

## CHANGES IN SRI LANKAN ENGLISH AS REFLECTED IN PHONOLOGY

By

DR. (Mrs.) SIROMI FERNANDO B. A., Ph. D.

*Senior Lecturer*

*Department of English, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

Linguistic studies of English as it is used in Sri Lanka have over the years distinguished a variety that has been variously labelled "Ceylon English", "Lankan English" and "Sri Lankan English." Studies of and references to this variety in H.A. Passé (1948) and (1955), Doric de Souza (1969), John Halverson (1966), Thiru Kandiah (1965), (1973), (1978) and (1979), and Chitra Fernando (1976) have discussed its phonology, grammar, syntax, vocabulary and stylistic features.

In the present paper, I suggest that Sri Lankan English<sup>1</sup> is in a state of change today. I outline the main aspects of this change, and make 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.<sup>2</sup>

Before analysing the changes that are taking place today, it is necessary to summarise the main features of the earlier variety of SLE. In this summary, I draw largely on descriptions given in Kandiah (1979) and Chitra Fernando (1976), keeping closest 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 organisation and which its habitual users acquired in that form as a first language."<sup>3</sup>

### Summary of Earlier Variety of SLE

First, SLE is a variety that is used as an L1 by a large number of its users. Kandiah (1979) claims "to begin with, Lankan English is by no means a foreign or second language, in any real sense of these terms, to a considerable number of its users who determine its distinctive nature."<sup>4</sup> In support of this claim he quotes figures given in W. A. Coates (1961). Coates gives 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.

Today, in 1985, numbers have changed, factors for change being increases resulting from population increase, and decreases resulting from emigration and the changed linguistic situation in the country. (Census figures for 1981 give the total population as 14,850,001,<sup>5</sup> and the number of those able to read and write English in the Colombo District English/as 368,369.)<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless it would still be safe to say that a body of persons to whom SLE is an L 1 exists.

Kandiah (1979) also defines SLE in terms of its acquisition by this body of speakers who use it as an L 1. He describes it as a language that is "picked up" "in action" at home, and in school. Examining its structure, he recognises 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."<sup>7</sup> This is different to 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 model 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."<sup>8</sup> Thus, SLE in his definition is no longer the outcome of an attempt to learn Std. E., but a system and variety that is acquired in its established form.

Kandiah also defines SLE in terms of its function: "a sizeable number of users of English in Sri Lanka habitually use the language as an effective first language for various of their purposes, some for more and others for less of them"<sup>9</sup> 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. My feeling is that 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 (1943) comments that "English was adopted by many educated people as their first language."<sup>10</sup> The link between education and the class which used English as an L 1 is clear also in other writers like Doric de Souza (1969) and Chitra Fernando (1976).

### SLE as an L 1 and L 2

It is significant at this stage to note that there also existed in Sri Lanka a large number of persons who used English as an L 2. This is clear from Coates' projections for 1961. As in the case of Sri Lankans to whom English was an L 1, the norm for these speakers would have been SLE, and not Std. E. However, in terms of the acquisition of SLE, and the functions for which they used it, these two groups differ, both earlier and now. These differences between the two groups are given in Tables 1 - 4.<sup>11</sup> The variety of English used by L 2 speakers would only more or less equate to the system of SLE.

Chitra Fernando (1976) gives an insightful analysis of the use of English in Sri Lanka with reference to the bilingualism of many users. She distinguishes three groups of English and Sinhala bilinguals. Her Group One corresponds mainly to those to whom SLE is an L 1 in terms of the preceding discussion. She describes them as having "a highly Anglicised life style and speaking a virtually uniform variety of English whatever its racial origin ... Such bilinguals are typically members of the legal, medical and educational professions, civil servants, commercial executives etc. at the top and middle of the social scale; at the lower end are clerks, nurses, stenographers etc, who would shade off into Group Two depending on their pronunciation and the degree to which they use English in domestic or social intercourse."<sup>12</sup> She classifies this group further on the axis of the variety of English they use, i.e. on the phonological, grammatical, lexical and stylistic features of their variety of English.

Fernando does not distinguish however between those who use English as an L 1, and those who use it as an L 2. It is important to note here therefore that earlier, a large number of those who used English as an L 2, but probably came into Chitra Fernando's "lower end" of the social scale, would have used the same variety of English, SLE. They would have themselves, to a greater or lesser degree been distinct from Group Two, whom Fernando describes as follows: "generally of peasant, lower-middle or working - class origin, (who) would regard English very much as a foreign language. . . Differences of racial origin would show up quite clearly in this group. The English pronunciation of this group would set them apart not only from native speakers but also from... Group One."<sup>13</sup>

My contention here is that Group One subsumes both L 1 and L 2 users of SLE, while Group Two comprises only those who use English as an L 2 or foreign language, but who use a variety that is neither Std. E. nor SLE. L 1 and L 2 users of English within Group One on the other hand, both use SLE, but differ in the ways shown in Tables 1 - 4, both earlier and today. Chitra Fernando also gives three very interesting tables of the domains and role-relations in which middle-class Sinhala bilinguals used English,<sup>14</sup> used Sinhala,<sup>15</sup> and of language choice in present-day (i.e. 1976) Ceylon.<sup>16</sup> I feel that language choice for these two categories of bilinguals would be different, especially today, and tabulate the language choice of the L 1 speaker earlier and today (i.e. 1985) in Tables 5 and 6. As Chitra Fernando notes in 1976, "The most striking feature marking the use of English and Sinhala in present-day Sri Lanka is the invasion by Sinhala of almost all the areas held by English alone."<sup>17</sup> Though less obvious, also interesting is a feature revealed in Tables 5 and 6 of a reverse use of English in fields where only Sinhala was used earlier, e.g. with domestics in the home, or the marketman.

The differentiation of L 1 and L 2 users also shows up fields, mostly in the domain of family, where English still has a monopoly. This does not emerge in Chitra Fernando's Figure 3, which is a more general presentation of "language choice among Sinhala bilinguals in present-day Ceylon."

#### **Re-definition of SLE Today**

I would contend that the situation today, in 1985, has changed further since the analyses of both Chitra Fernando (1976) and Kandiah (1979), and continues in a state of major change. I would re-define the current situation as follows. This re-definition characterises the L 1, rather than the L 2, user of SLE.

Socially, the speaker of SLE today is (generally) privileged, affluent, upper or upper middle-class, with a tradition of formal westernised education behind him, usually educated in urban schools, many of them private; also with a tradition of anglicised cultural patterns, in employment generally in the professions, learned occupations and upper rungs of the government or commercial hierarchy. Although still socially privileged, he is less assured today of these privileges than earlier.

In terms of language acquisition, he still acquires English at home. This is reinforced at school only in a few urban private schools where English continues as the official medium of extra-curricular activities. At home, English is still acquired for speech by the age of five at the latest, and what is acquired is the established variety, SLE. Socially, the younger generation, but also all speakers of SLE, are more mobile and interactive today. They interact more than earlier with those to whom SLE is not an L1, both in Sinhala and a variety of English that is neither Std. E. nor SLE. In the case of interaction in English, he is exposed to the non-Std. E., non-SLE variety mainly in listening, but in some cases he may use this other variety as well.

Thus, in terms of the acquisition process, SLE remains unchanged. However, once acquired, it no longer achieves the same rapid supremacy as earlier.<sup>18</sup> It now receives less reinforcement at school, as medium of instruction, extra-curricular activities or conversation. In addition, the SLE speaker's early contact with Sinhala no longer wanes as dramatically as it did before.<sup>19</sup> He retains contact with situations in which Sinhala is used, and with Sinhala speaking groups that are socially more influential than before.<sup>20</sup> In many instances, if his Sinhala is defective, he is now at the receiving end of linguistic discrimination.<sup>21</sup> The group he interacts with in Sinhala are economically, politically, socially or educationally often his equals, sometimes his superiors. They are an assertive and upward mobile group, while he himself belongs to an endangered species. Educationally, and in terms of status, the English language weapon he wields,<sup>22</sup> still gives him an edge over this group, but the liberalism of his anglicised cultural background, and the ideological and moral framework he has inherited, ironically enough from this very westernisation, often gives him a sense of guilt and embarrassment about this slight edge, and triggers off in him an attempt to identify with the other group.

In terms of his proficiency in Sinhala, he now uses a far better-formed variety. In earlier times, his proficiency in Sinhala was very low, inadequate in its grasp of phonology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary, register and style. Today his proficiency is quite good, his morphology and syntax are smoother, pronunciation less anglicised. In addition, he has a command of a greater range of styles and registers. In style, he is able to manipulate neutral and formal styles smoothly.<sup>23</sup> Some of this group handle even informal styles without embarrassment, though familiar and rigid styles may still be absent in the repertoire of many. The SLE speaker's greatest problems would still be in the areas of casual colloquial Sinhala vocabulary, culture-bound items like idioms and proverbs, and traditional uses of language like salutations to elders and religious dignitaries, or conversational exchange on ceremonial occasions.

Ragged code-switching and transference of lexical items across languages is also a feature of their bilingualism, as noted by Chitra Fernando.<sup>24</sup> Ragged code-switching however is a feature for only some in this group. Such bilinguals code-switch frequently and easily, for purposes of translation, stylistic effects like emphasis, humour, sarcasm or no definable purpose. For others, however, there would be an element of self-consciousness or compulsion in the choice of language, and in code-switching.

In addition, Sinhala is no longer the neglected vernacular it was earlier. It is elaborating steadily into a flexible modern language capable of being used for communication in a wide gamut of modern educational and social issues.<sup>25</sup> It is still not used widely as a language of modern scientific research, and does not have a vocabulary capable of manning some specialised technical registers,<sup>26</sup> but its flexibility and communicative capacity is considerable, and increasing steadily (a very recent advance is in the register of advertising).

## Results of Changes in SLE

As a result of these changes, SLE is an uncertain variety today. It is characterised by the SLE speaker's own lack of assurance. It is also far more open to pressure from Sinhala. Because of the SLE user's enhanced contact with Sinhala, he has once again become vulnerable to the psychological processes of transference etc. Because Sinhala is socially more influential than earlier, and because of his own embarrassment about his proficiency in English, his desire to conform to the patterns of the other group, including the linguistic patterns of Sinhala, is on the increase. Because Sinhala is once more a dynamic, modern language, it offers more exciting resources on which he can draw.

My point is that SLE is currently in a process of change, and that it is forming itself afresh in response to changed sociolinguistic conditions. I wish to discuss current changes in the phonology of SLE in order to demonstrate the more general features of change in the variety as a whole.

### The Phonology of SLE

The phonology of SLE (or Ceylon English) is analysed in great detail in Passé (1948). Some of its aspects are thoroughly discussed in Kandiah (1965). Chitra Fernando (1976) also comments on some phonological features of SLE. The variety described is largely the same in all three cases. However, certain changes in phonology have been asserting themselves with a greater degree of acceptance over the last decade or so, and these illustrate the overall direction of change in SLE as a whole.

In the following discussion of these changes, I classify areas of clear difference between Std. E. and the earlier variety of SLE, areas of slight difference, and problem areas encountered by learners which exhibit features different to both Standard and Sri Lankan speech. I then outline in relation to these three areas, the nature of the current changes.

#### Consonants.

In Consonants, areas in which SLE differs clearly from Std. E. are as follows :

1. The absence of aspiration in initial voiceless plosives.<sup>27</sup>
2. The use of slightly retroflex sounds where Std. E. uses alveolar plosives. Passé<sup>28</sup> and Kandiah<sup>29</sup> classify the Sri Lankan sounds as retroflex [t] and [d]. De Souza (1969) refers to "our slightly retroflex pronunciation of t and d."<sup>30</sup> I would classify the Sri Lankan "t" and "d" as slightly post-alveolar and slightly retroflex, the degree of how slightly varying with respect to the degree of formality in style. For example, in very relaxed, intimate, colloquial speech the point of articulation

would be further back, and the tongue more retroflexed. In formal conversation with non-intimate and prestigious groups the point of articulation would be alveolar. In general, many of these features in which the difference from Standard speech is one of degree, variation will occur along this scale of formality.

3. The use of dental plosives [t] and [d] where Standard English uses the fricatives [θ] and [ð].<sup>31</sup>
4. The use of a flap articulation [r] rather than the frictionless continuant of Standard English for initial [r].<sup>32</sup>
5. The use of a "clear" l in final position where Standard English uses a "dark" [ɫ].
6. The use of a labio-dental frictionless continuant [v] for both Standard English [v] and [w] initially.<sup>33</sup> Kandiah suggests that the single Sri Lankan phoneme /v/ used for both Standard English /v/ and /w/ has two allophones, a labio-dental and a bilabial frictionless continuant, and that SLE selects only the labio-dental allophone in this position. I feel that in final position, e.g. in *leave*, *have*, the Sri Lankan speaker moves from labio-dental frictionless continuant [v] to a fricative [v] along the scale of formality referred to earlier, with respect to variation in style.

Areas of slight difference in Consonants are as follows :

1. The degree of lip rounding in the labial sounds generally, but particularly in [f] and [w]. The degree is dependent on the scale of formality referred to earlier, although these consonants are never accompanied in SLE with as much labialisation as in Std. E.
2. Another slight deviation, again dependent on a scale of formality is the doubling of a final consonant in a stressed syllable when it is followed by an initial vowel in the next syllable, accompanied by an absence of juncture over word boundaries. This is usually found in informal and intimate, or friendly conversation, frequently in lexical items that are marked as specially Sri Lankan, or close to the Sri Lankan heart. Examples are the articulations given below of the following words and phrases.

#### Phrases

'come 'up	[kʌmmʌp]	
'can 'easily	[kaenni : zili]	
'push 'off	[puʃ/ʃf]	(SLE : slangy "go" or "move off")
'match 'over	[matʃ/tʃo : və]	(SLE : slangy "That's the end of that")

### Single words

'fully	[fulli]	(as in "He got fully involved.")
'pretty	[pritti]	(as in "He was pretty good.")
'finished	[finni/t]	(Halverson (1966) quotes the SLE use of "Finished!" as a general exclamation for any kind of bad or unpleasant result, e.g. "If I go without telling the home people, finished!" <sup>34</sup> )

The absence of juncture in groups such as the following is a related area :

'not to	[nottu]	(as in a sharp order "Not to!" from a Sri Lankan mother to a child)
'what to	[vɔttu]	(as in a typically Sri Lankan statement "What to do, men? That's life!")
'lot to	[lottu]	(as in a relaxed, informal style of "He'll have a lot to answer for.")

Problem areas for Sinhala learners in the area of Consonants are as follows<sup>35</sup>

1. The voiced alveolar fricative [z] of Std. E. and SLE. Kandiah notices the use of a semi-voiced [ʒ], or overcorrection, e.g. *sees* [zi : z] in these contexts.<sup>36</sup>
2. The p/f differentiation. Both Passe<sup>37</sup> and Kandiah<sup>38</sup> claim that SLE uses a voiceless bilabial fricative [F] where the English /f/ occurs. Passe describes "a voiceless bilabial fricative, made with spread lips, the friction heard is produced by blowing air between the lips, which are brought loosely together." I feel that the sound is not bilabial but clearly labio-dental, although lip movement is often laxer than for the Standard English sound, and the degree of friction varies once again with respect to a scale of formality. Kandiah describe the range of sounds that the Sinhala learner uses in this context as bilabial plosive [p], weak bilabial fricative [ɸ] or an affricate [pɸ].<sup>39</sup> Overcorrection as in *paddy fields* [ɸ aedi ɸ δ i:ls] also occurs.
3. The confusion and indiscriminate-use of [s] and [ʃ].<sup>40</sup>
4. The unvoicing, sometimes partial, of finalvoiced plosives.<sup>41</sup>
5. The neutralisation of final nasals to the velar [ŋ] as come *come tomorrow* [kaŋ tumə:ro].



6. The breaking up of consonant clusters both initially and finally by dropping consonants, e.g. *driver* [dai√ər], *typists* [taipis], *fruit* [put], or inserting vowels, e.g. *station* [isteefən] *problem* [pərobələm], Kandiah also notes two other interesting ways of dealing with the problem,<sup>42</sup> by replacing difficult sounds with easier ones, e.g. *nibs* [nips], or metathesis, e.g. *risked* [rikst].
7. Final /v/. It was noted earlier that SLE moved from a labio-dental frictionless continuant [v] to a fricative [v] in such contexts as *leave*, *have*. The learner however, as Kandiah notes,<sup>43</sup> uses either a diphthong, e.g. [li:u], [hɛu], or selects a bilabial allophone of /v/, e.g. [li:ʌ], [hɛʌ].

Today, the areas of change in Consonants are characteristically either a sharpening of earlier areas of slight difference, or a growing infringement of learner problems into accepted SLE usage. There is also a growing acceptance in neutral styles of forms that were sanctioned earlier only at very familiar and casual levels. Thus the doubling of consonants (Slight Differences 2) in casual styles, now occurs with less reference to a scale of formality. Many speakers may now in more formal contexts like university lectures use this feature without self-consciousness, e.g. for *come up* in a statement like "Such problems frequently come up in the examination of ....." where earlier the formality of style and technicality of register would have precluded the presence of this feature. Younger university lecturers, particularly those without Humanities or Arts backgrounds, i.e. from Faculties of Science, Engineering, etc., often demonstrate this feature, while older counterparts, or speakers of SLE from Arts and Law Faculties do not. Many of these however, may be those to whom SLE is an L 2.

s/z differentiation was earlier a learner problem, and SLE was demarcated from such interlanguages by the presence of this differentiation. Passé, as at many other points in his description, does not distinguish clearly between SLE usage and that of learners in this area, and mentions the use of a partially unvoiced [z] in initial position, and a weak [s] or a partially unvoiced [z] in intervocalic and medial positions, e.g. *husband* [hasbænd].<sup>44</sup> Kandiah discusses this area as a learner problem, but observes that "even in the speech of many who speak Ceylon English fluently, there is a tendency at times to slip into a half-voiced [s]."<sup>45</sup> Today's change is that the tendency to "slip into" a half-voiced fricative is gaining ground in significant ways. Firstly, it is heard among westernised, educated, socially prestigious persons with an apparently anglicised life-style, who in other respects may be marked as speakers of SLE. It is often heard, among teachers, instructors and lecturers of English not merely in secondary but also in tertiary institutions; or in the speech of some television announcers who in dress and appearance exhibit a high degree of westernisation. Secondly

the social sanctions that operated against its inclusion in the system of SLE (de Souza's "unintentional smile" or "raised eyebrow"<sup>46</sup>) rarely operates today. Thirdly, the speaker of SLE who does not include this feature in his system may still use it for certain purposes in other contexts, e.g. when using loan words from English in Sinhala as in *husband* (hasbənt) or *bull-dozer* (buldo:sə); or in slow, careful, repetitive speech to a learner who fails to understand a first articulation that contained strongly voiced fricatives. Thus, although admittedly in other contexts, this speaker is already vulnerable to a breakdown of voicing in alveolar fricatives. Fourthly, the speaker of SLE who includes this feature frequently lives in a less isolated social context than the one who does not. As the social interactivity of the speaker of SLE increases, his vulnerability to this feature also appears to increase. Finally, SLE today allows for a range of variation in this feature. As a result, a child is presented with an uncertain system at this point. Change is therefore more likely to move in the direction of the sound used by the majority than that acquired within the immediate family. In fact, children of parents who use a conservative SLE system are increasingly bi-dialectal on such points today, using the parental system within the family, and a more democratic one within the peer-group.

Where the change does occur, it is most frequent medially, *absurd* [aɛbsə:t], *exaggerate* [ɛksædʒɛrɛ:t], and only then finally, *boys* [bɔiʒ], *comes* [kamɪz], where a partially unvoiced [ʒ] may be used. It is still rare in SLE initially, e. g. *zoo* [zu:].

[ʒ] is another sound that is currently subject to change. In final position, in words such as *beige*, *rouge*, *camouflage*, *barrage*, most speakers today use the affricative [dʒ], whereas earlier the [ʒ] pronunciation still had prestige value. Medially, a growing number of speakers, usually those to whom SLE is an L 2, often the younger group, use [f] as in *measure* [mɛʃɛ], *corrosion* [kərəʃən].

In final /v/, where the speaker of SLE moved earlier between frictionless continuant [√] and fricative [v], the diphthong or bilabial allophone (Λ) used by the learner is more frequently heard; or the final consonant is omitted as in *five minutes* [fai minits], *five credits* [fai kredits], or very weakly articulated. As in the case of s/z, this occurs even among those who in other aspects of social position and power, dress and appearance, and general life-style, conform to the pattern of the speaker of SLE; also among teachers and instructors of English. Generally however, it is still not found in the system of those to whom SLE is an L 1; social sanctions still operate mildly against it; the speaker who ranges from [√] to [v] never selects [Λ] or a diphthong even for special purposes of intelligibility or in loan words. For these purposes he would only move along a scale of friction.

Other features discussed under learner problems are still clearly marked as such, and remain unacceptable in SLE. Thus SLE and learner interlanguages are still differentiated by the absence in the latter of the p/f differentiation, the

indiscriminate use of s/f, the devoicing of final plosives, the neutralisation of final nasals, and the breaking up of consonant clusters. Two slight intrusions however, should be mentioned :

The loss of syllabic consonants [l], (m), (ŋ) through the inclusion of the optional [ə] noted in Daniel Jones' *English Pronouncing Dictionary* in such words as *organisation*, *uncle*. In some of these contexts, Daniel Jones includes an optional [ə], e.g. [ɔ:gənaɪzəɪʃ (ə)n], but not in others, e.g. [ʌŋkl].

In an over-used word like *timetable*, a Sri Lankanised pronunciation [taɪntəbəl] is heard in the speech of those who in other contexts use all three nasals in final position, without neutralising these to [ŋ].

Thus, although several features demarcate the consonant system of SLE from patterns that occur among learners, there is today an area of change which is characterised by a new vulnerability to the patterns of Sinhala, a range of variant forms, and an uncertainty in the system.

### Vowels

In the area of Vowels, areas in which SLE differs from Std. E. are as follows :

1. The quality of simple vowels. Passè notes that "the long vowels in the Ceylon pronunciation of English are shorter than those heard in similar phonetic contexts and under similar phonetic conditions in Received Pronunciation."<sup>47</sup>
2. The use of long vowels (e:) and (o:) in SLE where Std. E. uses the diphthongs [ei] and [ou]. Some Tamil speakers of SLE use [ei] when there is an *i* in spelling, e.g. *bait* [beɪt], but a long vowel [e:] if there is not, e.g. *bate* [be:t].<sup>48</sup>
3. The use of [o:] in some contexts where Std. E. uses [ɔ:] or [œ]. Passè notices that the spelling combinations *ore*, *our*, *oar* and some words with *or*, which are pronounced [ɔ] in Std. E., are articulated with [o:] in SLE. Examples are *bore*, *pour*, *boar*, *port*, while other words with *or*, e.g. *sort* are given the same pronunciation as in Std. E.<sup>49</sup> Spelling combination *oor* also falls into this group, e.g. *door*.
4. The use of a short back rounded half-close vowel [o] in words like *omit* [omit], *co-operate* [koʊpəreɪt], *momentous* [momentəs] where Std. E. would use [ou], e.g. [oumit], [koʊpəreɪt], [moumentəs].
5. The difference in the quality of diphthongs.<sup>50</sup> Std. E. uses falling diphthongs, whereas in SLE the first element is only slightly more prominent than the second element. SLE diphthongs are also usually shorter than the corresponding Std. E. sounds.

6. The use of the diphthong [ea] where Std. E. uses [eə], e.g. *there* [Std.E. eə, SLE. *ðea*.<sup>51</sup>
7. The use of long vowels where Std. E. uses diphthongs in some contexts before *r*.<sup>52</sup> Spelling combinations *er*, *ar*, *ur* fall into this category. *serious* [Std. E. siəriəs SLE. si:ri:əs], *parent* [Std.E. peərənt SLE. pe:rənt], *fury* [Std. E. fjuri SLE. fju:ri], while combinations *ear*, *eer*, *air*, are pronounced [iə] and [eə] as in Std. E., e.g. *fear*, *career*, *dairy*.
8. In the diphthongs [ai], [ɔi], [au] the final element comes fairly close to the frictionless continuants [j] and [w] in casual colloquial speech, i.e. on the furthest point of the scale of formality, e.g. "so, *how how?*" [haw] in the sense of "And how are you,?" "Why, why?" [waj] in a persistent question, "Boy!" [bɔj] in a sharp summons to a servant.
9. The diphthongisation of the triphthong [aue] or the use of a long vowel as in *hour* [Std.E. auə SLE.aa, aə], *flour* [Std. E. flauə SLE. flaa], *flower* [Std.E. flauə SLE. flaa].
10. A slight tendency to replace the middle element of triphthongs [aue] and [aiə] with bilabial or palatal frictionless continuants in casual, colloquial styles, e.g. *power* [paʋə] as in casual "He's got a lot of power" *fire* [fajə] as in casual "There was a big fire."
11. The use of [a] for final *a*, *ah* in unstressed syllables where Std. E. uses [e],<sup>53</sup> e.g. *America* [Std.E. əmerikə SLE. əmerika], *verandah* [Std.E. vərənda SLE. vərənda].
12. The non-use of the neutral vowel in weak forms of words like *at*, *for*, *of*, *to*, *do*, *should*, *would* etc.<sup>54</sup>
13. The tendency to use the neutral vowel [ə], or a sound intermediate between the full vowel [e] and [ə] in all unstressed vowels in final syllables. Passè gives a full list which includes Past Tense and Past Participle forms with *ed*, e.g. *selected*, Third Person Singular Present forms in *es*, e.g. *marches*, plurals in *es*, e.g. *nurses*, and other suffixes: *-ach*, e.g. *spinach*, *-age* e.g. *message*, *-ain* e.g. *captain*, *-ate* e.g. *fortunate*, *-ege/edge* e.g. *college*, *knowledge*, *-en* e.g. *chicken*, *ess* e.g. *mistress*, *-est* e.g. *dearest*, *-et* e.g. *ticket*, *-less* e.g. *careless*, *-ness* e.g. *darkness*.<sup>55</sup>

The areas of clear difference remain unchanged today. However, slight deviations, as in Consonants, are becoming greater in degree or wider in distribution. Where degrees of deviation occur along a scale of formality, a deviation that was seen only in casual styles, might now occur in less casual ones. For

example, deviation 8 above, i.e. the move in the second element of diphthongs [ai], [ɔi], [au] towards bilabial and palatal frictionless continuants in easy colloquial styles in becoming more widespread. So is deviation 10 above, the similar move in the middle elements of triphthongs [aie] and [auə].

These areas of change are marked off from learner problems. The main problem that demarcates learner interlanguages from SLE is the substitution of a closer back vowel [o] where Std.E. uses [ɔ],<sup>56</sup> e.g. *not* [not], *caught* (ko:t). The use of [o] in SLE in a few contexts where Std.E. uses [ɔ] has already been noted - *bore*, *pour*, *door* etc., i.e. deviation 3 above. In such cases, the speaker differentiates between the pronunciation of *caught*, and *court* which are pronounced alike in Std.E., but not between *court* and *coat* which are pronounced differently in Std.E. The Sinhala learner pronounces all three alike as [ko:t]. This is tabulated in Table 7.

As an additional problem, the Sinhala learner frequently works with only three levels of openness for back vowels in opposition to four in SLE. He generally uses the three back vowels of Sinhala, close [u], mid [o], open [a].<sup>54</sup> The back vowel phonemes of SLE are close [u], half-close [ɔ], half-open [ʌ, ɔ], open [a]. Consequently, the back mid vowel of Sinhala is used for both SLE [o] and [ɔ]. As a result, in the articulation of *caught* the learner uses a closer sound than acceptable in SLE. Similarly, in *coat* his sound is more open than acceptable. This learner problem is demarcated from SLE as earlier, and as changing today. It is frequently heard however in the L-2 user of English whom Chitra Fernando (1976) classifies as Group Two, and with whom the speaker of SLE interacts increasingly in contexts in which English is spoken.

### Stress.

In the use of Stress, areas in which SLE differs from Std. E. are as follows:

1. All stressing in SLE is comparatively weak. Passè notes that "words and syllables that are prominent in RP become less prominent and some of the unstressed syllables are raised to an almost equal degree of prominence with the stressed ones."<sup>58</sup> Several differentiable degrees of stress are not used as in Std.E., e.g. *photographic* (Std. E. fou<sup>2</sup> - tə grae<sup>1</sup> - fik<sup>3</sup>), instead only strong and weak stress operate, e.g.

Str	Wk	Wk	Wk	
[SLE.				The strongly stressed syllable is only
	foo - tə - grae - fik].			

slightly more prominent than the others. This differentiation would however vary in degree with respect to the scale of formality.

2. The incorrect placing of stress on the first syllable.<sup>59</sup> Representative examples from Passè are *address* [Std.E. ə'dres SLE. 'edres], *advertisement* [Std.E. əd'vətisment SLE. 'ae dvə: tismənt], *America* [Std.E. ə'merikə SLE. 'emərika].

However, although these pronunciations were current earlier, the Std.E. forms were the more widely used in SLE, and the sanctions mentioned by de Souza<sup>60</sup> were likely to have operated against them.

3. Stress incorrectly placed on the second syllable.<sup>61</sup> Passè attributes this to the tendency in Sinhala to give prominence to the second syllable if it is longer than the first. Representative examples are *atmosphere* [Std.E. 'aetməsfie SLE. aet'məsfie], *monarch* [Std.E. 'mənək SLE. mənək].
4. In general, the tendency to front stress in polysyllabic words in SLE leads to patterns like *apostolic* [Std.E. ae pəds' tɒlik SLE. ae' δpəstɒlik].

Changes today have led to the replacement of subtle movement along a scale of formality in the degree of stress differentiation with two fairly clear styles, neutral and formal. Casual to neutral styles all use a single pattern similar to that given as SLE in 1 above. The formal style uses a combination of strong (what could sound artificially strong in the Sri Lankan system) and very weak stresses. This falling together of a range of styles is typical of SLE today.

In 2 above, the use of the forms given as Sri Lankan is more widespread today. The sanctions against them do not operate. In fact, they sometimes operate in the reverse, and those who still use the Std.E. forms could be considered a dinosaur breed, or affected. Other examples in which pronunciation with fronted stress are commonly used today are given below. The Std.E. pronunciation of these words too however is also current.

With *a* : ability, assess, absurd, additional administration, immaterial.

With *o* : observe, occur, offend, confession.

With *u* : submit, suppress, sufficient, support.

As regards 4 above, there is a large amount of socially sanctioned variation today in the placing of stress and the pronunciation of vowels in polysyllabic words. This variation is not systematic. For example, there is marked confusion in the placement of stress in words of the following type even among conservative L1 speakers of SLE.

	Noun	Verb
object	'ɒbd <sub>3</sub> ekt	əb'd <sub>3</sub> ekt
suspect	'sʌspekt	səs'pekt
colleague	'kɒli:g	
contact	'kɒntaekt	kən'taekt
convict	'kɒnvikt	kən'vikt

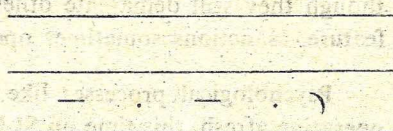
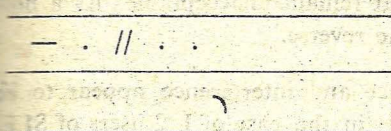
Many speakers confuse Noun and Verb forms, e.g. using either ['sʌspekt] or [səs'pekt] for both, either ['kɒntaekt] or [kən'taekt] for both, or [kə'li:g] for the noun *colleague*. It might be expected that the speaker who uses ['sʌspekt] for Verb, would also use ['kɒntaekt], but this is not necessarily so. Thus variation is unsystematic even within the speech of a single speaker. This confusion seems indicative of a more general feature of uncertainty in SLE as a whole today. 1985 SLE is no longer an established or assured variety.

### Intonation

In the area of Intonation, the main difference in SLE is in the use of flatter intonation curves than in Std.E.<sup>62</sup> This is illustrated in the tunes of Std..E. and SLE given in Passè<sup>63</sup> for the question "What am I to do?" reproduced below :

Std.E.

SLE



'wɒt əm aɪ tə 'du: /

'wɒt aem 'ay tu 'du: /

This difference remains unchanged. However, earlier the range of tunes used in SLE varied subtly with a move towards Std.E. tunes, depending on formality of style. Today this subtle sharpening of curves to match formality is less evident. It is replaced by the use of the flatter curve in all styles from casual to neutral, with a sharpened (sometimes exaggeratedly sharpened in L 2 speakers) curve in formal styles. This parallels the replacement of a range of degrees of stress differentiation by two main patterns.

### Spelling Pronunciations

A further change in pronunciation today is the extension of spelling or orthographic pronunciations. In addition to those noted by Passè,<sup>64</sup> are a number of others today of the type *Asia* [e:ʃiə], *Russia* [rʌʃiə], *thorough* [təro:]. This is indicative of a change in acquisition habits. SLE is still learnt "in action," but in limited or lessened speech action, where speakers operate with reduced vocabularies in speech, but larger vocabularies in reading.

## Conclusion

Changes in the phonology of SLE today mirror the following patterns of change in the variety as a whole. SLE today is an uncertain system at many points. A large number of variant forms are acceptable at several of these points, and these variations are sometimes unsystematic, even within the speech of a single speaker. Children who acquire SLE as an established variety, are confronted with this uncertain system, and are often bi-dialectal in these indeterminate areas.

There is a simplification of the subtle scale of formality along which the speaker of SLE adjusted from familiar to formal styles. Earlier characteristically SLE patterns were accepted largely in familiar, casual styles, and as a speech situation increased in formality, the speaker shifted closer to Std.E. patterns. Now a single SLE pattern is increasingly used without variation in familiar to neutral styles, and a second pattern closer to Std.E. and more sharply differentiated from the SLE one is used in formal styles. Thus a range of styles is collapsing into two more clearly demarcated ones.

There is a growing acceptance of a few patterns that earlier belonged to the area of learner problems and were marked as unacceptable by the operation of social sanctions. These sanctions do not operate at these points today, though they still demarcate other areas that remain unacceptable. As a new feature, sanctions sometimes operate in the reverse.

Psychological processes like transference and interference appear to be operating afresh, this time on SLE, especially in the case of L 2 users of SLE. The SLE speaker in general is characterised by a tremendous new vulnerability to the patterns of Sinhala.

The L 1 user of SLE remains isolated in his adherence to some features of the earlier system, and in his still almost exclusive use of English in the domain of the Family.

Siromi Fernando  
Department of English  
University of Colombo, Sri Lanka  
1985.



1. In subsequent references "Sri Lankan English" will be referred to as "SLE" and "Standard as "Std. E."
2. Kandiah (1979) *Navasilu* 3 p. 83 refutes that SLE is a "semi-formed aberrant variety of English that results from the 'attempts' of Sri Lankans to learn the language in its 'standard' form".
3. Kandiah (1979) *Navasilu* 4 p. 92.
4. Kandiah (1979) *Navasilu* 3 p. 83.
5. Department of Census and Statistics *Population Tables : Preliminary Release No. 2* (1981)
6. Department of Census and Statistics *Colombo District Report* (1981).
7. Kandiah (1979) *Navasilu* 3 pp. 86-7.
8. Kandiah op. cit. p. 82.
9. Kandiah op. cit. p. 86.
10. H. A. Passè (1943) reprinted in *Navasilu* 3 p. 13.
11. In this paper, I deal only with Sinhala speakers of SLE. Thus, comments on proficiency in Sinhala and use of Sinhala will at most be only partially relevant to SLE users of other ethnic groups. Changes in SLE generally and as reflected in phonology too will be discussed only from the angle of the Sinhala user of SLE.
12. Chitra Fernando (1976) pp. 348-9.
13. op. cit. p. 351.
14. op. cit. Figure 1 on p. 345.
15. op. cit. Figure 2 on p. 346.
16. op. cit. Figure 3 on p. 347.
17. op. cit. p. 348.
18. Kandiah (1979) *Navasilu* 3 p. 84 describes the supremacy English achieved in the life of the SLE speaker.
19. *ibid.*
20. *ibid.* The Sinhala speaking groups the speaker of SLE is described as associating with here are domestic servants and vendors.
21. *ibid.* Kandiah describes an era when jokes were perpetrated by SLE speaking school children on those teaching the native languages.
22. Kandiah (1984) analyses the power associated with the use of the English language in Sri Lanka.
23. Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartik (1972) p. 25 give a potential five-term distinction for style as follows :  
 (rigid) — FORMAL — normal — INFORMAL — (familiar)  
 (or neutral)
24. Chitra Fernando (1976) p. 354.

5. E. Haugen (1972) p. 108 speaks of "the maximal variation or elaboration of function one expects from a fully-developed language."
26. op. cit. p. 107 "But it (a language) has not reached a crucial stage of development until success is achieved in writing serious expository prose... Beyond this comes the elaboration of the language for purposes of technical and scientific writing and government use"
27. H. A. Passé (1948) pp. 290-2.
28. Passé (1948) p. 293
29. Kandiah (1965) p. 166.
30. de Souza (1969) Article 7.
31. Passé (1948) p. 298.
32. op. cit. pp. 306-8.
33. op. cit. pp. 313-4 and Kandiah (1965) p. 164.
34. Halverson (1966) p. 65.
35. These areas are revealingly analysed in Kandiah (1965) pp. 160-6 under the headings Overdifferentiated Categories (a) New Categories (b) Split Categories, Undifferentiated Categories and Parallel Categories.
36. op. cit. p. 160.
37. Passé (1948) p. 300.
38. Kandiah (1965) p. 162.
39. *ibid.*
40. op. cit. p. 161.
41. Passé (1948) p. 294
42. Kandiah (1965) p. 163
43. op. cit. pp. 164-5.
44. Passé (1948) p. 302.
45. Kandiah (1965) p. 160.
46. de Souza (1969) Article 7.
47. Passé (1948) p. 248.
48. op. cit. pp. 273-4.
49. op. cit. p. 257.
50. op. cit. p. 278.
51. op. cit. p. 284.
52. op. cit. p. 352. and Chitra Fernando (1976) p. 349.

53. op. cit. pp. 269-70.
54. op. cit. pp. 271-2.
55. op. cit. p. 287, and Chitra Fernando (1976) p. 349.
56. op. cit. p. 254 : "the substitution of Sinhalese (o) for English (o) is a mark of uneducated English."
57. The Vowel Phonemes of Sinhala are diagrammed in Siromi Fernando (1973) p. 44.
58. Passé (1948) p. 338.
59. op. cit. p. 358.
60. de Souza (1969) Article 7.
61. Passé (1948) p. 360.
62. op. cit. pp. 340-3. Also on p. 343 "the effect on intonation is to flatten out somewhat the pattern of rise and fall."
63. Passé (1948) p. 344.
64. op. cit. p. 357.

TABLE 1

*THE L 1 USER OF SLE — EARLIER*

Acquisition of SLE	:	in the home, by age five at latest.
Domains in which SLE is used	:	Family, Friendship, School, Employment, Public Life.
Role Relations for which SLE is used	:	in all except lower level relationships, or those with monolinguals or receiver bilinguals in all domains.
Proficiency in Sinhala	:	Very Low.
Interaction with Sri Lankans of other types	:	Limited

TABLE 2

*THE L 2 USER OF SLE — EARLIER*

Acquisition of SLE	:	in the school, at a later age.
Domains in which SLE is used	:	Friendship, School, Employment, Public Life.
Role Relations for which Sinhala is used	:	in most Family relationships, and many in Friendship. Only in lower level relationships in other Domains.
Proficiency in Sinhala	:	Good.
Interaction with Sri Lankans of other types	:	Wide.

TABLE 3

*THE L 1 USER OF SLE — 1985*

Acquisition of SLE	:	same as earlier
Domains in which SLE is used	:	SLE now shares all Domains except Family with Sinhala. Even in Family Sinhala is used a little more.
Role Relations for which SLE is used	:	SLE shares all except those with other L 1 users with Sinhala. Even with L 1 users, Sinhala is used a little more.
Proficiency in Sinhala	:	Quite good.
Interaction with Sri Lankans of other types	:	Quite wide.

TABLE 4

## THE L 2 USER OF SLE — 1985

Acquisition of SLE	:	Later than earlier, sometimes through school, private classes, conscious effort of parents, television, public life.
Domains in which SLE is used:	:	Employment, Public Life.
Role Relations for which SLE is used	:	higher level relationships in Employment and Public Life.
Proficiency in Sinhala .	:	Good
Interaction with Sri Lankans of other types	:	Wide

TABLE 5

## Language Choice for the Adult Speaker of SLE As an L 1 - Earlier

Domain	Role Relations	Language*	Locale	Topic
FAMILY	Grandfather	E	all	all
	Grandmother	E, perhaps S	depends	depends
	Father	E	all	all
	Mother	E, occasionally S	depends	depends
	Siblings	E	all	all
	Children (Older)	E	except in presence of younger children	
FRIENDSHIP	Domestics	S	all	all
	Visitors	E	all	all
	All	E	all	all
EDUCATION	Administrators	E	all	all
	Teachers	E, except S or Primary	except in S lessons	medium
	Minor Employees	E, S	all	all
	Students :			
	Primary	S	some	some
	Secondary	E	except in S lessons	medium
	Tertiary	E	except in S lessons	medium
EMPLOYMENT	Superior	E	all	all
	Colleague	E	all	all
	Subordinate	S, sometimes E	most	most
PUBLIC LIFE	Doctor	E	all	all
	Lawyer & Courts	E	except in presence of monolinguals	
	Police & Forces	E	all	all
	Business Contacts	E, S	depends	depends
	Shop Assistants	E	all	all
	Marketman	S	all	all
	Vendor	S	all	all
	Milk, Bread, Paper Man	S	all	all
	Dhoby	S	all	all

\* "E, S" in the Table indicates that both languages are used, either with different interlocutors or with the same interlocutor in roughly equal proportions. Where one language is followed by the other accompanied by some qualifying comment, the first is the dominant language, but the second is used under the conditions stated. The Table represents a large number of cases, not all. Some exceptions would be the use of reported speech in S, or the use of S out of deference to the presence of a monolingual S speaker. Such deference would however have been rare earlier.

TABLE 6

## Language Choice for the Adult Speaker of SLE as An L 1 - Today 1985

Domain	Role Relations	Language	Locale	Topic
FAMILY	Grandfather	E	most	most
	Grandmother	E, perhaps S	depends	depends
	Father	E	most	most
	Mother	E, occasionally S	depends	depends
	Siblings	E	most	most
	Children (Older)	E, S	depends	depends
	Domestics	S, occasionally E	depends	depends
FRIENDSHIP	Visitors	E, S	depends	depends
	Family Friends	E	most	most
	Neighbours	E, S	depends	depends
	Friend from School, Tertiary Institution, Workplace	E, S	depends	depends
EDUCATION	Administrators	E, S	depends	depends
	Teachers	E, S	depends	depends
	Minor Employees	S, occasionally E	all	all
	Students:			
	Primary	S, sometimes E	some	some
	Secondary	E, S	all	all
	Tertiary	E, S	all	all
EMPLOYMENT	Superior	E, S	depends	depends
	Colleague	E, S	depends	depends
	Subordinate	S, occasionally E	depends	depends
PUBLIC LIFE	Doctor	E	all	all
	Lawyer & Courts	E, S	depends	depends
	Police & Forces	E, S	"	"
	Business Contacts	E, S	"	"
	Banks	E, S	"	"
	Post Office	E, S	"	"
	Government Offices	E, S	"	"
	Commercial Sector	E, S	"	"
	Shop Assistants	E, S	"	"
	Marketman	E, S	"	"
	Vendor	E, S	"	"
	Milk, Bread, Paper Man Dhoby (rare today)	S, sometimes E S	" all	" all

TABLE 7

## The Pronunciation of "Caught," and "Coat"

	(kɔ:t)	(kəʊt)	(kɔ:t)
Std. E.	caught court	coat	
SLE.	caught		court coat
Sinhala Learner			caught court coat

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