The ordinary man was waiting for an opportunity to use Tamil in contexts where English dominated. The monolinguals always out-numbered the bilinguals in our society. All these monolinguals welcomed the opportunities the use of Tamil provided. In contrast, the requirements of English learning became fewer. Now English is no longer a prerequisite for any Government job. Legally, one is no longer required to use English in any official function.

School situation

In the school curriculum, students' only contact with English now is during the period when English is taught. All other subjects are taught through native languages. The training provided in English in schools is not adequate for the students to express their thoughts intelligibly in speech or writing. Students in schools seldom use English for writing or speaking outside the English class. Intense code-switching, which remained a mark of education among students and adults earlier, is seldom observable in modern society. Nowadays, code-switching is limited to

English words only. English phrases or sentences are seldom code-switched into Tamil.

What we witness among most of the students today is passive bilingualism, that is, students mostly grow up able to understand some English, but not able to speak any English. Language is essentially a social activity, but social use of English is now almost a myth to our students. Seldom do they get a chance to manage small group conversations in English on formal or informal occasions.

Learning English is time consuming, especially when there is no reinforcement from the environment. There is an important factor that prevents even students who may be keen to improve their English, namely the fact that the educational system in the country is so demanding and highly competitive that students devote their entire leisure to get help in tuition classes in private institutions to improve their aptitude in their regular subjects taught through Tamil. It is particularly so as students advance to higher classes. Students are aware that they would be dropping English as a subject for examination after the G.C.E.O.L. class. Even while in the G.C.E.O.L. class, they concentrate more on the subjects they propose to offer in the A.L. classes. University entrance is so competitive that students in the A.L. classes don't pay attention to English learning. After school hours and during weekends, students' study in a tense situation and do not get motivated to study English. Where is the time for them to learn English patiently when they have to run from one subject to another, sometimes taking tuition for a subject under two or more teachers in different tutorials? They usually stick to a couple of books in their mother tongue to learn their subjects. Their mother tongue satisfies all their requirements at examinations. They seldom use the library. School libraries mostly have books only in Tamil.

Failure to get a pass in English does not bar students from proceeding to the A.L. class. Usually the tendency is either for them to neglect English as a subject or to be examination oriented and manage to get a narrow pass in English. Also, the model of the question paper at examinations does not provide any orientation for any active use of English. Even students who get a distinction in English are unable to use it in society when occasions demand. Teachers also complain that students can use English while in the classroom but fail to use it well outside. This is the distinction between 'grammatical' and 'communicative' competence. Students acquire the one without the other.

Students find it difficult to comprehend complex structures in advanced books of the subjects they study when the books are written in English. They also find it difficult to listen to formal and serious lectures or discussions in English and understand them full well. This is true even with students who get a distinction in English at the G.C.E.O.L. examination. So, generally, students consider English a hard subject. They don't seem to enjoy learning English and do not get an urge to learn it at the school level. In fact, we are at the stage when most students bluntly declare that "that is a big headache; we won't get it". The ease or difficulty of learning English or something else is not merely related to the nature of the task, but also has components of motivation, intelligence, aptitude, quality of teaching and teaching materials; more importantly, it depends upon the expectations the learner has of success. It also depends on the formal linguistic differences between English and his home language, that is, Tamil. In other words, the problems he faces are as much social, cultural and psychological as they are linguistic. Students may be taught that no language is inherently difficult. Difficulty is a function of the relation between languages, and is not inherent in a language itself. Students must be told that, by considering English difficult, it may become difficult.

At this juncture, we must note that many students have begun to feel that they could study in Tamil, and work, earn and prosper in life comfortably. The motivation behind language learning is either the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity or the solution of economic problems. Today, the pattern of life in our society is such that only a very few learn English for intellectual satisfaction. Within Sri Lanka, one's mother tongue can satisfy one's private or public linguistic needs in one's life. The importance of English for the people depends on the need for it. Due to historical reasons, English has become internationally important. No one doubts it and there isn't any need to labor to prove it. But the international importance of English appears to have little bearing on the life of most people in Sri Lanka. The importance of English within our national context should not be over-emphasized. It may provoke the Tamil nationalists. We should have a clear perspective and a correct assessment of the demand for English in our social interactions, politics, education, and other contexts. Language needs an important factor to link education with society.

Students

There are also students who feel confident that, if necessity arises, they would and could pick up English or any other language in the world for all practical purposes. In recent times, many young people among the Tamils have gone to foreign countries like the U.K, France, Germany, Sweden, etc. without knowing the language of the country, yet manage to learn the language after going there. They never gave weight to formally learning these alien languages in their native land. In most countries, native speakers of different languages, particularly native speakers of English in Britain, are very tolerant of linguistic deviation in a foreign speaker. The British seldom attempt to correct a foreigner's non-standard forms and are not offended by them. Among Tamils, there are a few dons who had formally studied languages such as Japanese, Russian and French after going to the respective countries to write dissertations for their post-graduate programs. Dons who had their education from kindergarten to university degree in the Tamil medium have gone to the United Kingdom or the U.S. or to Australia for post-graduate studies and have successfully written their theses in English—of course, with the assistance of supervisors and tutors—and obtained their doctorates. All these possibilities can create some psychological impact on students aspiring to use English in post-graduate studies abroad. To discover that other possibilities exist for learning and using English is, for most students, a liberating factor at the school level or university level.

All new university entrants are now required to follow a pre-university course in English called GELT (General English Language Teaching) for six months. The effectiveness of this course is yet to be investigated. English is formally taught to students following courses in arts in the University of Jaffna, but not to others.

Let us now pose an important question: is the knowledge of English of the new entrants sufficient for them to “manage” their university education in general, or rather sufficient to build up a standard generally required in university education? The obvious answer is “no”. Generally speaking, even those students who score one hundred percent in their first English test in the university are not fully suited for university education. They score such high marks because of the type of test. Then, what will be the plight of those who score fewer marks and who may have to follow their courses only through English? Naturally, they would have a lot of difficulty in lucidly expressing their thoughts in writing or speech. Usually their “thinking” and discussions with colleagues take place in Tamil.

Certainly, they will find it difficult to change the language habits they developed in Tamil, from childhood through schooldays, to English suddenly at university level, even though English words are interposed in discussions.

All schools officially attempt to maintain a certain standard in English up to the G.C.E.O.L.; English is dropped in the A.L. classes. This being so, how is it that students are "able" to follow some types of courses in English, but not others in the university? Someone might argue that usually the most intelligent students go for medicine or engineering or science and therefore they are able to follow the course in English. But language is a matter of habit; usually English is not formally taught in the medical and science faculties, for instance in the University of Jaffna. The usual reason given for not teaching English is that students won't have time. Herein it is worth analyzing if a different quantum of English is required in different courses of study in the university. Requirements and expectations of English use may differ from discipline to discipline.

Grammaticality (i.e. grammatical well-formedness) of language, and language style, such as presentation of facts, appropriate choice of words from a large repertoire, idiomatic use, turn of phrase, types of sentences employed and correct spelling of words, are all important in evaluating answer scripts in arts, humanities and social sciences. No doubt what one says is more important, but how one says it can strengthen or weaken what one says. In social science, almost every word is value loaded. That is why it is generally considered difficult to translate books on social sciences. Some may think that science books are more difficult to be translated than social science books. Science terminology can cause difficulty, but once equivalents are found translation may proceed because most sentences are declarative sentences with little culture loading. The difficulty of communicating one's ideas, when written in poor English, seems greater in arts or social sciences. If one's expressions are poor, even context may not help the reader to understand the writer's point of view. This can happen in science subjects too, but the difficulties they cause may be relatively fewer. This may be the main reason why arts students, whose school background in English is more or less the same as that of the students doing medicine, engineering or science, are unable to use English effectively in university education.

In professional courses and in science education, teachers usually pay little attention to the grammaticality of students' language. Quality of language is not considered when evaluating answer scripts. Students are not forced

to pay much attention to poor expressions and language errors, and they do not lose marks for poor English. Formally, teachers do not take a serious view about the language used by students. This reflects a more tolerant attitude towards language errors than was true a few generations ago. Students are perhaps beginning to be judged more by what they say and less by whether they conform to the norms of Standard English. This is detrimental in a way because students get accustomed to the wrong use of the language and become insensitive and indifferent to the use of bad English throughout their courses. They complete their course but with English language deficiency as an indelible mark. They may not get a formal chance to improve their English after leaving the university. Sometimes, the need arises for them or others to seek special concessions based on their language deficiency. This situation cannot be even visualized in a course in arts or social sciences. Without a good command of English, it will be extremely difficult for a student to complete his course successfully in subjects like political science or sociology in the English medium.

If English has survived in Sri Lanka, it is not merely because it is the language of the elite or the language of the developed countries of the world, but more because of its widespread use in the world and consequently, its practical usefulness for us. According to David Graddol, “Today over 84 percent of the internet servers are English medium followed by 4.5 % German and 3.1% Japanese” (50). These figures clearly demonstrate that one needs to know English today in order to access and contribute to both printed and electronic information. Finally, access to higher education in many countries is dependent on the knowledge of English.

It is often said that Lankan English is sometimes “bookish” in the sense that speakers of English use sentences that they find in books. If we elaborate on this, we can say that they are unable to distinguish between formal language and informal language. To put it in another way, they are unable to distinguish between written English and spoken English. Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik point out that “the grammar of spoken sentences is, in general, simpler and less strictly constructed than the grammar of written sentences” (15). It is true that if we speak the way we write, people will laugh at us. This is true of any language for that matter.

Kachru speaks of two reasons for what he calls the ‘bookishness’ of South Asian English (SAE) which, as stated earlier, includes India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (*The Indianization* 41). The first is that in both

spoken and written mediums SAE users tend to use certain lexical items and grammatical constructions which either have been dropped or are less frequent in modern English. The second reason, in a way, stems from first: spoken SAE does not sound conversational, as the spoken medium has seldom been taught as an academic discipline in the South Asian educational system. Thus, the SAE speakers are not conscious of the characteristics of spoken English, for example, the contracted forms. What Kachru says is true of the English used in Jaffna Tamil society even now. They are not taught by native teachers any longer as in the period before independence. Many of the students seem to have no option but to follow the book, or rather what is found in the book, as the model. Therefore, Kachru quotes Mathai who argues that the English used in Jaffna is "always inclined to be bookish and not adequately in touch with the living English of the day" (*The Indianization* 41).

If one looks at the situation of English education in schools, a few private schools take this up as a challenge and maintain the standard of English instruction with limited human and physical resources. For example, St. John's College, St. Patrick's College, Chundikuli Girls High School, English Convent in Jaffna, and Uduvil Girls High School impart better English language instruction to the urban elite in Jaffna. This is evident in their students' performances in G.C.E.(O/L) and (A/L) in the recent past.

Unlike the Portuguese and the Dutch languages, the history of the English language in Sri Lanka captured a diverse turn. Gradually, it influenced and took root in the society from the time the British established political power in Sri Lanka. British rule in Sri Lanka began in 1796 and ended in 1947. The long period of stable and powerful rule enabled the English language to become a politically and economically superimposed language. Even after independence, indigenous governments that were in power from time to time could not get rid of the English language totally. It functions as a link language (*lingua franca*) among the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka and functions as a uniting power. It serves as the medium of communication at the national and international levels (electronic media and press media). It is also the language of international trade. Though education is imparted in the mother tongue of the students at the tertiary level in Sri Lanka, the use of English appears to be still indispensable in fields of study like advanced science, technology, medicine, engineering, etc. All these factors continue to generate a great demand for the use and learning of English in Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

To conclude, Sri Lanka, during its time as a crown colony of Britain and even in the post-independence era, had the English Language in an elevated position as the emblem of a privileged class, thus marginalizing the monolingual Sinhala- or Tamil-speaking majority of the country. During British rule, the English Language became the supreme vehicle of social mobility. The importance given to the vernacular languages in national affairs, politics, administration and education had its effect on the standard and quality of English used among the bilinguals in Jaffna society. The future language use in Tamil society, on speculation—and from the evidence available—shows that the attitude towards the English language has been changing positively.

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CHAPTER FIVE

MUSLIMS' AND BURGHERS' VIEWS ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Introduction

Muslims, who were a minor community under British rule in this island, underwent a period of changes and development in their political, social, economic and cultural spheres. One hundred and fifty-two years of British rule in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) from 1796 to 1948 A.D. marked an era where Ceylon, as a colony of the Second British Empire, gradually advanced to a self-governing, independent nation of dominion under the British Commonwealth of nations. The ruler and the ruled clearly understood that all the communities in the Colony should develop together if any type of freedom was to be enjoyed by the people once the nation was set free by the masters who had governed them for a long time. Consequently, one group in particular—the Muslims—contributed towards the attainment of political independence for Ceylon while maintaining their separate identity.

It is interesting to note that the Dutch, who suppressed and oppressed the Muslims during their rule in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), accepted them as loyal citizens at the tail end of their period. The British, who took over the maritime provinces of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) from the Dutch, inherited a country with a plural society which included a Sinhalese majority, and Tamils, Dutch Burghers, Muslims and Malays as minorities.

This chapter deals with the historical development of ethnic identity among Sri Lankan Muslims. It traces how a culturally conscious religious community gradually transformed itself into a strong politically-motivated ethnic community in Sri Lanka. It argues that Muslim identity is a reactive politico-cultural ideology that has been constructed and developed in relation to and as a response to the Sinhala and Tamil ethno-nationalistic ideologies throughout the colonial and postcolonial periods.

Whatever the opinions of the elite on the issue of the mother tongue of Sri Lankan Muslims, many of them speak Tamil as their mother tongue and use it for their in-group communication wherever they live. However, the socio-linguistic situation of Sri Lankan Muslims varies from place to place according to their population distribution and their class division. The Muslims, who are distributed in a scattered fashion predominantly in the Sinhala-speaking areas in the south, are mostly bilingual, speaking Tamil and Sinhala with equal fluency, and most of them, especially the older generation, invariably use Tamil as their home language and for their in-group communication. However, their mother tongue or home language is Tamil, and only upper-class Muslims tend to use Sinhala, or in rare cases try to use English, as their home language.

Muslims, by their strict adherence to their religious conviction and practices, avoided secular education under colonial rule; hence, they were shut out of all benefices of colonial rule under the Portuguese, Dutch, and to some extent under the British. Perhaps they were not wrong when they shied away from the educational establishments of the foreigners. But when, under the British, the educational system shed its proselytizing zeal and when English education became key to employment, social prestige and political power, Muslims appeared to be the most backward community in the country educationally. Education was an obvious influence on incomes at a certain stage, especially during British times. Education was the weakest point for Muslims and because either college or university education during the British era meant an income above the national average (whatever that average might be) to those who possessed it, Muslims continued to suffer materially under the British. Today, petrodollars have wiped out this advantage to most educated people because of the availability of employment for the illiterate, unskilled and skilled labour of various grades and of technical ability.

A few upper-class Muslims and a growing portion of the younger generation tend to use Sinhala or English as their home language. There was a family who sent their children to an English medium international school and their children communicated English or Sinhala with them. But they communicated their own language, Tamil, only with a servant girl who was a Tamil from the plantation. The family commented that they speak good Tamil, not like the Tamil that Muslims speak. This comment both exposed their attitude towards the Tamil that Muslims speak, and expressed self-pity about their own speech. Among the school-going generation who study in the Sinhala medium, there is a growing tendency to use Sinhala as their first language and speak in Sinhala even with their

Muslim friends and parents. They do not read and write Tamil, which shows a shift in their mother tongue.

The northern and eastern Muslims are mostly monolinguals and speak only Tamil as their mother tongue. Few of them are bilingual or trilingual in Sinhala and/or English in addition to their home language, Tamil. But they use neither Sinhala nor English as their home language or for their in-group communication. The linguistic attitudes and the language loyalty of the Muslims of the north-eastern and southern provinces differ according to their socio-linguistic situation.

For the Muslims to look upon English as their mother tongue merely because they have been given the option of having their children taught in English is just fiction, if not a myth. This myth is effectively exploded when we study the linguistic background of the Muslims of Ceylon. English is rarely ever considered a home language in Muslim households. Several Muslim homes are bilingual, but even among them the language of ordinary intercourse is not English. Thus, there is neither logic nor realism in the attitudes of the Muslims who are determined to continue to exercise their option in favour of English.

Azeez, a pragmatist and a realist, who hailed from the monolingual north, knew the difficulty of changing the mother tongue of the northern and eastern Muslims and he said:

...some tempted to advocate Arabic as the future mother tongue and others Sinhalese and still others English. These advocates do not, however, come from the northern and eastern parts of Ceylon where no doubt of any kind is entertained as regards the future status of Tamil. Even if it is accepted for argument's sake that the change in the mother tongue is indicated, the difficulties of the transformation are insuperable. ("The Ceylon Muslims")

Sri Lankan Muslims, the third largest ethnic community in Sri Lanka, have been coexisting and interacting harmoniously with other major ethnic communities in this country for many centuries, beginning from the medieval period. They were treated very well under the Sinhala kings in the pre-colonial period. They settled in the coastal commercial towns of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) during this period and engaged mainly in trade and commerce. The Muslims of Sri Lanka were merely a silent cultural community without a politically-driven separate ethnic identity until the beginning of the modern era, which is marked by the semi-capitalist transformation of Sri Lankan society during the 19th century under British rule.

There has been a growing tendency among southern Muslims to switch over to the Sinhala medium in education during the last two or three decades. At present, nearly 20% of the Muslim student population speak in the Sinhala medium. It will definitely increase in the future. At present, there is a considerable Muslim youth population in the south who use Sinhala for their in-group communication and do not read or write in Tamil due to Sinhala medium education. In the future, this may lead to the emergence of a new Sinhala-speaking Muslim community in the south. In 1948, Azeez, the first Muslim civil servant and a respected Muslim scholar from Jaffna, warned the Muslim community not to choose Sinhala as the medium of education for their children. He stated that if they chose to do so, in the future it would divide the community into two different linguistic groups. Fifty years after his warning, the situation is close to what he predicted. If this tendency prevails for some time, one can foresee that the community will be divided into two different linguistic communities within another fifty years. However, the choice of Sinhala medium is not merely a natural preference for the southern Muslims. Because they are a thinly scattered minority in the south, they cannot maintain either good Tamil medium schools or enough of them in their vicinity, and the state is reluctant to provide them sufficient material resources for their continued education in Tamil. Since education has become a tool for upward social mobility, they are compelled to send their children to Sinhala medium schools (Nuhman 6).

Southern and North-Eastern Muslims differ also in their language loyalties. The bi-lingual Southern Muslims mostly use Tamil for their in-group communication and Sinhala for other purposes due to social necessity. Their language loyalty towards Tamil is naturally not so strong, but most of the monolingual North-Eastern Muslims consider Tamil as their mother tongue and it is the only tool for their personal and socio-political communication. This diversity was reflected in parliament in 1956 when the Sinhala-only Bill was debated. The Colombo-based, bilingual Southern Muslim political leadership supported the bill while the Northern and Eastern Muslims opposed it.

Muslim Identity: Religious or Ethnic

In the Sri Lankan context, Sinhalese and Tamil ethnicities are marked by their languages, Sinhala and Tamil respectively. Each of these ethnic groups includes a minority religious group—that is: Christian, Catholic or Protestant. Sinhala Buddhists and Sinhala Christians are primarily identified

as Sinhalese by their language. In the same way Tamil Hindus and Tamil Christians are primarily identified as Tamils, because they choose Tamil language as their primary ethnic marker. But Sri Lankan Muslims behave differently. Although they are also linguistically Tamils like the Tamil Christians and speak Tamil as their mother tongue or home language, not only in the north and east but also in the interior Sinhala villages in the south, they do not want to be identified themselves by others as Tamils. They reject linguistic identity and choose religion as their primary ethnic marker. Ethnicity and religion are inseparable as far as the Sri Lankan Muslims are concerned. In the Sri Lankan context, it is clear that the Muslims constitute not only a religious category but also an ethnic category. Hence, the term “Muslims” is used to refer to both religion and ethnicity.

Ethnicity or ethnic identity is neither given by others nor inherently natural to a community. It is constructed by the community for itself in accordance with its socio-political conditions. Sri Lankan Muslims constructed their identity on religious lines rejecting Tamil language as their ethnic marker. In this respect, we can see a distinct contrast between the Tamil-speaking Muslims of the southern part of India (Tamil Nadu) and those of Sri Lanka. Although, these communities speak Tamil as their mother tongue, the Tamil Nadu Muslims never hesitate to refer to themselves as Tamils, because they are linguistically Tamils. But referring to a Tamil-speaking Sri Lankan Muslim as a Tamil has become a social taboo because the historical experiences of these communities are different. In Tamil Nadu, unlike in Sri Lanka, the Muslim community did not face any major challenges from the Tamil majority, economically and politically, since the Muslims were not a competing community in Tamil Nadu as in north India. Therefore, Tamil Nadu Muslims have not rejected the label of *Islamiyat Tamilar* (Islamic Tamil) so far.

A Sri Lankan Muslim feels uncomfortable when he hears a respectable Tamil Nadu Muslim calling himself a Tamil in a public meeting. Similarly, for Tamil-speaking Hindus and Muslims in Tamil Nadu, it is very difficult to understand the conflict between Hindus and Muslims in Sri Lanka, because they know only of Hindu-Muslim conflicts. In Tamil Nadu, the contrast is between Hindus and Muslims, which is clearly based on religion. But in the Sri Lankan context, the contrast is between Tamils and Muslims or Sinhalese and Muslims. This contrast is not between the same categories of religion, as in Hindus and Muslims, or of language, as in Sinhala and Tamil, but between two different categories of language and religion. This clearly shows that the ethnicity of Sri Lankan Muslims

is not defined by language, as in the case of Sinhalese and Tamils, but by religion. That is why Sri Lankan Muslims have been giving more importance to their language.

Sri Lankan Muslims have co-existed and interacted harmoniously with other major communities in this country for centuries, from the medieval period to the modern era until the end of 19th century. There was room for cultural assimilation to some degree, and they shared several significant cultural features with other communities.

Although the Sri Lankan Muslims were a closed and traditional society and were comparatively backward in the economy and modern education, there was a tiny elite group which included the affluent mercantile class and the emerging educated middle class centered mainly around Colombo and Kandy. It was this elitist group which was ethnically sensitive and politically motivated and led their community into the modern era through its revivalist activities.

Sri Lankan Moors/Muslims

Sri Lanka is a plural society that consists of three major ethnic communities, namely Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims. Muslims in Sri Lanka are traditionally divided into five different subgroups: Ceylon/Sri Lankan Moors, Coast/Indian Moors, Malays, Memons and Borahs. The Memons and Borahs are North Indian business communities in Sri Lanka and have been since British rule; they mainly live in Colombo and constitute less than 0.5% of the total Muslim population. They speak Gujarathi and Urdu, respectively, as their home languages, and are exclusively endogamous. They live under a very rigid religious leadership. Umberto Ansaldo outlines the history like this:

The diasporic Malay communities of Sri Lanka were brought to Sri Lanka through various waves of deportation from Indonesia by the Dutch and British colonial powers. Though lacking official identity, being grouped together with other minority groups under the label 'Muslims', the Sri Lanka Malays are characterised by a unique language of trilingual base, often referred to as Sri Lanka Malay (SLM), in which Sinhala and Tamil grammar and colloquial Malay lexicon merge (Smith et al. 197-215; Ansaldo 2007). While different degrees of loss of this vernacular have occurred in recent years in favour of the country's dominant languages, Sinhala, Tamil and English, most recently a new tendency can be detected in at least two of the SLM communities: the desire to acquire the standard Malay variety that is the national language of Malaysia, which allows

them to gain a useful economic tool while still preserving their identity by assuming a global Malay one. ("Keeping Kirinda" 52)

The Malays settled in Sri Lanka mostly during the Dutch period. They were brought from Java and the Malay Peninsula as either political exiles or to serve in their military establishment. They constitute around 4% of the total Muslim population and maintain their distinct ethnic identity. They are mostly bi-lingual or multi-lingual; they speak Tamil, Sinhala and/or English. They also speak a variety of Sri Lankan Malay as their home language. However, there is a tendency among them to assimilate with local Muslims through 'inter-marriage'. There are also instances of intermarriage with Sinhalese.

The coast Moors/Indian Moors came – mostly - from southern Tamil Nadu, and settled in the urban areas, especially Colombo, during the British period. Eventually, they became a strong business community. They are no longer a significant ethnic group in Sri Lanka. Most of them returned to India due to the citizenship problem, while others gradually assimilated into the Sri Lankan Muslim community.

The Ceylon Moors/Sri Lankan Moors are the largest Muslim community in Sri Lanka. They constitute around 8% of the total Sri Lankan population and they are the second largest political minority in this country. They claim a pure Arab origin, although historically they are a mixed community.

The "Moor" identity was imposed upon the Muslim community by the colonial rulers, first by the Portuguese and then by the Dutch and the British. The word "Moor" is supposed to be of Phoenician origin and was borrowed by the Europeans to denote the Muslims of mixed Arab origin found in Western Spain and in North Africa. The Portuguese who first arrived in Sri Lanka used the word "Moors" to refer to the Muslim community of mixed origin they found in the colonial administration and other domains. A section of the Muslim elite borrowed this word to refer to their ethnic identity.

From the mid-19th century, the English-educated elite of the Muslim community interchangeably used the terms "Moors", "Mohammedans", and "Muslims" to refer to themselves. However, in time, they dropped the terms "Moors" and "Mohammedans", which were originally used by non-Muslims to refer to Muslims; instead, they chose the word "Muslim" for themselves. From the 1950s onwards, the community has constantly used the term "Ceylon/Sri Lanka Muslims" to refer to themselves. Muslims do not currently use the term "Moors" to refer to the entire community. And it

is doubtful that the community as a whole ever used this term to refer to itself; rather, some sections of the Colombo-based Muslim elite persistently used this term to refer to the Muslim community for their own class interests during the colonial period and after independence, in order to differentiate themselves from the Indian Muslims and Malays. Furthermore, they only used this term when they wrote in English. When they wrote in Tamil, they used the Tamil term *sonakar* as a substitute for Muslim. McGilvray points out that:

The Sri Lankan Muslim superiors (elites) dynamically created a “racial” identity under the British colonial regime in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as Arab descendants: *Sonahar* (in Tamil), or “Moors” (in English) under the British colonial regime. The Moors of Ceylon could then be seen as a (Semitic) Arab racial group comparable to the (Aryan) Sinhalese, the (Dravidian) Tamils and the (European) mixed-race Burghers. (McGilvray 1982, 2007)

There was a burnt debate about whether Moors were “Arabs” or actually Muslim Tamils in the late nineteenth-century. The leading Tamil statesman of the day, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan (1888), in his article, wished to keep the Moors within the Tamil fold. Despite this mid-century change of identity, the Muslims are the only Sri Lankan ethnic group bearing a religious rather than a linguistic, ethnic or racial name, as reflected also in the name of the largest Muslim political party—the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (founded in 1981).

In the Sri Lankan context, the term “Muslim” has gained an ethnic sense and denotes a distinct ethnic group which consciously differentiates itself from the other major ethnic groups, namely the Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils.

The Muslim elite had a strong political motivation for disowning linguistic identity in the late 19th century and after. Since Muslims were emerging as a politically conscious minority, they had to safeguard their socio-political interests from the Tamils, who were not only numerically the largest, but also socially a powerful minority in this country. This fact led the Muslim elite to seek a strong separate identity for themselves, which could totally differentiate them from the Tamils, even though Muslims were also linguistically Tamils.

Language and Identity of Sri Lankan Muslims

Language is closely related to the socio-cultural and political life of a community. It is not merely a medium of communication as defined by theoretical linguists; it becomes the symbol of the national, ethnic or cultural identity of the community. It unites, yet divides the people, dominates, yet assimilates them. In Sri Lanka, some of the religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities were economically and culturally dominant, hence politically influential throughout the colonial period. As they dominated the trade and commerce, finance, the plantation industries, the professions, the higher echelons of administration and the services and, finally, the educational establishments, they naturally wielded power, prestige and influence. This state of national disequilibrium, amounting to social injustice, could not persist for long.

The socio-linguistic situation of Sri Lankan Muslims is peculiar. They reject linguistic identity and are confused about their mother tongue, but speak Tamil wherever they live, although in different dialects and in different regions. There are monolingual, bilingual and trilingual speakers among them. They value different languages differently, arguing for one or the other language as their mother tongue, and choosing one or the other language as the medium of education for their children. Although they do not show any emotional attachment towards any language, they consider Arabic most important to them as it is the language of their religion, even though a vast majority of them neither speak nor understand Arabic and they primarily seek their identity in religion, not in language.

The Sri Lankan Muslims are a minority community who are not self-assured of their mother tongue. But they are politically motivated and culturally conscious in Sri Lanka. Although they do not show any concentration towards their mother tongue, it seems that they are not very particular to speak their mother language. For political reasons, Muslims from the south have been reluctant to accept their mother tongue as Tamil. They wanted to promulgate their identity as a separate ethnic group in Sri Lanka, even though some are Sri Lankan Tamils whose first language is also Tamil. There was an argument validated by most of the scholars even in the late 1980s. Uwais states, "The Tamil Language being the language of trade in the areas where the forefathers of the Muslim community settled, they had no difficulty in adopting Tamil as their language of communication with the resident population as well as among themselves

and thereby lost interest in Arabic as the spoken language”. Therefore, they maintained that Tamil is their mother tongue.

In their initial state, the Colombo-based Muslim elites were undetermined and muddled about their first language. They were confused about their language of education too. They wanted to remove Tamil as a mother tongue and trusted to accept Arabic or another language. Mostly they preferred Arabic as their mother tongue and traced their origin from Arab traders. In 1884, Siddi Lebbe wrote in his newspaper *Muslim Nesan*: “Muslims should try to adopt Arabic as their home language. If the Portuguese and Dutch who live in Ceylon can forget their mother tongue and speak English why can’t we forget Tamil and make Arabic our mother tongue?”. However, according to Nuhman, “Sri Lankan Muslims, who are very few, could not understand the Arabic language and no one uses [it for] their day-to-day communication” (Nuhman, 2007:52).

Further Siddi Lebbe changed his mind and accepted that the mother tongue is naturally inherited or acquired, not a language that is chosen or learned. In 1886 after two years Siddi Lebbe, a leading figure in the Muslim revivalist movement in the late 19th century, made a four-language policy for Muslims. He wrote in his article, “it is important to us who live in this country, to learn Arabic, Tamil, English and Sinhala. In the first place, it is most important to learn Arabic since, our religion, our prayer, and Qur’an is in Arabic. Secondly Tamil; since, it is the language we speak and one who does not know it would be like a blind, and he would need another person’s help. Thirdly English; since it is the language of the rulers, to do any job this language is essential. Fourthly Sinhalese; knowing this language would be very useful since the majority of this country is Sinhalese.” It was promoted by many followers especially by A.M.A. Azeze (1911-1973), a reputed Sri Lankan Muslim, who was very much respected by both Muslims and Tamils for his services.

Burghers’ Views on English

Due to the long experience (almost 150 years) of British colonial rule, English-Sinhala and English-Tamil bilingualism emerged in Sri Lanka. Up to the introduction of Sinhala as a national language by the Act of Parliament in 1956 (Sinhala Act No 33, 1956), English bilingualism enjoyed its peak in Sri Lanka. In other words, during that time, there was what has been identified as English dominant bilingualism in Sri Lanka. Due to the domination of Europeans in Sri Lanka, another distinct ethnic group gradually emerged.

Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole

The predominant languages - Sinhala and Tamil - which are spoken in Sri Lanka are influenced by interaction with the Portuguese. This led to the coming to fruition of a new language, Sri Lankan Portuguese Creole (SLPC), which succeeded as a lingua franca in this island for 16th to mid-19th centuries. SLPC continues to be spoken by an unknown, very small number of people. They are members of the Burgher community. Although they are actually descendants of the Portuguese and Dutch, the Portuguese cultural traditions are still widely practised by some Sri Lankans who are neither of Portuguese descent nor Roman Catholics. Today the language is spoken by descendants of the Portuguese Burgher community in the Eastern towns of Batticaloa and Trincomalee.

Tamil speakers are the overwhelming majority, but there is also a concentrated community of SLPC speaking Burghers. In the early part of the century most Burghers lived close to the center of the town (Batticaloa), but more recently many have moved to outlying areas. All of the Burghers in Batticaloa speak Tamil, many of them better than they do SLPC, and some also speak Sinhala and/or English. Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole was the solution to the problem of intercommunication when the Portuguese and Sri Lankans came into contact. Portuguese-based Creoles are the oldest Creoles based on a European language and are therefore particularly important.

After the Portuguese era, Creole developed in contact with Sinhala and Tamil (the indigenous languages), and Dutch and English (the languages of the two colonial powers that followed the Portuguese). It is still spoken on the island, mainly in the Eastern Province (Batticaloa and Trincomalee) and in the North-Western Province (Puttalam). Although there is religious literature in Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole, it is rare to find secular literature which reflects the culture of the creole community, the burghers (descendants of the Portuguese and Dutch), such as is included in the Schuchardt Manuscript (1842-1927). ("On the Indo-Portuguese")

Holm states that Schuchardt's major work was on the Portuguese-based Creoles.

The grammatical structure of Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole (SLPC) is distinct from that of Standard Portuguese (SP). For example, the verb has been reduced to a single form; tense-mood-aspect markers (lo, te, ja) indicate the future, present and past tenses; that is, lo leva (SLPC): levarae (SP) 'he will carry'; te folga (SLPC): folgam (SP) 'they rejoice'; ja olha (SLPC): olhei (SP) 'I saw'. ("On the Indo-Portuguese")

Jayasuriya delves more into the history of the decline of the Creole and the ensuing language and other identity issues of the Burghers:

As the Creole was losing ground in the island, many Burghers substituted one prestige language (Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole) for another (English). Most of the affluent Burghers, whose mother-tongue became English, have emigrated to economically strong English-speaking countries, mainly to Canada and Australia. The World Bank classifies Sri Lanka as a low-income country. Emigration was inevitable, given the fluency in English of the affluent Burghers. The Dutch Burghers and Portuguese Burghers contracted intermarriages. Today, many Burghers in Batticaloa have Dutch names, but are Roman Catholics and follow Portuguese cultural traditions. Even though the Dutch were more powerful from the outset, they were not able to entrench their cultural traditions in Sri Lanka. Dutch was used for administrative purposes during the Dutch era, but attempts to spread the language proved futile. (Jayasuriya 254)

The Burghers, descendants of Europeans who had served the Dutch administration, found no difficulty in adapting themselves to the ways and system of government of the new rulers.

During the British colonial rule, the Burghers always had the advantage of English education and literacy. By 1901, two-thirds of them were literate in English, and in 1911 the figure had risen to seventy-eight per cent (*Census of Ceylon-1911*). A report in the *Blue Book - 1907* also noted the fact that “English is a foreign language to all but a small fraction of the population; the Europeans, Burghers, and Eurasians together form a little less than 1 percent” (*Ceylon Blue Book - 1907*). Since all Government employment depended on the proficiency of English, there was a predominance of Burghers in Government employment. (Coperahewa 43).

In the early years of the British occupation, the bulk of the posts in the clerical service were filled by Burghers, who were proficient in the English language. They picked up their language easily, entered the learned professions like law and medicine, and held many offices in the Government service below those of the highest grade. A small group of Sinhalese and Tamils, proficient in English, were able to join their ranks to form an articulate middle class.

At the middle of the nineteenth century, leaders in the public life of Ceylon came from this class. Prominent among them were Sir Richard Morgan, C. A. Lorenz, James D’ Alwis, Sir Harry Dias and Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy. It can be said that they belonged to the “imitative” stage of nationalism mentioned by Dr. Bonn, though they sometimes kicked against the barriers. They had to make their way in an Anglo-Saxon milieu

by being as well equipped for their avocations as their British prototypes. But a few were disturbed by the gradual disappearance of a national spirit and a steady deterioration of an indigenous culture among those who received an English education. They asked themselves whether they were paying too high a price for material success.

At the same time, because of their English knowledge, the Tamils also enjoyed more posts in proportion to the population than did the majority ethnic group, the Sinhalese (Tissa Fernando 9-33). Although English education established a link among the elite of different ethnic communities (Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers) it did not penetrate far below the surface. The majority of the Sinhalese and Tamil peasants and workers remained in a position incapable of communicating with each other. In this way, the colonial educational system added a new form of language inequality to the island's linguistic culture: those who knew English and those who did not (Chitra Fernando 47-59). The English language was at the apex of the linguistic hierarchy and the use of vernacular was regarded as an 'admission of inferiority' (Wyndham 49). (Coperahewa 43).

Currently,

the Creole is known to be spoken only by 'Portuguese Burghers' in the east coast towns of Trincomalee and Batticaloa in the predominantly Tamil-speaking area of the island... All Sri Lanka Portuguese speakers are fluent in Tamil, with some also speaking Sinhala and/or English. Tamil has supplanted the Creole as a home language in many families. This has happened due to marriage with non-Creole speakers and due to the fact that men must often seek work elsewhere on the island, where they are bilinguals in a purely Tamil- or Sinhala-speaking milieu. (Strazny 1034).

Conclusion

Finally, it is clear that the Muslims as a minority uplifted their positions from a backward, conservative group to a more developed and progressive ethnic group during the colonial period and maintained their freedom in the postcolonial period as a multilingual society with Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka.

However, as an outcome of the continued use of Portuguese by the Burgher community, Creole Portuguese emerged in Jaffna and Batticaloa in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. "The speakers of BP are likely far fewer now, due to recent Tamil influence. Note that Batticaloa is located on that eastern strip of Sri Lanka where Sinhala is not the primary language" (Harper).

Creole Portuguese was in use among a few families in Jaffna until recently (Smith 160). However, English survives in Jaffna everywhere unlike other western languages.

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CHAPTER SIX

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS A SIGNIFIER OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN THE LITERARY TEXTS OF SRI LANKAN WRITERS

Formal and informal English in literary texts

This chapter examines Sri Lankan perspectives on the English language as reflected in the literary texts of selected contemporary Sinhalese, Tamil and Burgher writers. The use of English and attitudes to English emerge in the characters and dialogue of English-language writers publishing in Sri Lanka as well as selected writers of the Sri Lankan diaspora. Although there are several scholarly studies of the attitudes to English prevailing in Sri Lanka, there is no specific work on the use of English as a signifier of social stratification that incorporates different scholarly views on the use of English in the literary texts of writers from Sri Lanka's three major ethnic groups: Sinhalese, Tamils, and Burghers.

This chapter examines the use of both formal English and of the hybridized English dialects of the three major Sri Lankan communities as presented in literary works. In some cases, the dialogues presented in works of fiction and nonfiction have the quality of documentary film. For example, in Manuka Wijesinghe's memoir *Monsoons and Potholes*, women's use of Sri Lankan English is differentiated from that of men. In Shyam Selvadurai's novel *Funny Boy*, the language used by children is presented from the point of view of a boy with homosexual preferences. This type of hybridization of English with other vernacular Sri Lankan languages has given Sri Lankan literary language significant energy.

The use of English in the development of characters and dialogue in fiction and drama as well as the language used by the speakers in poems by Sri Lankan poets suggests to some degree the views of these writers on society, politics, and economics. The way in which English is used by Sri Lankan characters and speakers in fiction, drama, and poetry often shows their social class and ethnicity as well as how they are viewed by other

characters. Hence selected passages from several authors and their representative works are analyzed in this chapter to show how speakers and characters are viewed by other characters. Selected passages from texts are also analyzed to show the value placed on English skills in the three major communities in postcolonial Sri Lankan society.

It is necessary to emphasize that there is a rich literary tradition of works written in Tamil by Tamil writers in Sri Lanka which have been translated into English. The same is true of Sinhalese literature in English translations. Sri Lankan literature in English is, therefore, significantly hybridized by these two vernacular literary cultures. The hybridization of English with these two vernacular languages has given Sri Lankan literary language significant energy. The discussion of diversity in the use of English by Sinhalese, Tamil and Burgher writers seeks to show that Sri Lankan authors have created a literary language of their own that is quite distinct from the English of other South Asian groups. The writers examined in this chapter are all contemporary. As this body of English language literature is not small, a limited sampling of literary passages has been selectively analyzed in this chapter. However, this sampling is intended to be representative and includes the writing of the Sri Lankan diaspora over the last three decades.

Sri Lankan scholars have examined the status of English in postcolonial Sri Lanka. This body of scholarship has examined patterns of social stratification among Sri Lankans in their use of English as well as the significance of English language skills in the workforce of Sri Lanka. The writers from the three prominent ethnic communities - Tamil, Sinhala, and Burgher - depict prevailing attitudes to English in Sri Lankan society in their literary texts. This chapter examines writers in the following groups:

Burgher (Eurasian): Michael Ondaatje and Rienzi Crusz (Sri Lankan diaspora); Carl Muller and Jean Arasanayagam (lived in Sri Lanka);

Sinhalese: Romesh Gunesekeera (Sri Lankan diaspora); Shehan Karunatilaka, Isankya Kodithuwakku, Manuka Wijesinghe (living in Sri Lanka);

Tamil: Shyam Selvadurai (Sri Lankan diaspora); Ayathurai Santhan (living in Sri Lanka).

In his book *De-Hegemonizing Language Standards* (1995), Arjuna Parakrama has pointed out that most English language users in Sri Lanka are bilinguals and that while the English language is used in formal writing and in the workplace it is used very little in domestic and personal

situations. In his field observations, Parakrama found that most Sri Lankan users of English were bilinguals. Parakrama writes: “The major argument against Lankan English as a self-sufficient language in its own right has been the fact that it does not fulfil the domestic and personal language role, giving way to Sinhala and or Tamil in these arenas” (65). Parakrama's study has analyzed some non-literary works in print and has pointed out inaccuracies in grammar that he considers to be a symptom of a de-hegemonized British standard in postcolonial Sri Lanka. Parakrama has also collected examples of hybridized writing where either Sinhalese or Tamil words are liberally infused into English language lyrics. Siromi Fernando has quoted from Manique Gunesekeera's *The Postcolonial Identity of Sri Lankan English* (2005), where Gunesekeera states: “The English used by the Sri Lankan elite is Standard Sri Lankan English, which is part and parcel of belonging to the ‘English speaking class’” (*English in Sri Lanka* 308). Fernando also cites Gunesekeera's classifications of formal and informal English in Sri Lanka:

“The prestigious variety is the elitist variety, considered to be Standard Sri Lankan English... The other variety, which used to be called non-standard Sri Lankan English, is now called ‘Not pot English’, spoken by those who are not very familiar with English... The elitist variety of English is used by the Sri Lankan elite consisting of members of the Sinhala, Tamil, Moore, Malay, Burgher, Parsi, Borah, Sindhi, Bharatha, Colombo Chetty and Eurasian ethnic groups. Members of this group use SLE in their educational, social, and professional activities, and share togetherness in their use of language and their scorn of those who don't use the language”. (*English in Sri Lanka* 308)

Siromi Fernando has identified four distinct dialects of Sri Lankan English in contrast to Arjuna Parakrama and Michael Weyler who have identified two (306-310). The identification of these Standard Sri Lankan English dialects ranging from two to four is based upon mother tongue incursion from the Sinhala and Tamil languages on the pronunciation of English as well as the variations in word order in spoken English in Sri Lanka in comparison with the British standard (Fernando 310-312). Clearly, comparisons can be made with the development of postcolonial English in the Indian Republic. However, this subject is addressed elsewhere in this study.

In studying the variations in Sri Lankan English (Standard Sri Lankan English) as presented in literary texts from Sri Lanka, the connection between social stratification and Standard Sri Lankan English usage is quite clearly observed by readers. This characteristic was first observed by

D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke in his study *Sri Lankan English Literature and the Sri Lankan People 1917-2003*. Discussing the writing of Regi Siriwardena, Goonetilleke points out the disconnect between Sri Lankan English and the language used by Siriwardena's characters: "Siriwardena's characters speak in sesquipedalian sentences which nobody uses in real life. Moreover, the idioms of the characters are not differentiated in terms of their respective natures" (15). In contrast, Goonetilleke finds that the Burgher writer Carl Muller handles the hybridity of language, race, and culture very well in creating convincing characters who use Sri Lankan English with its very distinctive idioms (15).

This chapter analyzes passages from the works of writers of Sri Lankan Burgher descent such as Michael Ondaatje, Rienzi Crusz, Carl Muller, and Jean Arasanayagam to point out their use of Standard Sri Lankan English. For discussion of the use of Standard Sri Lankan English by Sri Lankan writers of Tamil descent, this chapter examines the works of Shyam Selvadurai and Ayathurai Santhan. From Sri Lanka's majority ethnic group, the Sinhalese, this chapter analyzes the use of Standard Sri Lankan English by Shehan Karunatilaka, Manuka Wijesinghe, Romesh Gunesekera, and Isankya Kodithawakku. While these ten writers are only a few among the growing number of Sri Lankan postcolonial writers in English, this sampling is adequate to provide an overview of the use of Standard Sri Lankan English by the different ethnic communities in Sri Lanka.

Literary texts by Burgher writers

Michael Ondaatje (born 1943) and Rienzi Crusz (born 1925) are both writers of Sri Lankan Burgher descent who live and publish in Canada. In Ondaatje's poetry and prose, the language is Standard North American English. Most of Ondaatje's speakers use this form of Standard English. An occasional poem with a Sri Lankan setting is hybridized incorporating romanized phrases in Sinhalese side by side with English translations to emphasize the speaker's location (*Handwriting* 29).

With diasporan Burgher poet Rienzi Crusz, the hybridization of Sri Lankan and North American elements is evidenced in his imagery rather than his use of language. Like Michael Ondaatje, Rienzi Crusz presents speakers in his poems who use Standard North American English. The advantage of using the standard is that the language of Crusz's poetry is easily accessible to a variety of readers. However, with regard to Crusz's creation of the convincing voice of Sardiel, a Sri Lankan outlaw who lived

in colonial times, how likely was Sardiel (who was from a poor family) to have used Standard British English, as in his speech after conversion to Christianity when in prison? “Formerly”, replied Sardiel, “I surrounded myself with firearms and guns and swords to defend myself against—that is the devil” (*Lord of the Mountain* 91).

The well-known Burgher novelist and poet Carl Muller (born 1935) lives and publishes in Sri Lanka. Muller uses both the Burgher’s dialect of English as well as the Standard Sri Lankan English that is quite formal and a descendant of the British Standard of Sri Lanka’s colonial period. In Muller’s collection of poems titled *I am Modern Man* (2007), the speaker of the opening poem uses language that is formal and obviously intended for well-educated readers:

“I am the Man of Today—I close my eyes to every righteous act, / I have satisfied the abiding happiness of society for transitory profit” (11). The use of the word “man” does not appear to be applicable to all human beings but more specifically to males in this poem’s indictment of contemporary Sri Lankan society. The speaker’s language in this poem is not only formal but somewhat stilted and almost academic. All the poems in this volume are in formal English.

In contrast to Muller’s poetry, Muller’s novel *Yakada Yaka* (1994), subtitled “The Continuing Saga of Sonnaboy von Bloss and the Burgher Railwaymen”, the passages of dialogue capture the energy of the nonstandard English dialect of the Burgher community as in:

Divisional Inspector of Mechanics, Vere Gerreyn, who was in the bungalow and had not joined the others for breakfast, followed the S.M. ‘Damn good lesson for those fellows. I think better if you inform the hospital, no?’

‘Not the hospital I’m thinking,’ the S.M. muttered, ‘what about Colombo?’

‘To hell with that. Must send those buggers to the hospital. Dead man’s heart they ate, no? How if something happens? I’ll tell you, you tell Colombo. I’ll phone the hospital.’ (107)

The profanity and the nonstandard grammar suggest that the engine drivers and the railroad workers do not have much formal education. The title “Yakada Yaka” means “iron demon”. This was the name first given to trains by Sri Lankan villagers. This novel is one of the three volumes that make up Muller’s well-known trilogy of Burgher life in Sri Lanka.

Jean Arasanayagam (1931-2019) is another well-known Burgher writer who lived and published in Sri Lanka. Her writing is also popular among readers and scholars of the Sri Lankan diaspora. Arasanayagam's works capture the turmoil of Sri Lanka's internal dissensions from the 1980s onwards. Minoli Salgado at the University of Sussex quotes Arasanayagam who writes: "I had only the country of myself to return to where no flag of conquest would ever fly. The territory of my uninvaded self. Where I would finally discard that archival documentation from an identity scrawled in hieroglyphics of blood" (*Fault Lines: Three Plays* 179). According to Salgado: "Here Arasanayagam returns to and reverses the colonial trajectory inscribed in her ancestral history, erasing imperial conquest by replacing the divisive discourse of territoriality with the mergent scripture of migration" (179-180).

An examination of the volume *Fault Lines: Three Plays* by Jean Arasanayagam shows all the dialogue to be in the standard English of Sri Lanka (Standard Sri Lankan English). The scenarios depicted are tense as they are set amidst internal ethnic strife and in refugee camps. The advantage of using Standard Sri Lankan English is that the plays can be produced for diverse audiences where language will not present a barrier. However, the relative absence of specific speech patterns leaves Arasanayagam's characters somewhat undifferentiated.

Literary texts by Tamil writers

Among writers of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka, Ayathurai Santhan (born 1947) and Shyam Selvadurai (born 1965) are well known. Ayathurai Santhan is a novelist of Tamil descent who lives and publishes in Sri Lanka. His novel *The Whirlwind* (2010) was shortlisted for Sri Lanka's prestigious Gratiaen Prize. This novel brings to life scenes of living amidst political turmoil. Like Arasanayagam's characters, Santhan's characters use Sri Lankan Standard English, irrespective of their social class. This strategy keeps the dialogues accessible to the global reading public, but the voices of the characters are not differentiated.

Shyam Selvadurai (born 1965) is of mixed Tamil and Sinhalese descent and is an award-winning writer of the Sri Lankan diaspora. He emigrated to Canada in his teens with his parents during a period of ethnic strife in Sri Lanka. In most of Selvadurai's writing, the prose is either standard Sri Lankan or standard North American English. Occasionally, he presents characters whose use of language is distinctly ethnic as in his novel *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), where he creates a British voice in the

reflections of Richard, the lover of Balendran, the novel's protagonist. In his first novel *Funny Boy*, he presents dialogue in both familiar and formal Sri Lankan English.

The publication of Selvadurai's bildungsroman *Funny Boy* (1994) brought him favorable reviews and significant attention from critics. The title itself refers to the protagonist's homosexuality in a nonstandard phrase in Sri Lankan English. This novel is set in Sri Lanka during Selvadurai's early life before he moved to Canada. In terms of this novel's setting, ethnic conflict is ongoing in many districts while the life of the affluent family of the young protagonist Arjie continues relatively untouched by the ethnic and political conflicts. The main subject of this novel is about growing up gay in Sri Lanka in the 1970s and 1980s.

Selvadurai's young protagonist Arjie is a first-person narrator. He is the second son of a privileged family. Hence there is limited use of informal Sri Lankan English in this novel's dialogues. Arjie is "funny"—a word for "gay" in informal Sri Lankan English. Instead of playing cricket with the other boys, Arjie dresses as a female and plays the role of bride in a girls' game called "Bride-bride". His young female cousin from overseas wants to play the role of bride and she insults him using insulting slang terms for homosexuals that Arjie and the other Sri Lankan children were hearing for the first time:

Her Fatness looked at all of us for a moment and then her gaze rested on me.

"You're a pansy," she said, her lips curling in disgust.

We looked at her blankly.

"A faggot", she said, her voice rising against our uncomprehending stares.

"A sissy!" she shouted in desperation.

It was clear by this time that these were insults.

"Give me that jacket," Sonali said. She stepped up to her Fatness and began to pull at it. "We don't like you anymore."

"Yes!" Lakshmi cried. "Go away, you fatty-boom-boom!" (11)

In this interesting juxtaposition of the slang of the diasporan cousin and the Sri Lankan cousin in a children's quarrel, the difference between Sri Lankan children growing up overseas and those growing up in Sri Lanka is

obvious. The diasporan cousin brings prejudice against homosexuals while the Sri Lankan children accept Arjie's cross-dressing and continue to play girls' games with him.

Soon after this episode, Arjie's mother orders him to go and play with the boys (18-20). As Arjie becomes an adolescent studying in an all-male school, he has his first relationship with a male partner named Shehan, a fellow student. One wonders to what extent all-male and all-female schools in Sri Lanka and other countries in the Indian subcontinent provide an environment for situational homosexuality.

Elsewhere in *Funny Boy*, Arjie reports the metaphor used by his Radha Aunty to reject a young man: "I would rather wither and drop off my stem than be pollinated by a bee like you" (54). Radha's use of figurative language suggests that the language of educated Tamils is clearly formal Sri Lankan English. Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* has some parallels with Sinhalese writer Manuka Wijesinghe's memoir *Monsoons and Potholes* in its episodes that describe the ongoing Sinhalese-Tamil civil war of the 1980s and early 1990s.

Literary texts by Sinhalese writers

The Sinhalese are Sri Lanka's majority ethnic group. There are several Sinhalese writers who write in English, some of whom are very well-known both in Sri Lanka and abroad. This chapter examines the work of U.K. based author Romesh Gunsekera (born 1954) and three authors based in Sri Lanka—Shehan Karunatilaka (born 1975), Manuka Wijesinghe (born 1963), and Isankya Kodithuwakku (DOB unavailable). Romesh Gunsekera's works of fiction use Standard British English. His prose includes almost lyrical passages of description that bring settings to life in *Monkfish Moon* (1992) and *Reef* (1994). In the prose of *Heaven's Edge* (2002), an adventure story set in an unusual landscape, Gunsekera displays his myth-making abilities. Images of Heaven and Eden recur, and as in the earlier books the prose is often lyrical:

I told her about my grandfather's Eden and she said that she had heard that there was once a whole region full of butterflies and flowers—Samandia—but nobody went that far into the blighted south anymore. "You'll have to find somewhere else", she said, "make your own Eden". (*Heaven's Edge* 20)

The characters in the fiction of Isankya Kodithuwakku use Standard Sri Lankan English. Her technique of constructing dialogue is similar to that

of Gunasekera and different from that of Karunatilaka and Wijesinghe whose fiction differentiates the speech of characters according to gender and social class. Kodithawakku's 2006 Gratiaen Prize winning collection of short stories *The Banana Tree Crisis* (2006) uses Standard Sri Lankan English for the voices of working-class Sri Lankans. Again, this choice of Standard Sri Lankan English makes the dialogue easily accessible to non-Sri Lankan readers. It should also be mentioned that at the time of composition of this collection of short fiction, the author Isankya Kodithawakku was studying in an MFA (Master of Fine Arts) program in the United States and writing for an international audience.

Shehan Karunatilaka's 2008 Gratiaen Prize winning novel *Chinaman: The Legend of Pradeep Matthew* is composed in Standard Sri Lankan English in the voice of the ailing alcoholic sportswriter W.G. Karunasena who is researching the career of the "legendary" cricket player/bowler Pradeep Matthew. This novel has won several awards as an outstanding first novel. As he is working on this narrative, Karunasena is quite aware that he is dying of liver disease. "Chinaman" is a term for a bowling technique used by bowlers in the game of cricket, a team sport popular in many countries of the British Commonwealth. The fictional narrator recommends the title "Chinaman" for his show on Pradeep Matthew: "We will call it Chinaman. Sri Lanka's Greatest Unsung Hero" (*Chinaman* 124). This novel presents three intertwined stories—the last days of the narrator Karunasena, the career of the bowler Pradeep Matthew, and the final unexpected turn in which, after the death of Karunasena, his son appears to be ready to publish the narrative in the name of the author Shehan Karunatilaka so that his father's last work gets published.

This novel's dialogues have similarities with Carl Muller's dialogues in Karunatilaka's depiction of the use of nonstandard English among different groups. Karunatilaka presents dialogue in scenes when cricket lovers talk among themselves, when middle class Sinhalese people talk in their homes, and when men talk in all-male company. Among the specialized uses of informal English recorded by Karunatilaka, there are the many terms for bowling and batting in the game of cricket that surface again and again in the conversation of the men in this novel. Karunasena depicts men who get together with food and plenty of alcohol to watch international cricket games on television. The dialogue in Karunatilaka's novel depicts middle class male characters who often lapse into a nonstandard Sri Lankan English dialect as in:

"Pakistan, yes. Why no Ranatunga?"

“There are better batsmen, no?”

“Why no Murali in your team? and

“Did you forget? Useless fellow” (*Chinaman* 162).

Although English is a second language, it appears to have an informal version in the homes of educated middle class Sri Lankans that is presented in dialogues in *Chinaman*. An example of informal English in an educated, middle-class family is the exchange between Karunasena and his wife:

“Don’t talk rot, Sheila. When we were young anger was fashionable. Angry young man and all. Now I am a grumpus?”

It was true. The world had changed and I had not. As with everything, my fault entirely.

“Heard from Garfield?”

“Just go men.” Sheila is cutting onions and not crying. She keeps jabbering. “He’s doing well. You better stop this business and talk to him. He’s calling tonight.”

“Tonight I will be writing.”

“Do whatever the hell you want.” (*Chinaman* 13)

These two voices bring to life everyday speech in the Sinhalese community.

The language used by Sri Lankan men in the company of other men is of interest in this novel. Karunatilaka presents the meaningless profanity used by men speaking in all-male company as in:

“Buggers shouldn’t smoke,” says Ari. “They are professional sportsmen.”

“Hogwash. We lived on beer and fags and steak and pies,” says Tony Botham. (*Chinaman* 42)

The use of profanity from time to time by the fictional narrator Karunasena gives his voices some degree of authenticity.

The narrator Karunasena is depicted as a person who is sensitive to different accents of English. When he arrives to meet representatives from independent television and the cricket organization SLBCC, he describes

Ms. Dhanika Guneratne: “‘You have showreel!’ Dhanika sounds like a *vatti amma* selling veges on the street, even though she looks like a Parisian model” (*Chinaman* 47). Elsewhere he describes with mild satire the accent of Dr. Rakwana Somawardena, ITL programming director as “part-Oxford, part-Australian” and “The accent reverts from Oxford-Aussie to Colombo-7-aunty” (*Chinaman* 48).

While Karunatilaka’s *Chinaman* presents voices of Sri Lankans (mostly Sinhalese) in all-male company, Manuka Wijesinghe’s memoir *Monsoons and Potholes* (2008) presents the voices of women in all-female company as well as the voices of different social classes in the Sinhalese community. This memoir narrates the experiences of the author as a young girl growing up in the period of the civil war between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The child narrator is deeply affected by the murder of her family’s Tamil driver Podian, whose uneducated use of English remains in the author’s memories many years later. Wijesinghe’s memories of the civil war present close parallels with some of the civil war sections of Selvadurai’s bildungsroman *Funny Boy*. Selvadurai also grew up in Sri Lanka during this civil war.

Manuka Wijesinghe’s memoir presents the different social classes of the Sinhalese community from the educated urban middle class to the poor and uneducated villagers as using some form of English. Wijesinghe is a playwright who uses dialogue in *Monsoons and Potholes* very effectively for character development. The middle-class characters use Standard Sri Lankan English while the uneducated villagers use a nonstandard dialect, as in the speech of the woman character Magi who airs her political views: “‘Aiyo, enappa, bad man this Sinhala mans, always letting women do work. Look at Madam Bandaranayake! Workings very hard like man, but aiyo! Look what mess country is in!’” (*Monsoons and Potholes* 156). As in this speech, the novel contains many references to events in Sri Lanka’s recent history.

Wijesinghe captures the familiar speech in informal English of women gossiping together:

‘And low-caste too,’ added Dotty. Her mouth did not close again. ‘Chee, chee, chee,’ she said.

‘What to do?’ replied Achi, ‘that was the poor man’s karma.’

‘Aiyo! But those people are Christians, no, they don’t believe in karma.’

‘Yes. But Christian or no Christian, you can’t escape karma.’ (*Monsoons and Potholes* 16).

Elsewhere in the novel, Wijesinghe gently satirizes the value placed on speaking the Queen’s English when she describes the character Nenda as correcting a child’s pronunciation:

Not ‘Tinkle, tinkle, Putha, it is tuwinkle tuwinkle,’ corrected Nenda.

Having gone to a village school up to the third grade, having learned only the native tongue, she now had a PhD in household English. It was a PhD acquired through hearing, logic and common sense. Nothing more. (*Monsoons and Potholes* 29).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter’s selective overview of the use of English by characters depicted in contemporary Sri Lankan literature shows that Sri Lankan writers often use both speakers of Standard Sri Lankan English and speakers of nonstandard English dialects to depict class distinctions in postcolonial Sri Lankan society. Karunatilaka and Wijesinghe also show the differences in speaking English among all-male groups and all-female groups. And while there is a significant reading public in Sri Lanka for books written in English, the number of books published in Tamil and Sinhala annually exceeds the number of books published in English. This fact indicates that many Sri Lankans have bilingual reading skills if not polylingual reading skills. And English language skills continue to be highly valued among all the three Sri Lankan communities discussed in this chapter. With the spread of the Sri Lankan diaspora to many English-speaking countries, the production of English language literary texts by Sri Lankans is likely to continue to flourish.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

EXPLORING AND CORRELATING THE SOCIAL FACTORS

Introduction

The school system of the island under the colonial administrative system rapidly expanded during the period 1869 – 1900. The state, as mentioned in earlier chapters, had by this time assumed central authority in education. All Government schools were entirely financed and controlled by the state under the revised scheme of 1870, and denominational schools received liberal financial assistance from the state. At this time there were three categories of schools, namely English, Anglo-Vernacular, and Vernacular schools. English schools, in the main, served the wealthy and influential sections of the community. Anglo-Vernacular and Vernacular schools were expected to serve the rest. A significant social trend of this time was the increasing desire of the upper classes for more and more English schools for their children. English education assured one of employment in the service of the colonial Government, which gave the school high prestige and economic advantage. Anglo-Vernacular schools shared a little of this characteristic. Vernacular schools were meant to provide the masses with an elementary education and to raise the general level of literacy of the community (Somapala 447- 451).

English education which qualified pupils for employment under the Government naturally had little use for evangelists. But missionaries working in the island soon realized that English schools were fast superseding vernacular schools in popularity. If they were to keep their hold on the upper classes through education, missionary schools had to exploit the upper classes' increasing desire for English education. The desire of each mission to entrench itself in the upper classes gave the necessary impetus for maintaining high standards. In this respect even the English schools of the more general types were well attended. But vernacular schools were very slow to develop indeed. It was through regulations governing the grants-in-aid that the Department of Public

Administration activated denominational agencies to raise the level of their vernacular schools (454 – 461).

The educational system in vernacular schools

There was a large body of Sinhalese and Tamils who had hardly any educational facilities at all. They were the class who found it most difficult to get into the administrative set-up. They, too, gradually realised the importance of education and particularly of an English education. The Government was probably not in a financial position to meet this demand. However, a few vernacular schools were established for the children of the Sinhalese and Tamils. And these few schools were admittedly inefficient and failed to impart the education that the people desired.

So long as the English had control of education in Ceylon, they had to reject Tamil and Sinhalese as a means of higher education. It is chimerical to think otherwise and dangerous to act otherwise, said Rev. Highfield of Wesley, “Remembering the growth and history of English schools in Ceylon, I am not inclined to the study of vernacular in those schools”. Rev. Father C.H. Lytton, Rector of St. Joseph’s was more outspoken and minced no words in expressing his opposition to the introduction of the “Vernaculars”. “I would exclude the vernaculars from all English schools. They will not be introduced into St. Joseph’s College. Our course is arranged so that the best students may be rendered fit to complete their education in an English University. Tamil literature not only does not elevate the mind, but degrades it by obscenities with which it is replete” (quoted by De Alwis 975). He held similar views regarding both Sinhalese and Tamil literature.

He further expressed that:

“We have the belief that higher education in Sinhalese literature and Tamil literature is not for the moral or spiritual welfare in Ceylon from our point of view but rather the opposite. If you wish to find filth in literature you will find it equally in both and those who know most about it are forced to admit it. I would rather teach French novels” (976).

It is not surprising that similar sentiments should be echoed by those whose minds had been fashioned in those educational institutions. “In my opinion,” said Mr. E.W. Perera in his memorandum to the Education Committee,

“the vernacular languages are of no value in the education of the classes which attend English schools, elementary and secondary—I think it will be a decided disadvantage for Ceylonese boys to be taught the vernacular in such schools. The only way to aim at a standard of pure English... is to make the pupils think as much as possible in English and to teach English in English schools through the medium of English alone.” (89-93)

Thus, the stage was set for the adoption of a policy that called for a strict adherence to the teaching of English. The first schools established by the British Government in Ceylon were, of course, English schools at central stations. English-speaking communities at these stations were principally composed of the civil and military officers of the Crown, and these schools were established for the education of their children. It was this class of society that could easily fit into the existing set-up without the semblance of any real maladjustment. They needed English for their advancement just as much as the rulers needed them to fill the responsible grades of the Government service with local servants who were not only proficient in English but were also conversant with English life and thought, English History and English forms of Government. That would have facilitated the emergence of a rock-like foundation for the British Administration. But the demand for English education with its consequent benefits began to be clearly appreciated by the natives as well. They felt, and quite rightly too, that if they were to find a ‘respectable’ place in society an English education was a *sine qua non*. Hence, there were growing demands by the natives for educational facilities.

Although at the beginning the biggest demand was for Government Anglo-Vernacular schools, the number of these schools increased only slightly as a result of this demand being met by the missionary schools. There were many missions which were actively engaged in educational enterprises. Many schools giving instructions in English were established, and, although the motives of the Missionary Societies included, *inter alia*, the motive of converting the natives to Christianity, their activities were a source of great financial relief to the government who would otherwise have been forced to devote very substantial amounts of money to education. In many towns, missionary schools began to be established, and in the Jaffna peninsula in particular, they dominated the entire field.

Temple School Educational System in Sinhala

The backbone of the educational system during the time of the Sinhalese kings was the temple school. The education imparted during these times

was entirely through this institution. After nearly three centuries of foreign rule, the temple school diminished in importance. Yet the significant fact was that these schools survived the foreign onslaught and remained until British times. Colebrooke himself was induced to make at least a passing reference to these institutions, although what he had to say was not exactly complimentary: “The education afforded by the native priesthood in their temples and Colleges scarcely merits any notice. In the interior, the Buddhist priests have evinced some jealousy of the Christian Missionaries. But the people in general are desirous of instruction, in whatever way afforded to them, and are especially anxious to acquire the English language” (31).

Colebrooke quite unintentionally exposes the main reasons for the decline of the temple schools. The temple school provided no teaching of English, and the education it imparted was robbed of its social value without such teaching. In English schools, even in the Anglo-Vernacular schools, the teaching of the national languages was in a state of neglect. Rev. M. Dias says of the vernacular class that: “Of the principles of orthography, they appear to have no notion at all. They merely follow the sound of words and express those sounds by letters which each fancies being their representative and the consequence is that the same word is written in various ways by various persons” (390).

He observes further that:

Of Sinhalese grammar and composition, they scarcely know anything, but from the general intelligence and shrewdness displayed in other subjects which they have been taught, it is evident that, if provision were made for carrying through a course of study calculated to give them a correct insight into the grammatical structure of their language, they would soon learn to appreciate the beauties of correct Sinhalese in contrast with the jargon in common use among the illiterate. (390)

What was lacking, therefore, was certainly not the ability on the part of the students to learn, but the proper teaching of the subject. This sad state of affairs was no doubt due to the decline of the temple school. These temple schools were: “in some cases close for years...the majority of them were schools attached to ‘Pansalas’, and these for the most part consisted of a very small knot of children collected for a few months of the year to perform various services about the temple...” (Dias 390).

The Buddhist monks had to organise their education mostly in these schools with very little help from the state. As they existed, however, Dias argues, “these vague and desultory gatherings of children hardly deserve the name of schools” (390). Hence the decline of the temple school was undoubtedly the major cause for the decline of the Sinhala language. The National Languages were fighting a losing battle against English which was growing in importance and prestige. There were many who fought for the cause of English, but hardly any who championed the cause of National Languages.

When the study of the National Languages was in this pathetic state, a very significant event took place in the 1880s. Up to this time, the instruction of the young was entirely in the hands of the Government and the Christian missionaries. But a revivalist movement among the Buddhists was soon underway with the inauguration of the Buddhist Theosophical Society. It was Col. Henry Steele Olcott and Madam Blavatsky who were the pioneers of the Buddhist revival. Col. Olcott arrived in Ceylon in 1880, and he was deeply perturbed by the existing state of affairs, where a Buddhist child had to study under Christian influences.

Tamil-English bilingualism

The history of bilingualism in English is almost common to all the British colonial countries. Before 1948, English had a strong position in Jaffna. On the one hand, it was considered a symbol of British ruling power and, what is worse, a politically superimposed language. In several spheres, including the field of education, the English language was the effective medium of communication. Other spheres where English was extensively used other than education were large business activities, export and import trade activities, initially shipping and later aviation, reading centres and libraries, the higher levels of the various Government departments, and very specially in the fields of Sri Lankan law, medicine and sports. This situation caused most of the Jaffna people to adopt the social and other language-related attitudes in these spheres of activity. Due to this linguistic power, English-Tamil bilingualism emerged in Jaffna Tamil society. To make the discussion easier and to understand the nature of bilinguality clearly, we shall roughly divide the period into three: (a) first phase: 1796-1833, (b) second phase: 1833-1956, and (c) third phase: 1956 to date.

a) First phase, 1796-1833: exogenous mono-cultural L2 dominant bilinguality

This period was the initial stage of English educational activities that were carried out by the missionaries. The basic and master philosophy of English education of these missionaries was proselytization; detailed studies on the missionaries' activities in Sri Lanka and Jaffna were conducted by Piaratna (1982); Sinnathamby (1988); and Mathias (1992). Up to 1833, it was only the missionaries who were active in the teaching of English; thereafter, the Government in Sri Lanka (the British Government) also began to impart English education in the Government Schools, after the recommendation of Colebrooke. (The Colebrooke-Cameron Commission recommended consistency of the educational curriculum and proposed the changeover to English from local national languages, Sinhala and Tamil, in 1833. Thereafter, many English schools were launched and the vernacular schools accommodated English). Therefore, at this starting point, one could say that the degree of competence was L1 dominant bilinguality in this period. Thus, the degree of competence in the mother tongue (Tamil/Sinhala) was higher than in English.

Following the implementation of the Colebrooke Commission's proposal, most of the bilinguals were adult English learners and such a trend was labelled as adult bilinguality. They learnt English in high schools and not from the primary level. For example, in 1923, Chelliah (10) cited a report of the then principal of Batticotta Seminary (present-day Jaffna College-Vaddukodai) in which the principal stated that the students of the above Seminary started their English learning late in life as adult learners (10). His report provides concrete evidence regarding the type of bilinguality at that time, which was L1 dominant adult bilinguality. Although English learning in Jaffna transmitted certain L2 cultural elements into Tamil society, the type is identified as exogenous mono-cultural L2 dominant bilinguality.

b) Second phase, 1833-1956: exogenous Tamil Christian L2 dominant mono-cultural bilinguality

In this period, the English language enjoyed the highest status in Sri Lanka. After the recommendation of the Colebrooke Commission, in 1833, it gained the highest status and enjoyed all the privileges (Mendis 1-374). The level of competence in English among the bilinguals in Jaffna was very high. English was the medium of instruction in all the schools from the primary level upward. Therefore, the bilingual trend in this

period can be labelled as the L2 dominant bilinguality. Further, during this period, the English language dominated almost all the domains in Jaffna. The function of the mother tongue (MT, here Tamil) was limited to certain situations like discussion at home with family members, conversation with servants, and monolinguals.

Since the medium of instruction was English throughout school learning and higher studies, the degree of exposure to the English language was very high. According to the report of the Special Committee of Education in Sri Lanka, up to 1886 a large number of schools were Christian Schools (The Report of the Special Committee 1943). Thus, the tendency was towards Tamil Christian L2 dominant mono-cultural bilinguality. Hamers and Blanc identify this trend as adolescent bilinguality in the society. This group spoke the Tamil language with a different accent that is closer to the English sound system. Anyhow, the English language was learnt in the absence of the L2 community in Jaffna (L2 community in this context is English natives). Hence, it was a situation of exogenous bilinguality. An exogenous language (in Jaffna it was English) is one used as an official, institutionalized language but has no speech community. During this period, the Jaffna bilinguals were an ideal example for exogenous mono-cultural L2 dominant bilinguality. It does not always mean that high-level bilingual competence needs a dual cultural membership or speech community.

c) Third phase, 1956 to date: L1 dominant bilinguality

This period was and is the period of the development of the status of the mother tongue (Tamil in Jaffna). In this period, both mother tongues of Sri Lanka (Tamil and Sinhala) have been declared as official languages (The Sinhala Act 33, 1956 and The Tamil Act 28, 1958). The English language was gradually replaced by Tamil as the medium of instruction. Officially, the status of the English language was declared as that of a second language by the Sri Lankan Government, particularly after the implantation of the Educational Reformation Act, 1950. Therefore, Tamil in Jaffna progressively took over from English the main role in almost all the domains. Hence, this period experiences L1 dominant bilinguality. In this social context, the MT played a superior role to L2 in Jaffna. Anti-English feeling and nationalist sentiments also contributed a lot to promoting the status of the MT in Jaffna.

In modern Tamil society in Jaffna, the bilingual level is gradually declining. The earliest L2 dominant and the balanced bilinguals are

reducing in number. As interpreted previously, L1 dominant or passive bilingualism is found in Jaffna. On the other hand, the emergence of a monolingual elite in this society is increasing. Even in recent times, the Tamil freedom fighters Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) implemented certain measures to purify the Tamil language within Tamil-speaking regions to elevate the status of the Tamil language. For example, after 1990 in Jaffna, the above freedom fighters (LTTE) who had full control over Jaffna and some parts of other Tamil-speaking regions in Sri Lanka made Tamil an integral part of its planning to establish Tamil identity. One of the major steps they took was the purification of Tamil. Based on the above planning, word forms of loans or borrowings, which appeared in Tamil, were removed and new Tamil vocabularies that were equivalent to them were introduced. Most of the loans/borrowings in Tamil were Sanskrit and English with a few Portuguese and Dutch words. The freedom fighters requested pure usage of Tamil language in all sectors. As a part of this planning, the traders of Jaffna were requested to use pure Tamil names on their signboards. In a country, language planning can be a political instrument used by the majority of people to apply power and control, but it can also be used as a politically revolutionary force by minorities, as Williams suggests (509); it happened in Jaffna between 1990 and 1995.

At this point, a brief discussion of the nature of the English speech community in Sri Lanka is essential to get a clear picture of the language contact situation in the Sri Lankan context. As interpreted above, the category of speakers of English in Sri Lanka is “speakers-Y”. These learners learnt English from their childhood, but not as their mother tongue. They did so because English had a special status like an official language, etc. These speakers are found in the former British colonial countries, especially in Asian countries.

Most of the Sri Lankan speech communities learnt English as their second language. Few elite groups learnt it as their first language. When Platt and Weber speak about the development of Singapore-Malayan English, they claim, “Singapore-Malayan English came into being and has developed through education” (16).

Sri Lankan Bilingualism

In the traditional or historical concept of the view on bilingualism, Sri Lanka has been a bilingual country since the occupation of Tamils a few centuries ago. But in the modern sense of life, the word ‘bilingualism’ is

mostly treated as having English as one component, though this is not correct. In that sense, Sri Lanka became a bilingual country with English as one component from the first quarter of the nineteenth century and this process accelerated when English was designated as the only official language in the 1830s.

Sri Lanka's bilingualism has been largely between English and Sinhala (the native language of the Sinhalese majority) and to a lesser extent between English and Tamil (the native language of the minority Tamils), the English language operating during the British colonial period not only as the official language of the country but also as *lingua franca*. Despite the domination of English, both Sinhala and Tamil continued to be taught in schools as vernaculars; English, though, continued until the second part of the 1950s as the official language, finally occupying a place in the country as a 'link' language with the passing of an amendment to the Constitution in 1988.

In 1956, English officially ceased to be the language of administration and was replaced by Sinhala and a restricted use of Tamil. Later, inevitably, it ceased to be the major language of education as well. The linguistic situation in post-independence Sri Lanka is naturally very different and infinitely more complex than it was before 1948. Language choice is no longer the relatively clear-cut affair it was in 1948 and before. Twenty-eight years and a new generation later, we find that there has been a re-ordering in the domains and role-relations in which English and Sinhala are used. English seems to have given way to Sinhala completely in all the public domains. In actuality, neither in public nor personal areas is the situation a simple 'take-over' by Sinhala (and Tamil) from English (Chitra 341-360.).

Co-related factors

The attitudes and perceptions held by Sri Lankans towards all languages spoken in the country, and the links between these views and language policy and planning, are examined by Raheem (Ratwatte & Herath). Raheem deals with the status and role of the three languages in Sri Lanka and how social and individual identities are forged through identification with one or more of these languages. Among these observations, two are of particular significance for the future of the languages and relations among users. Even though language is often cited as a primary reason for divisions between the different language groups in the country, the attitudes of Sinhala and Tamil speakers to the 'other' language show that

there is no significant polarization between the communities. As Raheem states, “The linguistic tolerance and a desire and willingness to accommodate other cultures is an encouraging response for it indicates that in spite of the tragic internecine warfare and displacement of population, attitudes have not hardened into outright rejection and total enmity” (Raheem 2006). The other key insight arising from Raheem’s study is the change taking place in the Sri Lankan linguistic mosaic in the direction of additive bilingualism, with English being increasingly used by the younger generation in domains that were previously reserved for the mother tongue. That bilingualism is considered positively is further confirmed in the view expressed by the academics surveyed for this study: they favor an inclusive policy of providing instruction in all three languages to young children.

This preference for all three languages in education is also echoed in the study by Manique Gunsekera who investigated the extent to which Sri Lankans from different strata accept English as one of the languages in the country and the extent to which they identify with Standard Sri Lankan English (SSLE), the variety they speak. Those surveyed represent leading policy makers subscribing to different political ideologies, university academics, English teachers and a westernized elite from all three ethnic groups, from different regions. All informants except from Jaffna are of the view that all three languages should be used for education; informants from Jaffna prefer English as the medium of instruction. The complexities of linguistic identification in contemporary Sri Lanka however become apparent when this position on the medium of instruction is viewed in conjunction with Raheem’s finding that Tamil speakers identify more with Tamil at a personal level than Sinhala speakers, and are bilingual at home. Regarding the extent of identification with SSLE, although it has gained more acceptance than before, an interesting disparity is noted by Gunsekera (Ratwatte & Herath 1-24), between people in Colombo and the rest of the country. In Colombo, a few politicians and some elite people, albeit a minority, though educated in Sinhala/Tamil and English in Sri Lanka, believe themselves to be speakers of British English, while the rest of the country identifies with SSLE. All, however, believe that the variety that should be taught in schools is SSLE, which supports the decision of policy makers and university academics to use this variety for General English for the G.C.E. (Advanced Level) Examination.

Given that Raheem and Gunsekera (39-54) obtained the information in their studies from different sources, the parallel nature of key findings suggests that while the views expressed reflect the status of English in Sri Lanka in the first decade of the 21st century, they are also crucial for

future policy decisions in language planning and education. One of the common findings is the approbation of English; the Colombo-based academics in Raheem's study see it as a 'useful', 'modern' and 'beautiful' language while the English teachers and academics from other parts of the country as well as the elite in Colombo surveyed by Gunsekera say that it is the 'most prestigious' language in the country. Further, all the politicians interviewed also believe that a majority of Sri Lankans wish to learn English. Thus, even fifty-six years after independence from the British, English still retains its status as the most prestigious language in Sri Lanka. However, the language that has attained this status is not the variety of English introduced by the colonizers but the indigenized Standard Sri Lankan English, the variety that is capable of reflecting the Sri Lankan ethos. Native speakers of this national standard, according to Gunsekera, "represent multilingualism at its best" since all of them are bi- or tri-lingual.

The outcome of these studies also indicates congruence between personal choice and official policy in contemporary Sri Lanka, as evidenced by the views expressed regarding the media of instruction: bilingualism and the approbation of English on the one hand, and the introduction of English medium instruction on the other. The question of whether this phenomenon is to be viewed from an ideological standpoint, where the knowledge of English is seen as a means of gaining individual empowerment, or whether it is to be viewed as the outcome of a subtle exertion of power by the dominant group not through coercion but through consent, thus leading to legitimizing and sustaining the existing power structures, needs to be debated. While drawing our attention to the many facets of English in the multilingual context in general, the debate also brings to light certain critical factors concerning the linguistic future of Sri Lanka. Sri Lankans from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, age groups and with varying levels of education and varying political ideologies, appear to acknowledge that English is part of the linguistic mosaic of Sri Lanka and that knowledge of the language would lead to empowerment intra-nationally as well. Thus, the variety that is increasingly being accepted and identified with, at least as the spoken form, is Standard Sri Lankan English. Another noteworthy trend is the positive attitude extended to the other languages from the linguistic montage of Sri Lanka. The attitudes, particularly of young secondary school children—brought up against the backdrop of a conflict where 'language' is an important concern—to the 'other' language, its literature and culture, are encouraging. A further indicator of the future is the country's movement from monolingualism to bi- or multi-lingualism. It appears that despite, or maybe because of, over

two decades of conflict, the desire to be multilingual has increased rather than diminished.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the views of different ethnic groups on the English language in Sri Lanka over almost two centuries. While a few studies address the subject of English in Sri Lanka in a general way, there is no study that shows the specifics of English usage in the major ethnic communities of Sri Lanka. While there is research on variations of Indian English usage by different ethnic communities in India, there is no such study of the differences in attitudes to English and its usage within Sri Lanka's multi-cultural society. This book fills the gap in such comparative sociolinguistic analysis.

Currently, there is significant interest among international scholars in studying attitudes to English in the field of Postcolonial Studies. This interdisciplinary study examines socio-cultural issues in the light of English Studies and Linguistics. There is an emphasis on the historical background of colonial and postcolonial writings. Contemporary and recent research in postcolonial studies continues to influence views on language and other issues. Helped by the persuasive writings of contemporary writers, we have clearly recognized the need to put textual analysis into this study.

Sri Lankan English

The concept of "Sri Lankan English" (SLE) is explored at the beginning of Passé's *The Use and Abuse of English*, where he uses the term "Ceylon English" to signify the special features of Sri Lankan English (12). Afterwards, Kandiah employs the term "Lankan English" to express the peculiar characteristics of Sri Lankan English. Scholars like Parakrama, Canagarajah and Gunasekera exploit the label "Sri Lankan English" to focus on the unique features of Sri Lankan English, the characters of this speech community and its growth as a language of Sri Lanka. Further, Siromi Fernando, Gunasekera and Parakrama also apply the phrase "Sri Lankan English" when they describe the newly assigned roles of English in Sri Lanka. Since the term "Sri Lankan English" denotes the fresh norms

and customs of its speech community, we prefer to employ the notion “Sri Lankan English” throughout in order to display its peculiar character.

Kandiah, when he speaks about the speech community of “Lankan English”, says “a sizable number of users of English in Sri Lanka habitually use the language as an effective first language for various purposes, some for more and others for less” (“Disinherited Englishes” 86). According to his suggestion, these habitual users acquired the English language very much like English natives’ acquisition of English. That is, they picked up the English language in action. They are all educated elites; they learn English at home and at school, as native speakers learn. Kandiah also accepts that this kind of English language acquired in its spoken form is Lankan, not British English. He proposes that the distinct linguistic characteristics of the Sri Lankan variety of English arose due to the above reasons. Remarkably, Parakrama suggests that uneducated people also speak English in Sri Lanka. This claim must be seriously considered as he cites several pieces of evidence to support it. He remarks that standard Sri Lanka English is spoken only by a handful in terms of the total population at present (*De-hegemonising*, 1995).

Aravinda de Saram (Observer, 25.09.2011) in his review, quotes “Gunesequera, M. points out that the overarching influence of Sinhalese and Tamils on Sri Lankan English is manifested by syntax and morphology of Sri Lankan English (2005)”. However, the question of the existence or non-existence of the variety of English termed Sri Lankan English should best be left to the academics. The rationale behind the promotion of such a regionalised version of English is questionable. In his review, he further quotes Prof. Manique Gunesequera’s definition of Sri Lankan English in her book, *The Post-Colonial Identity of Sri Lankan English*. She defines it as “The language used by Sri Lankans who choose to use English for whatever purpose in Sri Lanka”. The power of the English language lies in its ability to communicate across ethnic, racial and geographical frontiers and its status as a common and perhaps a neutral language. If English is to be promoted as an international language, a language of global communication, it is International Standard English that should be promoted and not a regionalised variety of it.

In the context of postcolonial writers, including Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy, Prof. Gunesequera says:

...These writers may represent plural identities, but they have chosen to write in English: in a variety of English which can be described as international Standard English. This variety is grounded in Sri Lankan

culture, in the same way that Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" (1997) is steeped in Kerala culture, but she, in the case of these Sri Lankan writers, uses international Standard English. This is a variety of English, which is acceptable and understood by an international readership of users of English. (*The Post-Colonial Identity of Sri Lankan English*).

During colonisation, Standard British English was promoted in the colonies as the only way to speak English properly. The British colonies included America, Australia and Canada, as well as countries in Africa and Asia. The varieties of English that developed in these countries during this time, whether they were American English, Sri Lankan English, Indian English, Australian English, Singapore English, Nigerian English or Jamaican English, were looked down on as 'incorrect' and 'substandard'.

However, now, in the 21st century, this attitude has undergone a change. The varieties of English used in most English-speaking countries have now gained legitimacy, and are considered by language experts valid varieties of English. Now, most of these countries use their own variety of English, without a feeling of inferiority to Standard British English. The standard variety of Sri Lankan English, therefore, is the variety of English that is used by the educated speakers of English in this country, and Standard Sri Lankan English is used by them for official and educational purposes, for informal and formal communication, including international communication.

Therefore, speaking English our way, in Sri Lankan English, is primarily an act of freedom from colonisation. It is an assertion of a national and cultural identity, an identity which has now accommodated English as a local language with local speakers and functions, rather than as a 'foreign' language.

Sri Lankan English, far from being 'broken English', or a 'pidgin', has been described as a valid variety of English since 1943, in international and local publications, by academics such as Prof. H A Passé, Thiru Kandiah, Chitra Fernando, Siromi Fernando, Arjuna Parakarama, and Manique Guneseckera. In addition, it has been documented by World Englishes experts such as Prof. Braj Kachru of the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign and Prof. Jennifer Jenkins of the University of Southampton. Such studies attest to the fact that Sri Lankan English is a fully-fledged variety with its own phonology, vocabulary and syntax, with styles ranging from the formal to the informal (D. Fernando "Sri Lankan English and Teaching").

Most Sri Lankans learn English from local teachers speaking Sri Lankan English, although a few learn it at home from their parents, who, once again, speak SLE. So whether we like it or not, it is Sri Lankan English not Standard British English that we have been teaching in the classroom. However, recent studies have shown that many people still think that we speak British English.

Sri Lanka, being a more literate country than many other developing countries and a country where the standard of English has won acclaim, could be made more receptive to English despite prejudicial or chauvinistic politics. It is not easy or practical to place both Standard English as used in Sri Lanka and Lankan English in watertight compartments.

The issue of various types of English examined by Parakrama in his book *De-hegemonising Language Standards: Learning from (Post) Colonial Englishes about 'English'* is wider than that of Standard English spoken by a handful of people in terms of the total population. The observation on Parakrama's theorization of the postcolonial Englishes (or New Varieties of English [NVE], or New Englishes) is a new experience which has to be further studied by those scholars who are interested in a variety of English suitable for Sri Lanka. For our part, we propose to launch into this matter before others, to suggest construction of a model for a variety of English which we call 'Sinenglish', a model that will encompass many speakers of English other than those who speak Standard Lankan English.

The academics, professionals and others who are in authority to launch an action plan desire to devise a model English for Sri Lanka, initially a type of 'Sinenglish' as far as the majority is concerned. This should not in any way be interpreted to mean that Sri Lankan Tamil English has been sidestepped, the Tamil language being rich in vocabulary and literature. But such a variety, that may perhaps be called 'Taminglish', cannot be standardized only in the context of the Sri Lankan experience. The argument is that 'Taminglish', or even the linguistic analysis of the Tamil language in Sri Lanka, has to be viewed in the context of the Indian background. The cultural and linguistic consciousness of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka has always been influenced by developments in India in general, and in South India in particular.

Besides, there have only been a few studies done on 'Taminglish' and they do not cover the subject as such in full. This fact is indirectly confirmed by Suseendirarajah in a paper, when he says in a footnote that "The impact of English on Tamil deserves a detailed and special study" (362). He says

that the continued use of English for more than a century has resulted in two major varieties of English, one variety having influenced Sinhala and the other having influenced Sri Lanka Tamil. He does not go further to articulate this point, but examines the problems faced by the Tamil language as a consequence of Sinhala being given the dominant place in the field of administration. He also notices another peripheral point, that is, “if not for the relegation of English, Tamil would certainly not have gained its present status and developed to its present position in school education” (Suseendirajah 362). He also acknowledges the fact that English has now become “indigenized”, and nouns have been developed without reference to the prestige varieties of Britain or the United States. Regarding the influence of Tamil on English, he makes the remark that the variety of English that is in use among the English educated will soon be replaced by another variety of English whose special marks will be due to the impact of education through Tamil (quoted in Wickramasinge).

It could be argued that there was a time in Sri Lanka when the English language was known by many in the island. How is it, then, that there has been so much disharmony and conflict in the country? We must recognize that having a common language is not the only solution to communal conflict. But perhaps it is possible, through the use of another nation’s language, to see our national problems in a fresh light. Another language, in this instance English, is also an introduction to new ideas, attitudes and concepts which can help break down the barriers of bigotry and conceit. What is needed here is the cross-cultural principle, which can work effectively to bring about an attitude of sanity and goodwill.

Views on English

It is clear from this analysis that Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims use different strategies to express their views on English. The introduction of English education in the nineteenth century had a profound long-term impact on the country’s language policies and practices. This issue emerged as a public concern during the British colonial rule and was a key element of colonial policy for education, missionary work, and administration. These colonial educational policies inevitably resulted in the creation of social elites educated solely in the English language. Despite the increase in the number of schools, those who had the benefits of an English education remained in a minority. As a result, the colonial educational system created a new language hierarchy. But we can, at the same time, also argue that due to the expansion of mass vernacular education, another

large literate audience in vernaculars, mainly in Sinhala, was produced by that same educational context.

Sri Lanka, during its time as a crown colony of Britain and even in the post-independence era, had the English language in an elevated position as the emblem of a privileged class, thus marginalizing the monolingual Sinhala or Tamil speaking majority of the country. During British rule, the English language became the supreme vehicle of social mobility. The importance given to the vernacular languages in national affairs, politics, administration and education had its effect on the standard and quality of English used among the bilinguals in Jaffna society. The future language use in Tamil society, on speculation and from the evidence available, shows that the attitude towards the English language has been changing positively.

In Sri Lankan English, Jaffna English emerged as a distinct variety consisting of a speech community of the northern part of Sri Lanka. While the Jaffna Tamil community has its own indigenous aspects and national temperament, the Jaffna variety of English has begun to signify the peculiarities of Jaffna Tamil consciousness, culture and linguistic richness.

Muslims' and Burghers' views clearly reveal that the Muslims as a minority uplifted their positions from a backward, conservative group to a more developed and progressive ethnic group under the colonial period and maintained their freedom in the postcolonial period as a multilingual society with Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka. They consider themselves as belonging to an independent ethnic group. English is a foreign language to all but a small fraction of the population; "the Europeans, Burghers, and Eurasians together form a little less than 1 percent" (*Ceylon Blue Book* 1907). Since all Government employment depended on the proficiency of candidates' English, there was a predominance of Burghers in Government employment. English speakers from the Burgher community are likely to be far fewer now, due to recent Sinhala and Tamil influence.

The selective overview of the use of English by characters depicted in contemporary Sri Lankan literature shows that Sri Lankan writers often use both speakers of Standard Sri Lankan English and speakers of nonstandard English dialects to depict class distinctions in postcolonial Sri Lankan society. Karunatilaka and Wijesinghe also show the differences in speaking English among all-male groups and all-female groups. And while there is a significant reading public in Sri Lanka for books written in English, the number of books published in Tamil and Sinhala annually

exceeds the number of books published in English. This fact indicates that many Sri Lankans have bilingual reading skills, if not poly-lingual reading skills. And English language skills continue to be highly valued among all the three Sri Lankan communities discussed in this chapter. With the spread of the Sri Lankan diaspora to many English-speaking countries, the production of English language literary texts by Sri Lankans is likely to continue to flourish.

However, as an outcome of the continued use of Portuguese by the Burgher community, Creole Portuguese emerged in Jaffna and Batticaloa in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The speakers of BP are likely to be far fewer now, due to recent Tamil influence. Note that Batticaloa is located on that eastern strip of Sri Lanka where Sinhala is not the primary language. Creole Portuguese was in use among a few families in Jaffna until recently (Smith 160). However, English survives everywhere in Jaffna, unlike other western languages.

The Tamil writers use the language by incorporating indigenous language forms into English to define their socio-political and linguistic identity. The finding reveals the efforts that the writers have taken to rebuild their indigenous reality by bending the English language that is not their own, through the concepts of community and individuals' response to their native identity and to spirituality.

This places the contemporary writings of Jaffna Tamil writers in English within the Sri Lankan postcolonial literary canon and content. By relating the work of resident writers to the internationally acclaimed Jaffna Tamil writers who have left the country during the ethnic strife and violence, this study aims to examine to what extent Jaffna Tamil literary production in English about home has been shaped by various socio-political hegemonies.

Tamil writers use different nativization strategies to express not only their native cultural connotations, but also the varied emotions, ideas and philosophy of the community they have nurtured in a foreign language. This explains the way Jaffna Tamil writers have nativized the English language to explore their socio-linguistic environment through their characters and the setting of the stories by their nativization of context, native similes and metaphors in the English language about their diasporic countries (Sivagowry).

We need the English language in order to talk with our own brethren as well as to widen the perimeters of knowledge. It is up to the legislators and

administrators, the teachers and the taught, to see to it that English continues to be used in such a manner as will justify regarding it as an agent of unity—fostering national unity, while maintaining a continuing dialogue with the wider world.

Today we are in a different position. After the sound and the fury have subsided, we can look back to that fortunate era when people had the benefits of an English education. Is this an attempt to idealize the past? One certainly does not wish to go back to the past. Sri Lankans have become increasingly aware of the value of their indigenous heritage. But commercially, educationally, nationally and internationally, in terms of the pursuit of knowledge and the advancement of civilization, the facility of the English language is indeed an enviable asset.

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