THE NEED FOR INSIDER PERSPECTIVE IN LANGUAGE CODIFICATION; A STUDY IN RELATION TO SRI LANKAN ENGLISH CODIFICATION

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Abstract- Defined as the "language used by Sri Lankans who choose to use English for whatever purpose in Sri Lanka (Gunesekera, 2005, p. 11), Sri Lankan English (SLE) is gradually accepted as a newly institutionalized variety of English, with its unique phonological, morphological lexical, and syntactic features. SLE vocabulary has been identified as one of the most prominent features of Sri Lankan English's unique linguistic identity (Gunesekera, 2005; Meyler, 2007). Among the limited number of efforts in codification of SLE vocabulary, Michael Meyler's 'A Dictionary of Sri Lankan English' could be considered the most elaborate. Although the publication of the book is one of the most important milestones in the field of SLE vocabulary studies, certain drawbacks were identified, including the lack of nuanced understanding of the socio-linguistic circumstances of the language on the part of the codifier and the seemingly biased data collection method which seem to exclude the lexical usages of other less prestigious varieties of SLE. Therefore, the research gap is identified to be the lack of an insider perspective on the codified vocabulary of SLE, where an insider who speaks English as their second language and/or bilingual in English and Tamil or Sinhala could utilize his/her nuanced socio-linguistic understanding of first and second language varieties (Sinhala and Tamil) to provide affirmation of the authenticity and accuracy of codified vocabulary of Sri Lankan English. Thus, the present study applies the theories of positionality and reflexivity in providing a detailed reflexive analysis of the lexical items included in Meyler's dictionary, in order to provide a subjective analysis of codified lexical items in the dictionary. The researcher will investigate to what extent the codifier has done justice to the meaning of a lexical item, accuracy of the meaning and recorded usages, possible alterations to the meaning, socio-cultural nuances associated with the lexical items, alternative usages and also the ability of the lexical item to show the language of other speech communities with less power and prestige.

Keywords- Sri Lankan English, Insider Perspective, 'A Dictionary of SLE', Language Codification

I. INTRODUCTION

Apart from the broad division of SLE into standard and non-standard Sri Lankan English, there are many other SLE varieties defined by race and ethnic group, religion, age and the social status of the speaker. According to Meyler (2007),

> "within the relatively tiny speech community, there are several sub-varieties of Sri Lankan English. Sinhalese, Muslims, burghers speak different varieties; Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims have their own vocabulary; the older generation speak a different language from the younger generation; and the wealthy Colombo elite (who tend to speak English as their first language) speak a different variety from the wider community (who are more likely to learn it as a second language) (Meyler, 2007, p. ix).

His viewpoint highlights how the linguistic circumstances of SLE cannot be viewed or analysed in binary terms since there are numerous factors contributing to the existence of language varieties

other than the mere standard and the non-standard. Identifying subvarieties of SLE, which are termed "standard Sri Lankan English, Lankan English, Singlish, Tamil, and Sineglish" (Meyler, 2007), Meyler argues that the "Sri Lankan variety of English should be validated alongside other more established varieties" (Meyler, 2007).

However, the existence of different varieties/regional dialects/social dialects complicates any attempt at establishing a unique national linguistic identity since it could raise questions of acceptance, power, discrimination as well as the danger of overgeneralizing which could result in misrepresentation. Thus, necessary attempts should be made to expand the boundaries of the accepted standard to include greater variety which contributes to the construction of a unique national linguistic identity. However, the expansion and shifting of the prescribed boundaries of the norm would be futile without the political and social acceptance which grants them the linguistic power and authority to represent the linguistic identity of a speech community. Thus, language codification in terms of producing dictionaries and grammar books plays a vital role in establishing political and social acceptance.

Even though the role of dictionaries in the process of language codification was discussed previously, the codification processes of non-native English varieties should be elaborated given the current research context. Unlike codification attempts at native English varieties, many obstacles are faced in codifying Asian Englishes or, essentially any English variety in the Expanding and the Outer circles (Kachru, 1982) especially Asian Englishes.

According to Jenkins (2009) these obstacles include the non-recognition of nativized or indigenized varieties of Englishes of the Outer Circle as "legitimate L2 varieties of English" (2009) by the Inner Circle and debunking them as interlanguages rather than languages which "contain unique linguistic features and forms which defy the norm of Standard Native English" (p. 234). Another major challenge faced by Asian English codifiers is the conflict between "centripetal forces pulling them inwards towards local needs and centrifugal forces pushing them outwards towards international intelligibility and acceptability" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 32). A codified Asian English will need to perform the function required by its intranational community, who expect the national language to reflect their unique national identity, with necessary considerations given to make it intelligible and acceptable to English speakers, who might or might not be native English speakers. This matter essentially marks one of the key expectations from a successful codifier where they are expected to strike a balance between authentic representation and acceptability.

In spite of the evident hardships faced in codifying institutionalized varieties of New Englishes in the Expanding and Outer circles, many attempts have been made to achieve this goal. Many outer and Expanding circle countries have documented and attempted codifying through lexical lists, small glossaries and dictionaries including Singapore English (Deterding, 2007), Hong Kong English (Setter, Wong , & Chan, 2010), Ghanaianisms (Dako, 2011), Gambian English (Augustin, Peter, & Wolf, 2003), and Fiji English (Tent, 2011). These New Englishes have been subjected to at least one successful attempt at codification resulting in the increasing acceptability of them in the global context as accepted varieties of Institutionalized New English varieties.

An identical scenario can be observed in relation to codification of SLE within the Sri Lankan speech community. SLE has been defined as the "language used by Sri Lankans who choose to use English for whatever purpose in Sri Lanka" (Gunesekera. 2005, P. 11), highlighting the ability of Sri Lankans to declare a national identity through the existence of a unique language variety. Meyler believes in the same ideological standpoint from which he promotes the "acceptance of SLE as one of the many established varieties of English" (Meyler, 2007, p. ix). The identity of SLE as an independent language is confirmed by the fact that there are "native speakers" of Sri Lankan English (Gunesekera, 2005 p. 23).

Given that "within the relatively tiny speech community, there are several sub-varieties of SLE (Meyler, 2007, p. ix), the codifiers of SLE face similar challenges as other language codifiers of Expanding and Outer circle countries. This could perhaps explain why only two attempts have been made so far in codifying SLE, namely; by Gunesekera (2005) and Meyler (2007). In addition to the many phonological and syntactical features of SLE, Gunesekera (2005), has recorded 576 entries of SLE words. Meyler in his study has recorded approximately 2500 examples of SLE words, which "are characteristic of the English spoken in Sri Lanka" (Meyler, 2007). The present study takes "*A Dictionary of SLE*" (2007) by

Meyler as the primary source and assesses the validity of its representation of SLE.

Meyler's dictionary, which attempts to "introduce uniformity and accuracy to the multi-cultural vocabulary of Sri Lankan English" (Meyler, 2007, p. viii), is one of the most important documentations in codifying SLE as a unique independent variety of English. Underlining the existence of several subvarieties of SLE that differ according to extra-linguistic characteristics of the speaker, and highlighting his belief in expanding the boundaries of the standard to include maximum variety, Meyler (2007) points out how "all users shape the language, bringing into it Sri Lankan habits, customs, expressions, interests and experience" (p. ix). Although he refuses to identify the lexical items he included in the dictionary as belonging to standard Sri Lankan English, the dominant language hegemony appears to have forced him to accept the existence of such a distinction. He highlights how "merely by deciding to include a particular word, the compiler is inevitably bestowing it with a seal of acceptability" (Meyler, 2007, p. v) which inevitably leads the readers to perceive the codified lexical items to be the standard.

This dilemma of what to and what not to include has been one of the inevitable questions of language codification. In discussing the process, he followed in the creation of the dictionary, Meyler states that lexical entries are included "on the grounds that it is a feature of the English spoken by Sri Lankan speakers of English, and that it differs in some way from current 'Standard' British English. It does not include those features which are better defined as common errors made by learners of the language" (Meyler, 2007). Tony Thorne in "Dictionary of Contemporary Slang" (2007) expresses a similar viewpoint which underlines the role of codifier who has to make subjective decisions regarding the entries to be included in the dictionary.

Although this role of the codifier is essential in the codification process for inevitable practical reasons, in the case of *A Dictionary of SLE (2007)*, it could become one of the drawbacks of the compilation given that the author or the codifier position as an outsider to the Sri Lankan community. The dictionary provides what Meyler himself recognizes as an "outsider's perspective" (Meyler, 2007, p. ix) of SLE. He acknowledges the engagement of Dinali Fernando and Vivimarie Vanderpoorten as "editors" in the codification process (Meyler, 2007, p. xxxii), who could have provided an insider perspective to the codification process. However, their engagement in the codification process is assumed to be minimalistic, where he underlines how "to a larger extent, the compilation of this dictionary has been a "one-man show" (Meyler, 2007, p. xxxii). Therefore, the prominent decisions regarding the codifications processes are assumed to be made by Meyler. In this context, Meyler's lack of nuanced understanding of SLE lexical usages and their literal and metaphorical meanings integrated with cultural and social nuances could result in controversies where Sri Lankan native speakers who are bilingual or multilingual might not accept or acknowledge the accuracy of the entries.

Majority of the data collected for the dictionary were taken from thirty published Sri Lankan books which represented a range of contemporary Sri Lankan writing. However, given that the "authors are either Sri Lankan or of Sri Lankan origin living abroad" (Meyler, 2007, p. xiii), one could easily question the lack of representation of the non-elite Sri Lankan language varieties. Further, certain vocabulary and syntactic usages recorded by Meyler are, at present considered outdated and are no longer in use, emphasizing the need for updated research on linguistic characteristics of SLE. Even Meyler himself has pointed out the need for a documentation of the rapid changes in the field of Sri Lankan English vocabulary. However, at present, given that the discussion on New Englishes are shifting towards the expansion of the standard to include greater diversity and variety, research has to be conducted to underline and question the accurate and authentic representation of the "English spoken in Sri Lanka" (Meyler, 2007), in terms of vocabulary. The research gap has been identified as the lack of "insider perspective" on SLE vocabulary in determining the authenticity and accuracy in linguistic representation of codified SLE vocabulary with specific attention to social, cultural and linguistic implications of SLE lexicon.

Thus, the present study applies the theories of positionality and reflexivity in providing a detailed reflexive analysis of the lexical items included in Meyler's dictionary, in order to provide a subjective analysis of codified lexical items in the dictionary. The researcher, whose mother tongue is Sinhala, situates herself outside the conventional westernized Colombo urban English speaking elite and recognizes herself as a member of the new generation of educated bilingual SLE speakers. The researcher's main concern would be to provide a nuanced understanding of the lexical items by utilizing socio-political, linguistic and cultural experiences encountered as a speaker familiar with L1 varieties in Sri Lanka, thus providing an

insiders perspective on codified vocabulary of SLE. The researcher will respond to lexical items as a culturally, socially, economically and linguistically rooted speaker of Sri Lankan English, and will investigate to what extent the codifier has done justice to the meaning of a lexical item, accuracy of the meaning and recorded usages, possible alterations to the meaning, socio-cultural nuances associated with the lexical items, alternative usages and also the ability of the lexical item to represent not only the language of the educated elite but also the language of other speech communities with less power and prestige.

Thus, the research questions are as follows.

- According to the subjective analysis of the insider, has the codifier done justice in providing meaning to lexical entries? Are the codified meanings and recorded usage accurate? Are there possible alterations to the meaning and alternative usages? Is the insider able to provide a more nuanced understanding of the lexical entry as a socially, politically, economically and linguistically situated researcher?
- Are the codified lexical items in A Dictionary of SLE capable of representing not only the linguistic circumstances of the educated elite but also other linguistic communities with similar unique linguistic features?

II. METHODOLOGY

I have chosen the study area of codified vocabulary of SLE recorded in *A Dictionary of SLE* (2007) and attempt to offer a comparative analysis of insider and outsider perspectives. Therefore, the primary data source of the research will be *A Dictionary of SLE* (2007) by Meyler, where the codifier offers an "outsider perspective" (Meyler, 2007) to the "English spoken in Sri Lanka" (Meyler, 2007). The outsider perspective of Meyler limits his codification attempt where he is comparatively unfamiliar with the social, cultural, and linguistic aspects of the Sri Lankan speech community. My belief is that, as a politically, socially, economically and linguistically situated researcher, I will be able to provide a more subjective yet nuanced understanding of the codified lexical items, providing a more elaborate analysis of the codified lexical items.

Given that I aim to provide a subjective analysis of the codified vocabulary of SLE as a socially, politically, economically and ethnically situated individual, it is evident that, a qualitative research methodology is appropriate in the given research context. As Rossman and Rallis (1998) have noted, "there are few truths that constitute universal knowledge; rather, there are multiple perspectives about the world" (p. 29), which underscore the necessity of exploring multiple perspectives, which in the current research context is the comparative analysis of insider and outsider perspectives on the codified vocabulary of Sri Lankan English. Therefore, textual analysis, a qualitative methodology, is utilized in conducting the research where *A Dictionary of SLE* (Meyler, 2007) is recognized as the primary text of analysis.

Theoretical methodologies of reflexivity and positionality are used in the research to conduct the textual analysis. Reflexivity and positionality are primarily considered to be feminist methodologies where critical reflections of a socially, politically, economically and linguistically situated researcher can be "transformed into a self-conscious, effective, and ethically sound practice" (Kearns, 2005, p. 192) in research. More than methods or methodologies, critical reflexivity and positionality are considered as "epistemological approaches" (Correia, 2012) for conducting research, producing situated knowledge about the world. However, the validity of these approaches as a theoretical basis has also been discussed by numerous critics including Merrifield (1995).

Although the available literature makes evident the significance of reflexivity and positionality as an integral part of the research process, Positivist paradigm "resisted the relinquishment of the idea of the researcher's objectivity on the grounds that it resulted in bias" (Wickramasinghe, 2008). "It was feared that researchers' would misuse reflexivity to provide false accounts of researching which would then become legitimized through the writing process" (Wickramasinghe, 2008, p.88). Wickramasinghe questions the concepts of impartiality and honesty which are commonly embraced as "the privileges of Positivistic research" (Wickramasinghe, 2008) by revealing the "objectivity of the researcher as incorporating some degree of bias as well as being a form of bias." (p.89). These arguments validate the legitimacy of subjective research and reflexive research methodologies.

III. DISCUSSION

Purposive and random sampling methods were used in selecting the lexical items to be analysed, from which fifty lexical items were selected for extensive analysis. For reasons of brevity, only twenty lexical items are included in the discussion, which, according to my subjective analysis are the most prominent lexical items that offer significant insights into the discussion. The discussion consists of three separate segments in accordance with the questions I attempt to answer (aforementioned) regarding each lexical entry. The three segments are namely;

- Instances of erroneous definitions
- Instances of 'elitism' or of biased representation of linguistic features of the elite as being the standard.
- Instances of overlooked socio-cultural nuances and alternate meanings and usages.

1. Instances of Erroneous Definitions

This section identifies the instances where I have noted inaccurate, misconstrued or incomplete information provided by the codifier in the codification process. The inaccuracy of a definition is determined from my subjective standpoint where I utilize the cultural social and linguistic knowledge I possess as an insider of the Sri Lankan speech community in providing a subjective critical analysis of the lexical entries.

1.1 *gudu*

"A game played with Sticks; also chakgudu (Sinhala)" (Meyler, 2007, p.105).

As documented by the codifier, *gudu* is a term associated with the gaming traditions in Sri Lanka, where *gudu* is one of the ancient games played by Sri Lankans. However, the term can be identified as one of the instances where the codifier has inaccurately defined a Sri Lankan lexical item. Though it is correct to say that *gudu* is a game played with sticks, it is inaccurate to assume *gudu* and *chakgudu* to be the same game.

chakgudu is a game similar to Kabaddi famous in India, where the participants are separated into two groups and each team tries to hit or touch a player of the opposite team without getting caught. The game is associated with the rural Sri Lankan village life though the game is popularized as Kabaddi in the urban areas.

Further, the codifier has failed to identify the socio-cultural implications of both *gudu* and *chakgudu* games where the games are considered two of the oldest traditional Sri Lankan Sinhalese games, mostly played in rural areas especially during the Sinhala and Hindu New Year season. However, these traditions have been dying and the game is scarcely played by Sri Lankans even in rural village areas. Nevertheless, the game represents the gaming traditions associated with Sri Lankan traditional rural lifestyle and thus the term remains a metaphoric representation of the traditional Sinhala culture.

It appears that the word *chakgudu* or *gudu* has been romanticized by the Colombo urban elite where it is exploited by the anglicized urban English speakers in an endeavor to project a persona of a traditional Sri Lankan through their choice of vocabulary. Given that *gudu* and *chakgudu* are associated with rural Sri Lankan lifestyle, they are transferred into SLE as borrowings to represent a cultural identity which cannot be projected through Standard British English in its "pure" (Fernando, 2010) form. These lexical entries are utilized by the westernized elite in exoticizing their anglicized identity, which simultaneously highlights their assumed traditional Sri Lankan identity and their higher social status.

These social, cultural and linguistic undertones of such lexical items are better captured through the perspective of an insider to the Sri Lankan speech community, who is familiarized with the Sri Lankan culture and the indigenous language varieties which has a significant impact on SLE..

1.2 *border villages.*

"Front line Sinhala villages bordering traditional Tamil areas in the Northern, Eastern and North-central provinces" (Meyler, 2007, p.33)

In the documentation of the term *border villages*, the codifier has completely overlooked the defining social and cultural implications of

the term, making his definition incomplete and more or less incorrect. Though the term border villages is used to identify "Sinhala *villages bordering* traditional Tamil areas" (Meyler, 2007), the reasons for the existence of such a term needs clarification in order to make the definition more accurate.

Border villages is a term associated with the three decade-long civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers) who fought to create an independent Tamil state called Tamil Eelam in the North and the East of the island. During the period of the war, Tamil Tigers held the power in the Northern, Eastern and North-central provinces. *Border villages* were Sinhala and Tamil villages that lay along the borders between areas under government and LTTE rule. These border villages were frequently targeted by LTTE troupes and were often bombed or invaded resulting in the deaths of numerous civilians. With the defeat of the LTTE by the Sri Lankan government, the term has since lost relevance in the Sri Lankan context. Yet it is still used in war specific contexts in reminiscing the aftermath of the war.

Though the literal meaning of the word, which is *bordering villages* of a specific region, is easily understandable, without specific knowledge about social nuances, the significance of the term in relation to its meaning in a specific speech community is incomprehensible. Incomplete understanding of such social nuances, especially within a community which was traumatized by the cruelty of a civil war, could result in unintentional miscommunication with serious repercussions. Thus, an insider to a specific community is best suited to provide clarification on terms with such elaborate and complex cultural nuances contributing to its meaning.

1.3 *elle*

"A popular game similar to rounders or baseball; the national sport of Sri Lanka. (Sinhala)" (Meyler, 2007, p.85)

Elle is a popular outdoor game played mostly by the youth of Sri Lanka. As illustrated in the diagram in *A Dictionary of SLE*, the game is played with a bat or a stick and a ball, and the game is played by two groups of competitors, similar to baseball.

Although *elle* is highly popular among Sri Lankans, it is inaccurate to assume it is the national sport of Sri Lanka. The National sport of Sri Lanka is volleyball and this is another instance where the codifier has inaccurately provided information in his dictionary regarding an aspect of Sri Lankan culture. Furthermore, given that information on the national sport of Sri Lanka is easy to discover, this technical mistake is profoundly noticed.

2. Instances of 'Elitism' or Biased Representation of Linguistic Features of the Elite as being the Standard

This section identifies instances where the codifier has documented the vocabulary which is characteristic of the conventional anglicized Colombo urban English-speaking elite, showing a bias towards the 'elitist' language hegemony. Given that the codification process is ideally expected to expand the standard through the inclusion of linguistic, socio-cultural aspects of the less prestige language varieties of a language variety, I have noted the certain lexical items which are only representative of the socio-cultural aspects of the westernized urban elite minority. Through the lack of representation of the majority SLE speakers and the standardization of the language used by a minority elite as the norm through the codification process, Meyler perhaps unwittingly, is assisting the continuance of the elite hegemony which grant them political power and authority within the Sri Lankan speech community. However, this attempt should not be regarded as an effort to negate the author's attempt as insignificant given that all entries represent unique facets of SLE features used by variety of speakers. I have identified these lexical items and have suggested the alternate lexical entries used by the majority of SLE speakers, in an effort to codify SLE used by the average non-elite majority of SLE speakers.

2.1 *churuchurufy*

"(coll) drizzle (Sinhala): also whimper (of babies)" (Meyler, 2007, p.55)

The term *churuchurufy* can be considered as a blended stem; a type of borrowing where "inflectional suffixes and stems from two different languages are blended in a new variety" (Haugen, 1972 as cited in Fernando, 2002, p.173). The suffix -fy is blended or suffixed (Gunesekera, 2005) with the word *churuchuru*, which is a "borrowing from an indigenous language" (Gunesekera, 2005), to create the term *churuchurufy*. As documented by Meyler, the term is used in colloquial contexts for drizzling and the whimper of an individual, specially of a baby.

Although the term is in use as a part of SLE vocabulary, as a member of the newly educated non-elite bilingual SLE speaker of the new generation, it was observed that the term is rarely used among the new generation of SLE speakers. Instead of using it as a direct borrowing or a loan word, the term is overly adapted to Sri Lankan English, where the term appears incongruous and incompatible for regular language use. Further, the term remains unknown to most SLE speakers located outside Colombo and other urban areas or more generally by the majority of SLE speakers who do not study or explore features of SLE extensively and therefore have limited opportunity of familiarizing with such terms. The use of the term in colloquial contexts even among close associates seems abnormal or peculiar, given the term remains mostly unknown by many SLE speakers.

The use of the term can be considered a social marker where the speaker is immediately associated with higher social status and high language proficiency. The term is known and used mostly by the most proficient English speakers of the Colombo elite community, given that less proficient SLE speakers are less likely to use the term in colloquial situations. The need will rarely arise for a regular SLE speaker who does not use English for colloquial purposes, to use this term in a colloquial situation.

According to Stubbs (2002) "when words are borrowed into a language, they may become assimilated or integrated into the new language. [However,] the lack of assimilation (in pronunciation, spelling or word structure) can… be used …to connote "foreignness"" (p.35). The incongruity observed in the use of the word *churuchurufy* can be identified as a manifestation of the said "foreignness", which hinders intelligibility and create miscommunication. However, Stubbs (2002) further highlights how "loans […] are often used to signal exoticness" (p.19). This is evidently the case with speakers who use terms such as *churuchurufy* to display their Sri Lankanness through their overly Sri Lankanized English language. Therefore, the term churuchurufy (among many) has become a linguistic fashion statement through which they assert their Sri Lankan identity.

Furthermore, from a perspective of an insider to the Sri Lankan speech community, the term has other alternate usages apart from the documented usages by the Meyler. In Sinhala language, the word *churuchuru* is used to mean whining, constant complaining, and unenthusiastic or boring speech. It is evident that the word *churuchurufy* is adapted to SLE with the intention of providing a synonymous meaning.

Eg: He is *churuchurufying* all the time! I can sleep while listening to him!

The term in this particular situation is used with a negative connotation, where the word essentially conveys the unenthusiastic and boring nature of the speaker.

Given that the term *churuchurufying* is strictly restricted to informal contexts, many SLE speakers have resolved to using the complete Sinhala expression "*churuchuru ganawa*" instead of the blended stem with the intention of increasing effective communication across different demographics of SLE speakers with drastically different English proficiency levels.

Eg: He is *churuchuru ganawa* all the time! I'm so fed up.

This unique linguistic development highlights the objective of the new generation of SLE speakers which is the "communicative competence" in language usage where "its main focus is the intuitive grasp of social and cultural rules and meanings that are carried

by any utterance" (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). An insider with extensive knowledge in such cultural social nuances are best equipped to reflect on such linguistic developments for improving effective communication.

2.2 ***pattafy***

"(=hack) (coll.) ruin, wear out (clothes etc.) (From Sinhala)" (Meyler, 2007, p. 195)

The term *pattafy* is a blended stem adapted from the term "*patta gahanawa*" literary meaning wears out or ruin in Sinhala. The blended stem is produced by combining the Sinhala stem "*patta*" with the English suffix -fy which is commonly used in adopting Sinhala nouns into SLE as verbs. The term *patta* is a commonly used colloquial adjective among Sri Lankan youth where it means awesome or wonderful. The adjective is used on anything or anyone the speaker considers to be remarkable and wonderful.

Eg: He is a *patta* fellow men! If I were a girl I would marry him!

That was a *patta* lecture.

The term is used in extremely colloquial situations and the use of the term in any other situation would attract the criticism of the audience, especially of adults. The term is further adopted as *pattai* and it can be used without a noun.

Eg: wow! *pattai* ah! You're boss man!

The song was *pattai* men!

Both these adaptations of the term remain confined to extreme colloquial situations among the youth of Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, the term remains part of SLE vocabulary given the great number of users of the term in Sri Lanka.

Terms such as *kendirify*, *kunukunufy*, *pattafy* ect are examples of the manner in which the westernized urban Colombo SLE speakers adapt Sinhala terms into SLE as a way of displaying their traditional Sri Lankan roots. Highly westernized SLE speakers consider bilingualism as a way of highlighting their Sri Lankanness. Thus, terms such as pattafi, become linguistic fashion statements that ensure their acceptability as genuine traditional bilingual SLE speakers.

The adaptation of terms from L1 language varieties into SLE is done with the practical intention of ensuring effective communication by improving intelligibility between SLE speakers. The rationale behind this is that the speakers will be more familiar with indigenous terms rather than loan translations or an alternate Standard British or American term. Therefore, words such as *pattafy* seems an over adaptation that is excessive and fruitless.

The term is mostly used by the westernized Colombo urban crowd in colloquial contexts. Other SLE speakers who communicate in SLE with individuals from drastically different social background have maintained that the use of loan words from L1 varieties should be done primarily to improve communication between the speakers. It is ironic that rather than the SLE term *pattafy*, the standard British terms wear out or ruin make more sense to an average SLE speaker, who are not likely to be familiar with such exaggeratedly adapted words. Therefore, the new generation of educated bilingual Sri Lankan speakers recognizes the importance of language clarity in communication and does not advocate the use of terms which are overly adapted into SLE for the sake of displaying an exotic Sri Lankan identity which hinders effective communication across different social strata.

2.3 ***ajoutha***

"A type of card game (Sinhala from Portuguese)" (Meyler, 2007, p.4)

This particular loan word is a direct borrowing from Sinhala language for which the codifier has provided an accurate and conventionally accepted definition. The word is used less commonly for the above-mentioned purpose, and therefore could be identified as a dated entry in Sri Lankan English. However, given that the card game is popular among individuals belonging to the older generation, it has become a part of the SLE vocabulary.

Though the codifier has identified the traditional meaning associated with the term, he has overlooked current usages of the word

across different demographics of the society, specially relating to generation difference. The term has become popular among Sri Lankan youth as an expression of disgust and disappointment towards the quality of a particular item. The word is modified by adding the suffix "ai" where *ajoutha*+ ai becomes "*ajouthai*" in adopting the term to suit the contexts.

Eg: Aiyo! It's *ajouthai*! Don't eat that. It tastes like dirt! *ajouthai*!

This usage of the word is not restricted to inanimate objects; it has also been used to express disgust and/or disappointment towards individuals as well. Calling an individual *ajouthai* essentially would connote that a particular person is uninteresting, boring, badly mannered or generally possessing personality traits which are ridiculed or despised by the speaker.

Eg: He is such a vanilla kind of guy. *ajouthai*!

I went out with him once. No manners at all. *ajouthai*!

The use of the term as an expression of disgust or disappointment of the speaker towards an individual or an object is restricted to extremely colloquial contexts. However, given that *ajoutha* is an exceptionally Sinhalese term borrowed into SLE and that "loans ... are often used to signal exoticness" (Stubbs, 2002, p.19), the lexical entry is frequently used as a way of displaying a speaker's traditional Sri Lankan roots. This can be seen as overcompensation on the part of the extremely westernized, or anglicized traditional Colombo elite, who endeavours to display their lacking Sri Lankanness through linguistic means. Regardless, the term has been accepted as part of the SLE lexicon, and the socio-cultural nuances associated with the use of the term provide an overall understanding of the lexical entry for improved communication.

3. Instances of Overlooked Socio-Cultural Nuances and Alternate Meanings and Usages.

According to my perspective, given the codifier's position as an outsider to the social, cultural and linguistic dimensions of Sri Lanka, his ability to capture and reflect on the social cultural and linguistic undertones of a lexical item is problematic. SLE consists of many direct and indirect borrowings adapted from the indigenous L1 language varieties of Sri Lanka. Without comprehensive knowledge and familiarity with the L1 varieties, a codifier will not be able to capture the connotative meaning and the intrinsic values associated with a lexical item, resulting in incomplete or inaccurate representation of the features of Sri Lankan English.

Further, a lexical item's alternate usages are mostly adapted from its usages in the indigenous language variety. In this context, the codifier's lack of familiarity with such alternate meanings and usages can again limit the credibility of the codification attempt. In this segment I have noted instances where the socio-cultural undertones of a lexical item or/and the alternate meanings and usages are overlooked by the codifier, based on my subjective evaluation of the lexical item as a socially, culturally, and linguistically situated researcher.

3.1 *baila*

"/*baila* / a popular style of dance music (orig. Portuguese)" (Meyler, 2007, p. 18)

Baila, accurately defined by Meyler as popular dance music, has been a part of Sri Lankan community since the arrival of the Portuguese Colonial powers in 1505. It has been popularized in the Sri Lankan culture due to its frivolous, playful content and the upbeat tempo which is ideal for dancing.

However, apart from the above identified usage, the term has been used synonymously with "nonsense", alluding to the lack of serious content in *baila* music.

Eg: what *baila* are you talking about? Are you crazy?

Don't talk *baila* men! This is a serious conversation!

The term is used with a negative connotation; where an angry speaker is dismissing or mocking what someone else said. This alternate usage exits due to the influence from Sinhala L1 variety where the expression "*baila* kiyawanawa" is frequently used. Thus, the word has been adopted from Sinhala into the

vocabulary of Sri Lankan English, essentially as a loanword, where it remains synonymous with its L1 counterpart.

According to Haugen, borrowings or "morphemic importation can occur with no, partial or complete phonemic substitution" (1950 as cited in Fernando, 2012). This definition of loanwords clarifies how the term *baila* is adapted into SLE from Sinhala through complete morphemic importation, without phonemic substitution. According to Fernando, "SLE evolved because the Standard British English variety in its 'pure' form was inadequate to reflect the reality of the speakers" (2010), and loanwords are one of the most significant ways in which the unique social, cultural and linguistic aspects of the Sri Lankan community were reflected through language. Thereby an insider who is familiar with the indigenous language varieties as well as English would be capable of understanding the socio-cultural nuances associated with a lexical item more effectively.

3.2 *devil dance*

"A traditional dance, part of a *thovil* performed by masked devil dancers" (Meyler, 2007, p. 74)

The term devil dance is a loan translation from the Sinhala term "yak *natuma*", which is, as codified by Meyler, "a traditional dance associated with *thovil* or an exorcism ceremony performed by masked devil dancers" (Meyler, 2007, p. 74). Though the codifier has not provided an extensive description of the term including the socio-cultural nuances and traditions associated with the concept of devil dancing, from the examples he has provided, an outsider to Sri Lankan culture could obtain incomplete yet valuable information on the cultural and social significance of devil dancing.

Originated in the Southern province of Sri Lanka, devil dancing is a manner in which devil exorcism rituals are conducted. Devil dancing rituals performed by *devil* dancers are believed to cure sickness and free the souls of individuals whose bodies are possessed by poltergeists or demons. Often the devil dancers offer sacrifices, including animal lives, colourful flowers to demons in curing the *aathuraya* or the sick individual.

Devil dancing ritualistic exorcism ceremonies are associated with rural lifestyle and therefore such ceremonies are gradually becoming obsolete in the present new global age. Even in rural areas these ceremonies have become rare, making devil dancing a mere exemplification of a fragment of once existed traditional Sri Lankan culture. The term is significant given the socio-cultural nuances surrounding the ancient tradition of devil dancing which has become a trademark of Sri Lankan culture to non-Sri Lankans.

Apart from the original meaning, the term has been adopted into informal colloquial use where devil dancing alludes to an individual's disorderly, inappropriate and unsophisticated behaviour leading to chaotic outcomes. The term is derived from the Sinhala idiom "*yaka natala*/ *natanawa*" which literary means devil dancing.

Eg: Mrs. Silva's daughter is *devil dancing* all around the city at night! No wonder she can't marry her off!

Her little rascals have *devil danced* on the porch! Mud everywhere. You should've seen her face! It was hilarious!

The term metaphorically alludes to the chaotic nature seen at a devil dancing exorcism ceremony. The term is mostly confined to colloquial informal conversations and it is used by most SLE speakers irrespective of their social and cultural background. Though the expression would make sense to Sri Lankan bilingual speakers who are familiar with the Sinhala idiom and the socio-cultural nuances associated with it, an outsider to the Sri Lankan community would not be able to do so. Thus, an insider's perspective on such nuances surrounding a lexical item is invaluable.

3.3 *moosala*

"(coll.) miserable, wretched, desolate, unfortunate, inauspicious; noun *moosalaya* (Sinhala)" (Meyler, 2007, p. 170)

The term is a direct borrowing from Sinhala and the original meaning of the term is similar to what is codified by Meyler, which is miserable wretched, unfortunate and inauspicious. The

term is confined to colloquial informal contexts where the term essentially is derogatory.

Though the codifier has provided the literary meaning of the term, he has ignored the social and cultural nuances surrounding the term, which are associated with Sri Lankan superstitions. Superstitions are not considered as religious beliefs but are rather personal fears turned into collective community fears. Therefore, many circumstances and situations are associated by Sri Lankan's as being *moosala*, and to comprehend the meaning of the term better, these cultural nuances should be understood.

The most common kind of superstitions prevailing among the Sinhalese are those which are associated with omens, which they regard as prognostications, of both good and evil. The evil omens are regarded as *moosala* by the Sri Lankan culture. Situations such as, a gecko making chirping or clicking sounds when someone is about to leave the house, seeing a *polkichcha* or a magpie, meeting a married woman who is childless when embarking on a journey, the devil bird's or Ulama's cry, and the howling of foxes are some such evil omens.

The term is further adopted as a noun, *moosalaya*, which is used in a derogatory sense to identify a person, where an individual is essentially considered as an evil omen due to their miserable, morose and unpleasant personality. The term is popular among SLE bilingual speakers as a mild curse word strictly confined to colloquial contexts. Here, the word is used as an expression of mild anger and disgust towards an individual.

Eg: Ane here! I don't want to meet that *moosalaya* early in the morning! I'm leaving!

The noun *moosalaya* is moreover adopted as a feminine noun as *moosalie*, which is used on a woman, whom the speaker considers as an evil omen.

Eg: That *moosalie* ratted me out to the professor!

These terms are extremely derogatory and many Sri Lankans are extremely offended by the use of such terms, given the community's belief in superstitions. Therefore, a user of SLE should be fully aware of the social cultural nuances, in order to improve effective communication by possessing a broad understanding of the terms.

3.4 ***pirith***

"Buddhist verses chanted during a religious ceremony (Sinhala)" (Meyler, 2007, p. 200)

As identified by the codifier, the term *pirith* represents the influence of Buddhism on Sri Lankan Sinhalese culture. A *pirith* ceremony is a ceremony where "Buddhist verses are chanted" (Meyler, 2007) or recited for good luck and protection from evil.

Many terms are associated with the stem *pirith*, all referring to various aspects of the *pirith* ceremony. Pirith deshana is the chanting of *pirith*, *pirith noola*, the white thread blessed at a *pirith* ceremony (Meyler. 2007, p. 200), *pirith wathura*, the water blessed at a *pirith* ceremony, *gihi pirith* (gihi=laymen), the *pirith* chanted by laymen instead of monks, seth *pirith*, the *pirith* chanted for good luck and blessing and *pirith mandapaya*, the decorated stage where the monks are seated when chanting *pirith*. These terms are loan words from Sinhala L1 variety that are related to Buddhism and its ritualistic aspects. Similar to many other religious terms, they are used in their original Sinhala form and sense in SLE to ensure effective communication. This is because terms such as *pirith* has a significant intrinsic value for Sinhalese Buddhists and an alternate loan translation such as Buddhist chanting ceremony would not convey the same meaning in the Sri Lankan culture. The concept of *pirith* is venerated by Buddhists in Sri Lanka and a substitutive English term would not be able to incorporate the social, cultural nuances implied by the original term.

Eg: The beautiful *pirith mandapaya* was decorated with areca nut flowers (*Puwakmal*), Na leaves, and Betel leaves.

Putha, drink some *pirith* wathura for protection before you leave.

Loku Hamuduruwo tied a *pirith* noola on his wrist and blessed him to cure him of his illness.

Given that *pirith* is chanted for protection and good luck, it should be noted that *pirith* is chanted at auspicious occasions such as opening ceremonies, New Year celebrations etc. with the intention of repelling evil forces and asking for blessings from Buddha. Though this cultural aspect was overlooked by the codifier, it is one of the most significant aspects of the meaning the term carries. Knowing only the fundamental meaning of the term *pirith* would not assist a speaker in effective communication with SLE speakers and thus detailed information should be provided on alternate meanings, associated terms and also the socio-cultural nuances related to the term for improved communication. A bilingual insider, who is not only familiar with the Sinhala L1 language variety but also with Buddhism and its ritualistic aspects, can provide a more comprehensive analysis of such terms using the firsthand cultural and religious experiences.

IV. CONCLUSION

Firstly, the study establishes the ability of the insider to comprehend and critically reflect on the socio-cultural, political and linguistic undertones of the SLE lexical items which signify "English spoken in Sri Lanka" (Meyler, 2007). The insider's familiarity with the Sri Lankan traditional Sinhala culture, religious customs and rituals, indigenous language varieties and the political and social undertones associated with language usage is invaluable in offering insights into the codified lexicon of SLE which is highly influenced by the indigenous cultures. This is evident through the analysis of words including, *baila*, *devil dance*, betel tray, and *pirith*, where the codifier has been privy only to the denotative meaning of the lexical items. This manifests as his lack of familiarity with the Sri Lankan culture and indigenous L1 language varieties which has limited his ability to capture the socio-cultural undertones of the lexical items.

Secondly, the study recognizes the necessity for the codification of the language used by the majority non-elite average SLE speakers. It was evident from the study that codified lexical items in *A Dictionary of SLE* were not fully capable of representing the linguistic circumstances of other linguistic communities apart from the westernized elite, with similar unique linguistic features. Many lexical entries were recognized for which only the variation associated with the westernized elite was recorded by the codifier. Lexical variation of entries including *pattafy*, *churuchurufy* and *ajoutha*, associated with the average Sri Lankan non-elite speaker was elided by the codifier, firmly establishing the language ideology where standard is associated with the elite. However, given that the codification process should ideally support the "active broadening of the standard to include the greatest variety possible" (Parakrama, 1995), the necessity of codification of non-elite language usages in future codification efforts is highly emphasized.

Thirdly, the study made evident the increased adaptation/ borrowing of Sinhala lexical items and their alternate meanings and usages into SLE used by the non-elite average speakers of SLE. Given that average SLE speakers are bilingual or trilingual with English as their second language, their proficiency in L1 language varieties is higher than the second language. Therefore, in communication, they tend to use direct and indirect borrowings in SLE, as a strategy to increase effective communication between speakers with diverse proficiency levels in English. The adaptation of lexical entries such as *moosala* and *devil dance* for their implicit and explicit meanings is demonstrative of this scenario. Many speakers not only adapt Sinhala lexical items for the denotative meaning but also for the connotative meaning, making the codification process complex and difficult where an insider to the speech community with extensive knowledge on L1 language varieties and indigenous culture would be able to provide more nuanced definitions of SLE vocabulary usage.

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