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THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF ENGLISH & SRI LANKAN ENGLISH *

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Abstract: This paper is an analysis of the emergence of International Standard English and the impact of this phenomenon on Sri Lankan English. For over 100 years, world English was influenced by two main varieties; namely, Standard British English and Standard American English. However, a major linguistic development in the latter half of the 20th century, was the evolution and acceptance of national standards of English, such as Australian, Indian, Singaporean, Sri Lankan. The national standard was a demonstration of national identity in many postcolonial societies. Today, a new trend is emerging, where one international standard appears to be taking centre-stage and attempting to submerge the national standard. Therefore, a study of language and identity in terms of the globalisation of English is required. The data for this study consist of official documentation of the United Nations Organization in Sri Lanka. This comparative study of 'officialese' is crucial also from the point of view of the Education Reforms, now in place in Sri Lanka. A major problem of Sri Lankan English is the crisis faced by the majority of professionals who are uncomfortable with a national variety of English and a national standard for Sri Lanka, in the midst of global varieties of English.

Internationalisation of English

The world has seen the rise and fall of many world languages, the best known being Latin. In today's world, there are many regional languages such as Chinese, Spanish, Hindi, Malay, Portuguese, but only three world languages. These languages are Arabic, English, and French. These represent the changing order of political power. While Arabic remains a world language mainly for religious purposes, French and English are the global languages of today, in terms of their geographical spread. However, English outnumbers French, and is more dominant by virtue of its number of speakers and its reach.

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> The world is in various stages of social, economic, and demographic transition. Economically and politically, the world has changed more rapidly in the past few years than at any time since 1945. The emerging global economy is both competitive and interdependent. It reflects the availability of modern communications and production technologies in most parts of the world. So, do we need to be concerned about the future of the English language in the 21st century? According to *The Economist* (1996), English continues to be the world standard language, and there is no major threat to the language or to its global popularity.
>
> (Hasman, 2000: 02)

The "global popularity" of English, and its usefulness have led to the phenomenon of the internationalisation of English. While English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have been discussed by Applied Linguists for most of the 20th century, English as an International Language (EIL) is a relatively new concern. McArthur (1996) describes EIL as a late 20th century development and gives it the following definition:

> The English language, usually in its standard form, either when used, taught, and studied as a lingua franca throughout the world, or when taken as a whole and used in contrast with American English, British English, South African English, etc.
>
> (McArthur, 1996: 476)

One of the problems of English being taught or used as an international language is its role as a force of globalisation: while this may be considered a desirable consequence by many users of English, it is this which raises the issue of ownership and identity. As long as English belonged to the British and the British Empire, issues of ownership and identity were issues of imperialism and colonialism. Today, EIL is far more complex, especially because English is used in multilingual, multicultural societies, some of which were never colonized

by the British. Additionally, by virtue of the global impact or market forces of 'Englishisation', this language appears to be swallowing other languages and cultures or invading their space.

> The use of one language generally implies the exclusion of others, although this is by no means logically necessary. Functional bilingualism or multilingualism at the individual and societal level is common throughout the world. However the pattern in core English-speaking countries has been one of increasing monolingualism .
>
> (Phillipson, 1992: 17)

This then is one of the problems of the internationalisation of English: that at one level the language represents a society, which is monolingual; but the language is used by multilingual users. Another related issue is the emergence of many varieties of English, and many varieties of Standard English. The original or historical purpose of learning English, in order to talk to English people or the representatives of the British Empire has changed dramatically.

> The English language has been so successfully exported round the world that the native speakers no longer have control over it. They are now in a small minority, for a start, and today's learners of English are not learning it particularly to talk to Englishmen, but also to talk to each other.
>
> (Sinclair, 1988: 04)

National Standards of English

Variation in language is as old as language itself. However, traditionally, users have upheld and looked up to one variety as the standard form of language, and looked down on the others as 'dialects', 'regional varieties', 'sub-standard', 'colloquial' etc. In the case of English, Standard British English was the model for the former colonies, and the desire to use the Queen's English, also known as Received Pronunciation (RP), Oxford

English, and BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) English, reached its peak on the eve of independence. However, with the emergence of the nation state, the forces of nationalism clashed with the forces of imperialism and the National Standards of English have evolved. It was more a question of recognition than the birth of varieties of English. For example, in Sri Lanka, English grew alongside Sinhala and Tamil, from 1796 to date. But for a long time, Sri Lankans claimed to speak British English, as used by the BBC or the British monarch. It is only in the last quarter of the 20th century, that some Sri Lankans had the courage to acknowledge our English as Sri Lankan English.[1] It is this variety of English, that is, the National Standard, which is tied up with identity and recognition of a language as indigenous or otherwise. The new Englishes were originally called 'non-native varieties' because of the status of English in postcolonial societies; but how 'non-native' are languages which have been used for over 200 years in a particular society, often as the most prestigious language in a multilingual society?

> The wider implications of this change in the ecology of world Englishes are significant: The new nativised (non-native) varieties have acquired an ontological status and developed localised norms and standards. Purists find that the situation is getting out of hand... They are uncomfortable that the native speakers' norms are not universally accepted. There are others who feel that a pragmatic approach is warranted and that a 'mono-model' approach for English in the world context is neither applicable nor realistic.
>
> (Kachru, 1986: 13)

The emergence of the National Standards is in a sense long overdue. It is the colonial mindset which has to a great extent hindered recognition, and even worse, created a sense of inferiority in its users, to the point where speakers of the National Standard feel a sense of betrayal in declaring their identity as speakers of a variety of English which is divorced from the mother variety.

While the recognition of National Standards has been hesitant, especially on the part of the postcolonial users of English, as in Sri Lanka, it is now compounded by the emergence of an International Standard or variety of English.

International Standard English

This variety of English is a combination of two Standard varieties, namely American and British English. It is found in the documents of the United Nations Organization (UNO) and is now being discussed in the literature as a variety to be taught in classrooms.

> This article analyses the emergence of a new stage of global capitalism, called *informationalism*, and its consequences for English language teaching, focusing on three critical issues. First, globalisation will result in the further spread of English as an international language and a shift of authority to non-native speakers and dialects... Second, economic and employment trends will change the way English is used... Finally, new information technologies will transform notions of literacy, making on-line navigation and research... critical skills for learners of English.
>
> (Warschauer, 2000: 511)

This quotation acknowledges the internationalisation of English and the "shift of authority to non-native speakers and dialects." Speakers of English in Sri Lanka, India, Nigeria, Singapore, Kenya, all belong to this group since we have been called the 'non-native speakers' of English from the time of the British Empire. Accordingly, it is now the time when the non-native speakers of English are the authoritative voices. It is also significant that it is in this context that International Standard English is recognised as a variety for globalisation. It is almost like a linguistic conspiracy, where just as the language of the former colonizers has been acknowledged as part of the identity of a nation, a new, international force is perceived as influential and poses a challenge to emerging identity.

Standard Sri Lankan English

Standard Sri Lankan English is the variety of English used in Sri Lanka. It is based on British English and shows the influence of Sinhala and Tamil. This is so in terms of intonation patterns, long vowels, retroflex consonants instead of alveolar consonants, dental stops instead of dental fricatives, trilled /r/, unaspirated initial /p, t, k/, and the use of the labio-dental approximant /ν/ for both /v/ and /w/. The vocabulary of Standard Sri Lankan English reflects the multicultural society we live in as the borrowings from Sanskrit (*sansara*), Pali (*Poya*), Sinhala (*a mudukku joint*), Tamil (*machan*), Malay (*rambutan*) and Arabic (*janaza*) demonstrate. In terms of syntax, the tendency is to transfer the word order of either Sinhala or Tamil, as in "Then we'll go and come".

This paper laments the tendency to submerge this rich texture of Standard Sri Lankan English in the overall globalisation of English as represented in International Standard English, which lacks the colour and flamboyance of multiculturalism. Instead, there seems to be a move to de-culturalise English or use only Western culture in EIL, as demonstrated in this paper.

Data

The data for this paper consist of the following:

i. United Nations Correspondence Manual, 2000
ii. Style Book of UNESCO, 1993
iii. UNDP Human Development Report 2000
iv. Official Discourse in English in Sri Lanka (Minutes, Reports, Media, Letters)

The focus of the analysis is on EIL, with particular reference to written texts. This is followed by an overview of features of 'officialese' in Sri Lanka, with reference to EIL. The purpose of this paper is to study the features of EIL and the impact of this variety on National Standards such as Sri Lankan English, especially in terms of identity.

Use of English in Documentation (EIL)

This section of the paper deals with EIL as used by the UNO, based in Colombo.[3] In the use of English for written purposes (official), the UNO advises its employees to observe the following rules of English usage on matters of style[4] :

6.1 Write simply, clearly and concisely
6.2 Be concrete and specific, rather than vague and indirect
6.3 State your facts or ideas directly (subject-verb-object)
6.4 Use verbs in the active rather than the passive voice
6.5 Use concrete rather than abstract words
6.6 Use short words, short sentences and short paragraphs.
6.7 Don't use any more words than necessary to convey your meaning
6.8 Don't use a circumlocution if a single word or phrase will do
6.9 Don't use emphasis (bold, italics, underlining) in correspondence
6.10 Don't use needless adjectives and adverbs (don't overemphasize)
6.11 Avoid anything which might offend the sensibilities of the readers.
6.12 UN correspondence follows the spelling given in the latest edition of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English.* (British usage is followed in UN texts).

Additionally, detailed instructions are given on rules of punctuation and the formation of the plural.

The different types or genres of official correspondence are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Genre	Explanation of Unusual Genres
Memoranda	
Formal letters	
Transmittal notes	For letter from the Secretary General to a head of State
Informal letters	
Notes verbales	Formal note written in the 3rd person
E-mail	
Facsimile	
Telegrams and cables	
Covering slips	Printed attachment used to transmit a copy of communication for information
Forwarding slips	Printed form requesting a person outside the Secretariat to transmit a communication
Routing slips	Designed for use within the Secretariat only
Complimentary slips	Printed form used to forward material to an addressee outside the Secretariat

Characteristics of EIL

One of the main characteristics of EIL is the tendency to follow routine practice or clearly stated guidelines on format. For example, the following style for electronic mail is given below, as stated in the *Correspondence Manual*.

> While e-mail is still primarily an informal mode of communication, the language used in e-mail messages should adhere to United Nations standards for discourse.

This reflects a feature of EIL, which seems intolerant of deviation, even in the informal domain. Other characteristics or syntactic trends of EIL are listed in Table 2.[5]

Table 2

Characteristic	Examples
Pluralisation of Abstract Nouns	The seven freedoms, Only with political freedoms...Access to information flows, resource flows, aid flows, Economic interactions
(Back formation to fit "rights")	Civil and political rights, economic and social rights[6]
Refusal to pluralize "people"	All people everywhere
Compounding of Noun + Gerund	Decision-making, self-reinforcing, sanctions busting, networking, benchmarking
Compounding of Noun + Noun	Health care, race riots, self-interest, policy responses, street children, gender discrimination, income poverty, labour rights, hate crimes, gender empowerment, energy use, food security, lip service, job security, core covenants, time allocation, hallmark achievements, freedom indices
Compounds with Genitive Case	Women's rights, workers' rights, women's human rights, the Disabled People's International, ... are actors meeting their obligations

Table 2 continued

Characteristic	Examples
Hyphenated Noun Phrases	Decision-making, self-reinforcing, well-being, non-governmental, know-how, some three-quarters, gender-related, urban-rural disparity
Plural Nouns used as Adjectives	Human rights accountability, the rights approach in India, puts a human rights based approach to human development, human rights safeguards, human rights NGOs, human rights instruments, fundamental labour rights conventions
Introduction of word "actors" to mean active human beings or responsible persons	Rights make human beings better economic actors, identifying actors, state and non-state actors
Use of "action" for programme of activities, schedule etc.	National action, international action
Use of "activism"	Political activism

Table 2 continued

Characteristic	Examples
Prefixing	Pro-poor, non-state, nongovernmental, demystifying budgets, disaggregating the average, empowerment, macroeconomic, interdependence, multilateral
"Human" as a prefix or compound	Human development index, human poverty, human dignity, human potential, human rights development, human rights safeguards
Jargon	Horizontal inequality, an inclusive democracy, mobilizing civil and political rights
Abundance of acronyms	GEM (Gender empowerment measure), ODA (Official development assistance)

The extract given below represents many features of EIL:

> Complex political and economic interactions, coupled with the rise of powerful new actors, open new opportunities... to secure fundamental freedoms for all: all human rights, for all people in all countries.

A salient feature of EIL is that in terms of technicalities such as spelling and format, Standard British English is the preferred model, but in terms of syntactic trends, such as those listed above, Standard American English seems the norm.

In terms of EIL as a cultural force, however emasculated or detached the language appears to be, tries to be, or is perceived to be, the cultural content seems to represent the West, as shown below.

> ***The John Le Carre approach to economic policy - (structural adjustment by stealth)***
>
> *Structural adjustment has aroused strong passions. Its proponents have argued that poor performance was due to poor policy, pointing to the futility of huge project investments in a perverse policy environment. Its critics point to adverse social consequences and the lack of fine-tuning of a blunt "cookie cutter" approach.*
>
> *The debate has often ignored a vital shortcoming in the process for negotiating and implementing these programmes - a level of secrecy of which the finest spy novelists, including John Le Carre himself, would be proud. Economic policies that will...*

This extract highlights the dependency on Western literature and lifestyle, as in the reference to John Le Carre and the "cookie cutter". This extract also proves that EIL may be for the majority of users who are considered "non-native speakers", but the literary and metaphorical

usage is drawn from Western culture. Another revealing aspect is that both British and American images are represented in this extract.

English in Official Discourse in Sri Lanka

In terms of contrastive analysis, "officialese" in Sri Lankan English is also norm driven in terms of technicalities and formatting. Most Sri Lankan professionals refuse to budge from British spelling, other than in the case of some Information Technology specialists. Another characteristic is the reliance on grammar books and dictionaries from the British tradition rather than the American. There is also a somewhat fossilized belief that "the older the Better", which reflects the Sri Lankan refusal to accept language change as normal and healthy. It is perceived as wrong.

In terms of syntactic trends, the following observations can be made:

Table 3

Syntactic Trends	Examples
Pluralization of Collective Nouns	The possible areas cited were simultaneous translating equipments, video and multi media equipments, printing facilities.
Number assigned to Collective Nouns	A land for sale, a research was completed
Overuse of Continuous Form of Verb	He was holding a degree from a university in India
Abundance of acronyms	
Emphasis on "big words"	I devoured your advertisement
Servility in approach	I beg to defer, I humbly request
Marked contrast in speech and writing	

Conclusion: Language & Identity

The usefulness of EIL poses a threat to the survival of Standard Sri Lankan English, especially in written, formal discourse. This is ironic in today's world, because the traditionally accepted "English speaking world" is hastily attempting to adjust their teaching to suit the needs of the larger, more numerous ESL and EFL countries. Monoculturalism is no longer the norm, even biculturalism is perceived as inadequate.

> Clearly, in the EIL classroom, in which the language belongs to its users, interculturalism rather than biculturalism should be the goal.
>
> (McKay, 2000: 07)

In this context, interculturalism is considered the goal, but the term itself is tied to what EIL represents, a kind of globalisation of culture. Herein lies the problem for postcolonial Englishes, which have finally come of age. It seems to be a case of 'Back to the Future'. It is this de-nationalization of a language and a culture which seems menacing in a world where there are many Englishes, but one variety seems to hold sway over the others. In this case, the merged variety seems even more threatening than one or the other, since it represents the old and the new.

It is the presence of EIL, which is now retarding the growth and acceptance of Standard Sri Lankan English in written discourse. Although in 'officialese' in spoken discourse, Standard Sri Lankan English remains the norm; in terms of identity this is heartening. But the reluctance to acknowledge it or use it in written discourse at one level, shows the inferiority complex we, the users suffer from, and at another level it can be the recognition of EIL which is stopping the growth of National Standards. In this scenario, we are caught in the trap of post-colonialism and English as the language of the latest superpower. The forces of globalisation cannot be stopped, but it is unfortunate that just as we were beginning to consider English ours as much as anybody else's, interculturalism is sweeping us off our feet.

From the point of view of the Education Reforms now being implemented in Sri Lanka, at the academic level of preparation of lesson material and syllabus design, Standard Sri Lankan English is the medium in the re-introduction of English. However, in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) in Sri Lanka, a major issue of teacher training is the reliance of the TESL professional on archaic varieties of British English, and a reluctance to budge from this stand. There is lingering respect for BBC English and a fairly well-articulated fear that moving away from the teaching of RP is somehow incorrect. It is in the notion of correctness and doubts as to the existence of Standard Sri Lankan English, which demonstrate our hesitation to be linguistically independent. As Salman Rushdie (1991: 17) said, "To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free." This is what the National Standards to a great extent represented, but because the business of TESL is also tied up with EIL, to raise our heads and walk in dignity seems a difficult task.

Notes

1 There was a tradition of laughing at the English of the colonies, as in magazines like *Punch*, and by the colonized themselves, as in the 'Mudliyar' plays for example.

2 Standard Sri Lankan English is one of the varieties of English used in Sri Lanka. It is represented by the minority, which uses English for all or most purposes.

3 There is no change in UNO documentation the world over but these documents were collected in Colombo.

4 From the *United Nations Correspondence Mannual: A guide to the drafting, processing and dispatch of official United Nations communications 2000*. New York: United Nations.

5 The examples given in this section are from the *Human Development Report* 2000, New York: Oxford University Press.

6 This tendency may be due to the already existing morphology pattern of "rights" However, "right to schooling" is also found in its singular form.

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