GLOBALIZATION, LANGUAGE CONTACT, AND THE TRANSLITERATION OF ENGLISH LOANWORDS IN CENTRAL SRI LANKA

Introduction

Loanwords tell a story – a story of migration, military conquest, cultural contact, trade, technical development, proselytization and religious expansion and many other socio-historic phenomena. Each of these stories is bound by a particular context and specific historical dynamics. In Sri Lanka, the rich historical story of Sinhala is reflected in loan words from Dutch, English, Malay, Portuguese, Tamil and others. Tracing the story of Sinhala back to its early chapters, one finds the influence of old and middle Indic languages such as Sanskrit and Pali as well. The purpose of this paper is to understand the plot of the latest chapter in this story – the adoption of English into Sinhala in the commercial context of contemporary globalization.

Sri Lanka is one among many countries in the world that have witnessed anxieties over linguistic change and in which the issue of national language maintenance has acquired social, cultural and political significance. As may be expected, the contemporary globalization of English as the language of trade, commerce and telecommunications has created new ambivalences and generated new linguistic issues. In Sri Lanka, Kandy District in the Central Province is widely celebrated as the Sinhala cultural capital of the island. It becomes particularly interesting in that context to examine the kinds of changes afoot as Kandy becomes integrated into the circuits of global capital and Sinhala comes into increasing contact with English.

The story of this paper then is the relationship between Sinhala and English and the consequences of this language contact on one particular register of written Sinhala – what I term "written colloquial Sinhala". Besides spoken language, the most obvious social display of language contact between English and Sinhala is found on signboards – road signs, advertising posters, billboards, shop signs and posted announcements – often written in Sinhala alone, trilingually (Sinhala, Tamil & English) or bilingually (Sinhala and English or Sinhala and Tamil). In addition to the more or less expected trilingual and bilingual signs, the interesting and somewhat surprising twist that this story examines is the many incidences of transliterated English words written in Sinhala script.[1] The question that this research pursued was: *why were these English loanwords borrowed into Sinhala?*

[1] Equally surprising were the examples of Sinhala words written in Roman script, but these are not the focus of this study.

Pushing this empirical question in a more general theoretical direction, this paper further asks: *what do these incidences of borrowing tell us about globalization and language contact issues generally?*

While my broader research examined English loanwords on many different kinds of written signboards in several areas of Kandy district, the analysis of this paper will focus primarily on shop signboards. This reduced corpus of lexical items does restrict the possibility of drawing general conclusions about the relationship of English to Sinhala in terms of language contact, a wider analysis which would require an examination of such contact in many different social domains and registers. The paper does, however, elucidate the micro-level processes of lexical decision-making and lexical interpretation by focusing on one particular and widely salient register or genre of linguistic production. To do so, the analysis relies heavily on interviews with shopkeepers and customers at these specific sites of language contact. Rather than examine the more technical issues of phonological, morphological, syntactic and even semantic changes that occur with lexical borrowing, the purpose of this study is to speak to broader socio-historical and socio-linguistic issues as they pertain to language contact and linguistic change in one particular locale – real time changes in what Labov calls "apparent time" (Labov, 1963).

The paper will begin with a theoretical discussion of language contact and linguistic change in the context of globalization, with many examples from the Sri Lankan linguistic context. The paper then turns to an examination of the cultural and political history of language contact and linguistic nationalism in Sri Lanka. With this background, the final part of the paper analyzes the borrowing from English into Sinhala as is occurring in the commercial districts in the heartland of Sinhala nationalism – Kandy district.

Globalization of English and the Hybridization of Language

Globalization is often thought to be a contemporary phenomenon, and its recent rapid advance made possible by modern telecommunications technology has been widely and extensively studied. One significant aspect of cultural globalization has been the spread of English to non-English speaking parts of the world (Clyne, 2003; de Swaan, 1993; Haugen, 1972; Kachru, 1990; Myers-Scotton, 2002). But the roots of the globalization of English can be traced at least to the early nineteenth century and in particular to the spread of the mighty British empire to many parts of the globe. In the case of Sri Lanka, the British were preceded by the Portuguese and Dutch and all three colonial influences left lasting mementos in the form of place and people names and many now "naturalized" or "integrated" loans words in

Sinhala. It is important to note here that despite the power differentials of colonial conquest, these cultural interactions in the earlier phases of globalization were not unidirectional; in the opposite direction, the flows of Sri Lankan culture too affected the cuisines, lifestyles and particularly language of the colonialists.

In addition to the increased speed and intensity of contemporary globalization, facilitated in large measure by the rapid development of information and communications technology (ICT), the political and economic dominance of the United States of America is another hallmark of this particular phase, creating what is increasingly being called a new "empire". Besides more formal efforts to promote US interests abroad, there are also a whole host of more subtle and informal cultural forces at play here. Much of this cultural Americanization has come in the form of capitalist consumerism, with the rapid spread of American cultural icons to many parts of the world, including Sri Lanka – examples include the easy recognition of sports figures like Michael Jordan, the wide popularity of American television programs like the "Bold and the Beautiful", Hollywood films and music (it is common to find pirated copies of many of these films and music labels in the streets of Kandy), and the increasing numbers of American fast food outlets like McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza Hut (the latter two present in Kandy). While all foreign cultural products are locally adapted in innovative and interesting ways, it is important to note here that much of this consumption of American products is spurred greatly through the medium of English.[2] English becomes both the means to promote this expansion of empire as well as the product of this hegemony.

It is true that while the earlier expansion of English with the British Empire was in many ways very strategic,[3] the spread of English under the tutelage of the American empire is more commercial (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). Yet this spread is not innocent of the workings of power and certainly reflects important material interests that are served well by the promotion of English. In many ways, the fear in many postcolonial societies that the economic, political and cultural weight of English may lead to the 'death' of their mother tongue is a pressing and legitimate issue (Phillipson, 1998; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). However, I am less interested in this

[2] John Tomlinson argues that cultural globalization is never a simple one-way coercive process, and that the agency of the recipients in the appropriation and adaptation of products always needs to be accounted for (Tomlinson, 1991). Later in the paper, I will focus on the particular choices that shopkeepers make in appropriating and adapting English for their specific purposes.

[3] For creating a group of people who in the case of colonial India would act as interpreters between the British and Indians; "a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" in the famous Macaulay minutes.

paper about whether the spread of English acts to create a global *lingua franca* (de Swaan, 1993), or acts as a force of western imperialism (first British and now American) (Papapavlou, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) than I am about the repercussions this has for other languages that English comes in contact with around the world.[4]

So what happens when languages come into contact? As contact linguists have studied, there are two broad sets of issues to be examined when languages 'collide' – the internal structural changes in the languages themselves and the wider social issues surrounding these changes. Structural changes can be studied by comparing languages historically and structurally, which in early sociolinguistic work led to the creation of language groups and linguistic area categories. This paper is less concerned with these kinds of structural linguistic changes than it is with the social dynamics of those changes. It is certainly true that focusing on the form and structure of language and mining for linguistic patterns can also help discern many social dynamics of previous encounters. Relying on the sole evidence of written languages, this kind of historical-linguistic research can extrapolate about social conditions based on the types of linguistic changes that occurred over time. For example, the adoption of Pali religious terminology in South and Southeast Asia can tell us a lot about the spread of Buddhism while the current use of Spanish as the national language in Mexico allows us to understand the dynamics of conquest. However, current studies of actual language use, as this paper tries to engage in, allow us to more readily describe and explain social interaction *in process*, helping us grasp how linguistic changes function in society at any given moment. For example, examining the current sociology of language use can help us understand why English speakers in Tanzania are more likely to be from higher socio-economic income families or why Muslims in Sri Lanka tend to be trilingual.

Thus while contact linguistics studies both the internal changes of language and the larger socio-historical processes which lead to this change (Sankoff, 2001; Thomason & Kaufman 1988), I am more concerned with the latter here - in looking at the ways in which certain language behavioral change (borrowing) can be explained in part by larger socio-historical processes. In that context, it is important to point out that the process at work here is not the collision of languages per se, but the social and linguistic interaction of individuals within particular speech

[4] It should be noted here that English itself is changing as countries like India become more and more English-speaking (predominantly as a second language), creating many new varieties of English around the world, such as in the popularly spoken and now literary form of Indian-English (Kachru, 1990).

communities.[5] In other words, language contact is significantly, if not primarily, about cultural contact, and this contact is negotiated through the social and cultural worlds of particular speech communities. To understand what happens when languages collide, we need to examine how particular social actors understand and interpret the linguistic borrowings they are engaging in.

So what happens when languages collide in the social worlds of particular people? Language contact may lead to or involve multilingualism, language shift, the development of *lingua francas*, and pidginisation, as well as borrowing and code-switching (Trudgill, 2003). There can be three broad outcomes of language contact in multilingual settings: language maintenance and/or bilingualism, language shifts such as in creolization or pidginization and language death (Romain 1995). What I am interested in here are how these macro-level outcomes are produced by micro-level mechanisms and behaviors such as code-switching and borrowing (Bright, 1997). Some of the factors that influence language change are the intensity of contact (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988), the duration of contact (Sankoff, 2000) and speed or rate of contact. In describing the forces and factors which impact borrowing, we must also allow for a general discussion of the variation in linguistic behavior across different domains and registers of language use (Milroy & Milroy, 1997).

Let me first describe the macro-level outcomes of language contact before I discuss the more micro-level linguistic decision-making of social actors. Pidgins and Creoles are outcomes of prolonged language contact which produce a new form of language that draws on the structures of two (or more) languages. Rather than worrying about borrowed English words leading to linguistic and cultural degradation, pidgins and creoles help us understand the hybridization of all languages in the process of language contact, and in the context of Sri Lanka provide some insight into the development of some of the actual Creoles such as Vedda Creole, Sri Lankan Malay and Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole. Pidgins are languages without native speakers which inevitably lose some linguistic characteristics (reductionism) through "imperfect adult second-language learning" (Trudgill, 2003). Creoles on the other hand do have native speakers. In a Creole, following the initial reduction of linguistic characteristics, an expansion may follow to 'develop' the language for use in more social domains. An interlanguage, on the other hand, has to do with native speakers learning a second or foreign language. Like pidgin, interlanguage is a term used to describe a lack of full learning of the second language, but also connotes the beginning stages of second language

[5] In the ongoing debate over whether it is the languages or the speech communities that are in contact, Myers-Scotton (2002) argues that languages are "adjacent in the speakers' mental lexicon". p5.

learning. Imperfect second language learning (e.g. English in Sri Lanka) impacts the way in which loans are borrowed (Thomason, 2001) and may play a role in the borrowing of English loans by shopkeepers in Central Province.

In Sri Lanka, English is a second (or third) language for many Sinhala speakers. Although English is generally learned in the formal educational system,[6] many argue that it is learned rather poorly (Gair, 1983; Fernando, 1977; Wickramasinghe, 2000). This has been part of the reason for the development of spoken *Singrisi*, *Sinenglish* or *Singlish.*[7] It is unclear how much the level of English language learning impacts the development of a stunted-growth interlanguage, but this level of 'interlanguage English proficiency' does act as part of the linguistic repertoire of both shopkeepers and the general public. Whether or not this leads to a 'subtractive' form of bilingualism[8] with all its attendant problems is a question not pursued here. What I do ask here is how this reduced linguistic repertoire affects the English word borrowings of middle and lower-income[9].

Pidgins, creoles and interlanguages refer to different kinds of linguistic change. The first two have to do with the macro-linguistic phenomenon of linguistic structural change, while the last has to do with the level of acquired English proficiency of speakers. In every culture those who espouse language purity argue that "foreign" words contaminate the cultural heritage of a language. They (wrongly) assume that foreign loans will lead inevitably to the development of pidgins and creoles – structurally different from the host language. Lexical changes, however, do not require linguistic structural changes although sometimes it can lead to such changes. The close association of language with culture and the desire to maintain a dubious kind of linguistic/cultural purity can lead to conservative and sometimes ineffective maintenance efforts. It may be useful to mention here that the borrowing found in this study does not show any evidence of structural changes or

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[6] There are some native English speakers as well.

[7] This should not be confused with *Singlish* as Singapore-English.

[8] Subtractive bilingualism is a condition where learning of the second language occurs at the expense of the first, often resulting in the incomplete learning of both languages. This could lead to the development of a Pidgin or Creole. This is the main technical concern for continuing promotion of *swabasha.*

[9] In this study, there were several instances where shopkeepers did not understand the meaning of the English transliterated loan words they used in their own signs. (eg. *siti* [city] and *fam* [farm]). It is counterintuitive that shopkeepers would select words for their signboards that they themselves do not comprehend and even more surprising if they are trying to communicate something that the general public may not understand. This semantic aspect of borrowing will be investigated further in a future publication.

reduction in linguistic characteristics.[10] More applicable to minority languages such as Tamil and Malay in Sri Lanka, the discussion of Sinhala pidginization and creolization may not be relevant in Sri Lanka until there is a larger English-as-a-first-language speaking speech community and/or Sinhala loses much of its socio-political and cultural significance.

Alongside macro-linguistic phenomena such as creolization and pidginization, there also exist micro-linguistic phenomena. Without going into much detail about the distinctions between code-switching, code-mixing and borrowing[11], it is enough to say that borrowing is the incorporation or penetration of a single word into the host language (Myers-Scotton, 2002). In this paper, borrowing will draw attention to single word loans within a specific register or domain (termed here as 'colloquial written Sinhala'). Although lexical borrowing research has focused on phonological issues (e.g. Morin, 1999), morphological issues (e.g. Brown, 2003), syntactic concerns (e.g. Sure, 2003), and semantic research (e.g. Varma, 1979) – issues related to examining internal structural changes in languages, I am more interested here in the different types of loans and the distinctions made among them - intimate and cultural, cultural and core, nonce and integrated or nonce and neologisms. Bloomfield (1933) makes a distinction between cultural loans that come from an outside culture and intimate loans that come from a majority culture into a minority one. This distinction is useful for

[10] This is due largely to the fact that for most Sri Lankans, Sinhala is their first language and there is a very small minority of native English-speakers for whom Sinhala is the second language. It would be best to look to Tamils who speak Sinhala as a second language for the development of a Tamil-Sinhala pidgin or Tamil-Sinhala Creole. Indeed, reduction does appear to have happened to three minority languages in Sri Lanka – Vedda, Portuguese and Malay (Bakker, 2000; Dharmadasa, 1974; Hume & Tserdandelis, 2003; Jayasuriya, 2000; Slomanson, 2004). In one study, Dharmadasa (1974) uses phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical data to describe the development of Vedda-Creole. He describes the importance of the "protracted contact" (with Sinhala) in this development as part of a larger cultural contact which occurred prior to the colonial era. In contrast to Vedda Creole, Slomanson (2004) finds that Sri Lankan Malay has arisen in contact primarily with Tamil. This is supported by Bakker (2000) who examines both Sri Lankan Malay and Sri Lankan Portuguese within a larger 'linguistic area'. Unlike Bakker's internal examination of Sri Lankan Portuguese, Jayasuriya (2000) focuses more on the socio-historical developments which brought about this Creole.

[11] These distinctions are based primarily on the number of words incorporated from one language to another as well as the patterns which govern linguistic behavior. There is considerable research examining these distinctions (Brown, 2003; Cacoullos & Aaron, 2003; Clyne, 2003; Dako, 2002; Eastman, 1992; Kachru, 1990; Martin, 1998; Myers-Scotton, 1990; Nortier & Schatz, 1992; Shin, 2002).

describing language changes for a minority linguistic community within a larger dominant one (as is often found in immigrant communities or for Tamils in Sri Lanka), but is less useful for studying the majority language of Sinhala in the Sri Lankan setting.

Poplack, Sankoff and Miller (1988) look at the differences between integrated and nonce loans. Integrated loans are frequently and widely used borrowed words that have become part of most social actors' linguistic repertoires, while nonce loans are relatively new loans (Morin, 2002) and thus infrequent, not widespread and not readily accepted[12]. For example, in the case of Sri Lanka, many English loans into Sinhala that are now readily accepted are from a previous period of English language spread (during the British colonial period) while other newer loans (especially those associated with industries such as ICT where a great many companies are of American origin – e.g. Microsoft, IBM or Google) are more likely to have developed during a more recent American expansion of English[13]. It is quite possible that many currently nonce loans will become integrated loans over time, depending on the salience of the words and the different socio-historic changes underway in a society.

Cultural loans are borrowed words that fill a semantic gap or lexical deficiency as cultural contact leads to cultural change while core loans are borrowed words that do have a counterpart in the core of the recipient language (Myers-Scotton, 2002). According to Myers-Scotton, cultural loans are words that are borrowed fairly readily during cultural changes whereas core loans are borrowings that occur more slowly over time (Myers-Scotton, 2002). In the context of this study, cultural loans are closely related to nonce loans as the latter are borrowed in the context of rapid Western-style modernization/globalization to fill what may be a

[12] In this study, many "nonce" loans were found in signboards. Words like *niw* (new) and *fam* (farm) are not widespread and have not been heard by this researcher in spoken Sinhala. Other recent borrowings such as *fotokopi* (photocopy) are widely used and should be considered "integrated". Other older integrated loans include words like *sentar* (centre), and *storas* (stores) that are widely used and understood as well.

[13] Although it may be impossible to equate nonce loans with American English and integrated loans with British English (the earlier example of photocopy demonstrates this), one can examine the types of historical changes which drive linguistic development during the British and American expansionary periods. Thus this study cannot claim that all recent loans are of American origin, but does assert that the current power and influence of American English globally means that much borrowing worldwide will stem from American cultural influences. It is noteworthy that some English loans may even derive from postcolonial Englishes, such as the word *tharaedin* (threading) that is commonly used in beauty salons in Sri Lanka comes from Indian English and South Asian hair removal practices.

lexical deficiency in Sinhala. But unlike Myers-Scotton who found core borrowings to be less related to rapid cultural change and relatively slower in development, my study found that several English words were transliterated on signboards despite the existence of Sinhala counterparts – creating what may be called a category of 'nonce core loans'. The criteria used by sociolinguists to categorize and identify loans along lines of newness, widespread use and acceptance, and translatability seem to overlap in this study and thus require modification. In this study integrated loans differ from nonce-cultural loans (those which do not have translations) and nonce-core loans (which are thought to be more stylistic in nature). The nonce designation is used here to recognize recently borrowed loans and a lack of widespread use (in other registers).

The difficulty in categorizing loans indicates that in addition to the question of lexical deficiency, there are other reasons for why individuals and speech groups use certain languages for certain occasions. Often used in terms of literary criticism, or to study spoken language use, the concept of 'stylistics' elucidates that individuals draw on a repertoire of linguistic resources and chose to express themselves in specific ways bound in part by larger socio-political forces. Their own attitudes toward languages, varieties or registers as well as the perceived attitudes of the listener or reader play a part in these choices. If attitudes influence behavior, there are various reasons why a speaker may commit a specific speech act – to identify or represent oneself (or one's business) or as an act of accommodation to those who will receive the language act. In other words, individual-level linguistic choices are always made in particular political, economic, social and cultural contexts. The question of *why* particular actors borrow a particular word, even when there are other available alternatives in the recipient language, is an important question and at least part of the answer to the question requires attention to the social context of language contact.

Invariably during language contact, one of the languages is imbued with more prestige than another due to a variety of social and political factors. This often results in a differentiation of domains of socially acceptable language usage. Ferguson (1959) initially defined this phenomenon as diglossia. In the context of this paper, the concept of diglossia helps us understand the macro-linguistic issues that contribute to micro-linguistic language attitudes (i.e. what social forces impact linguistic choices) as well as makes it possible to distinguish between several registers of Sinhala. The distinction between a high and low prestige language or variety is often conceived in terms of internal structural characteristics – phonological, morphological and syntactic characteristics, but it also has to do with the social dimensions of language – the association of particular languages with certain forms of cultural capital (e.g. the prestigious position of English vis-à-vis

Sinhala in certain social domains in Sri Lanka). But any particular language operates at different registers. 'Register' can be used to define any variety of language used in specific circumstances based primarily on level of formality (Biber & Finegan, 1994). Different registers, varieties or genres of language reflect the particular dynamics of different social settings or domains. For example, the colloquial written Sinhala found on the signboards that this study examines represents a separate register from the colloquial spoken Sinhala or the classical written or peasant literature Sinhala. The concept of diglossia can be expanded not only to include more than two languages (Abdulaziz-Mkilifi, 1972), but several varieties or registers of the same language.

It has generally been accepted that the distinction between written and spoken Sinhala is diglossic – each used in a different domain with varying levels of prestige (Dharmadasa, 1977; Gair, 1992; Paollilo, 1997). However, this written and spoken dichotomy can be further sub-divided. Gair (1986) defines three categories of diglossia: written, formal spoken and colloquial spoken, while Paolillo (2000) defines four categories of diglossia: literary, hybridized literary, formal spoken and colloquial spoken. Meegaskumbura (2004) argues that the Sri Lankan linguistic environment should be studied as a multiglossic one.

Equally important is the means by which one defines the diglossic (multiglossic) relations. While the categorization of diglossic relations along internal structural lines is not the focus of this paper, the application of the concept of diglossic relations along the lines of formality, domain and prestige are important to this paper. It has also been argued that the language used in advertising represents a stylistic break from formal language varieties marking another separate register (Martin, 1998; Piller, 20003), which undoubtedly reflects different diglossic or multiglossic relations with the other registers. Kachru (1990) argues that newspaper language forms yet one more register. The data collected here does not fit neatly into the categories of either an advertising register, a written literary register, or a colloquial spoken register. I believe that the category of 'colloquial written Sinhala', a register that is distinguished from others primarily by its communicative function, best describes the language on signboards examined in this study. Overall, internal linguistic structures notwithstanding, one can argue that socially, there are six registers of Sinhala based on level of formality, prestige, style and domain which serve different functions: the first three at the written level include classical literary Sinhala, peasant or hybrid literary Sinhala (which attempts to stylistically capture spoken Sinhala usage), and colloquial written Sinhala (such as in the signboards used in this study), and at the spoken level include formal

spoken Sinhala, colloquial Sinhala and *Singrisi* or *Sinenglish.*[14] Although diglossic relations have been described between English and Sinhala (Fernando, 1977; Parakrama , 1995; Wickramasinghe, 2000) and between varieties of Sinhala (Gair, 1986, 1992; Meegaskumbura, 1990; Paolillo, 1997), the overlapping multiglossic or polyglossic relations between English and various registers or varieties of Sinhala have not been fully explored.

The Clash of Languages in Sri Lanka

Sinhala is considered to be one of many Indo-Aryan languages, closely related to other South Asian languages such as Marathi, Hindi, and Bengali (Gair, 1998). Linguists have demonstrated that historically Sinhala has been greatly influenced by Prakrit, Pali and Sanskrit (Sannasgala, 1976). In that sense, any attempt to restore or maintain a "pure Sinhala" misunderstands the very creation and existence of languages as vibrant living things that inhabit a diverse linguistic ecology (Haugen, 1972). In other words, 'cross-fertilization' of languages is not only common, but could be thought of as a way to increase the ability of languages to adapt in a changing environment. Indeed, language contact holds the potential to revitalize linguistic development and reverse linguistic reduction. Quite contrary to fears of borrowing leading to cultural and linguistic death, borrowing has been shown to invigorate a language.

Though this paper primarily examines language shift and borrowing, there have been extensive efforts to maintain and standardize Sinhala as well. The development of modern Sinhala in Sri Lanka has a rich history of formal and informal changes. In the 13th century, Sinhala first began to be codified while elites and peasants alike began to search for a standard form of Sinhala (Meegaskumbura, 2004). In the 18th century a Sinhala revivalist movement was led by Sandaraja, while the early 20th century saw an important 'revitalization' of 'pure' Sinhala by Cumăratunga using language to create a strong ethno-national identity (Dharmadasa, 1977). The nationalist movement of the 1930s and 1940s led to the consolidation of the *swabasha* movement. In the mid 20th century, Bandaranaike and Jayawardena used language successfully as a policy issue in the drive toward independence (de Silva, 1996; Gair, 1983). Language continues to play an important role in Sri Lankan politics and the *Hela Havula* movement exists today as an integral ideology for Sinhala nationalist politics (Devotta, 2004). From a linguistic perspective, these should be seen as attempts at language maintenance and standardization in the face

[14] In the case of English, Wickramasinghe (2000) and Parakrama (1995) argue that there is a distinction between educated or formal English and uneducated or informal English, with Sinenglish standing apart.

of interaction with other cultures and speech communities. These attempts continue to this day with the efforts of distinguished scholars and the government to translate and create new words in Sinhala through a process of Sanskritization or Anglicization. The Department of Official Languages has been given the charter to maintain and standardize Sinhala (and Tamil), but the success or failure of these efforts has received little scholarly attention.

As mentioned previously, in pre-colonial times Sinhala benefited greatly from "large scale borrowing" from Pali and Sanskrit (Sannasgala, 1976). During colonial times, there was contact between Sinhala and both Portuguese and Dutch over a period of several centuries. During this period of borrowing, it is important to note the cultural aspect of the words loaned and the social, political, economic and technical level of development and interaction that those loans signified at that particular time in history. For example, the Sinhala word *iskole* was derived from the Portuguese *escola* (school) as was the Sinhala word *mesa* from the Portuguese word *mesa* (table) – loans that derived from the socio-economic and cultural interaction of the time (Sannasgala, 1976). Besides a great deal of legal and bureaucratic terminology that was borrowed from Dutch, Sinhala words like *banku* come from the Dutch *bank* (bank), and *oralosu* from the Dutch *horologe* (clock) (Peters & Sannasgala, 1975) – once again reflecting the particular kind of interaction at work during that period. The Sinhala lexicon is riddled with loans from both Portuguese and Dutch.[15]

The degree of Tamil influence on Sinhala language development is most likely more intense than either Portuguese or Dutch given the duration of cultural and linguistic contact. Besides loaning lexical items, language contact between Sinhala and Tamil is thought to have resulted in some convergence along phonological, morphological and syntactic lines as well (Gair, 1998; Nuhman, 1992). Tamil is also thought to have been influential in Sinhala script development (Theru, 1966).

As has been pointed out earlier in the paper, the Sinhala lexicon also includes many English loanwords, many of them from the British colonial period such as 'stores', 'house' and 'centre' now integrated into the language and others from the more contemporary American period such as 'communication' and 'blender' constituting the nonce loans that this study examines. In addition, there is now a new category of 'marked loans' that has begun the process of Sinhalizing English nouns and verbs. In one study of English loans in Chinese (Good, 1996), it was found that the combination of certain phonemes identified particular words as

[15] See Peeters & Sannasgala (1975), Sannasgala (1976) & Wickramasinghe (2000) for lists of these words.

'marked' English loans. In Sinhala, there is a similar marking, though not morphological and not phonological. Some noun loans - both animate and inanimate - are marked as loans by adding what could be thought of as a suffix or what one colleague referred to as a "helper word". The two nouns that stand out here are the Sinhala suffixes "*-kenek*" (for people) and "*-eka*" for objects. Verbs can also be identified (or 'marked' as English loans) by the adding of the Sinhala suffix "*-karanawa*" to the English verb (complete with conjugations). Though these marked loans do not violate the structural codes of Sinhala, they do point out the adaptation of at least spoken Sinhala through its contact with English. Marked loans were found to be much less prevalent in the written colloquial Sinhala examined in this study as it is in spoken colloquial Sinhala.

The current linguistic context in Sri Lanka is also a product of the politicization of language in the colonial and postcolonial periods. In the pre-independence period, language became an important nationalist issue. It was during this drive to independence in the 1930s and 1940s that the *swabasha* movement was consolidated. The *swabasha* movement was (and is) the political application of an ethno-linguistic cultural nationalism and has had a strong impact on the development of nationalist sentiments. Beginning as a nationalist opposition to the British colonial administration's use of English, in 1956, the post-independence government of Ceylon instituted the Official Languages Act which changed the formal language of communication from English to Sinhala (and Tamil). Altering the access to English, this act was the first postcolonial formal attempt at 'maintaining' and reviving Sinhala and making the learning of Sinhala an important part of the nascent nationalist program, thus creating one of the incipient sources of contemporary Sinhala nationalism. The use and focus on Sinhala in education had major repercussions for formal attempts at language maintenance and language revitalization. Currently, the Constitution recognizes both Sinhala and Tamil as official and national languages with English acting as a 'link-language'. In the 16th amendment to the Constitution, both Sinhala and Tamil were also made languages of administration. It should be noted here that although both Sinhala and Tamil are national and official languages, Sinhala has had relatively more support and success in Sri Lanka due to the significantly larger number of first-language Sinhala speakers and governmental biases that have resulted from rising Sinhala nationalism.

Tamil and Sinhala also act as the media of instruction in formal schooling, with English being learned primarily as a second language. However, despite the focus on Sinhala revival in the *swabasha* movement, there is currently a renewed interest in "strengthening" English instruction and learning and English is making a slow 'comeback' in the educational system. This stems from the view that English

teaching in Sri Lanka is not entirely effective (Parakrama, 1995; Wickramasinghe, 2000). As such, there are now various attempts to 'correct' the English 'problem' by focusing on new teaching methods and reintroducing English as the medium of instruction in some schools at grade five. These efforts are sponsored in part by international donor agencies, including the British Council. There is also a movement toward bilingualism and trilingualism in education. But debates over whether or not to reintroduce English into schools are complex and lengthy and continue to be highly politicized and controversial. In general, there does not seem to be a general move toward English in education in the same way that there was a move away from English during the early independence era. It is institutions such as education which act concurrently with economic and political institutions to influence the ways in which borrowing occurs by creating a speech community with more or less exposure to both Sinhala and English.

It is safe to assert that the success of the *swabasha* movement has come at the expense of English language learning in formal education. While the merits of such a trade-off can be debated endlessly, it is necessary to note for the purposes of this paper that one of the results of this has been the creation of a large population of second language English speakers who do not have high levels of English proficiency. The English repertoires of this population are limited with a 'fossilized interlanguage' - one of the contact areas examined by those who study *Singrisi*, *Singlish* and *Sinenglish* (Dissanayake, 1998; Parakrama, 1995; Wickramasinghe, 2000). This suggests that those who borrow English words in contemporary social interactions may have a limited repertoire to choose from. Moreover, those who are reading or hearing these loans may fail to fully comprehend the word being used, especially outside of context (e.g. outside the context of the signboards in this study). The question this paper tries to answer is: *why are particular words borrowed and what meanings do those borrowing convey to the borrowers (shopkeepers) and the audience (customers)*?

As mentioned at the start of this section, maintenance efforts are conducted formally by the Department of Official Languages and informally through scholarship and translation of foreign texts by influential Sinhala (and Tamil) scholars. Kumarasiri (1982) even developed a dictionary for highly technical terms to codify standard 'modern' Sinhala. However, it should be noted that in many ways maintenance efforts are governed by the same stylistic forces which bound the decision-making of shop-keepers. At the same time, the accumulation of stylistic choices reinforces the form and function of standardized Sinhala. Hence maintenance of language and adaptation of language do not necessarily have to contradict each other. For example, the development and distribution of Sinhala for 'modern' consumption in film and television industries may also be described as

maintenance efforts. Other efforts to maintain and develop Sinhala in a changing world have to do with making Sinhala compatible with ICT. Translation services can be found on the web as well as dictionaries. One can now find Sinhala script and texts on-line and there are codes to make the keyboard compatible with Sinhala characters. Though Sinhala may have lacked lexical specificity to deal with social and cultural changes at various times in history, maintenance efforts to elaborate the lexicon result in the ability of Sinhala to adapt to current global technical changes. This adaptation even offers the possibility of language spread through this developing technology.

A Linguistic Tour of Kandy

Kandy is considered by many to be the current cultural capital of Sinhala tradition. Never conquered by either the Portuguese or the Dutch, the Kandyan Kingdom was the last Sinhala Kingdom to fall to the British. Kandy is looked upon as the center of Sinhala culture – where the largest *perahera* is conducted, where traditional Kandyan dancing originates and where many think the conservation of Sinhalese culture and tradition remains strongest. It is true that as a thriving business and commercial metropolis, Kandy is much less isolated than many parts of rural Sri Lanka, but it is certainly much less integrated into the global political economy than the highly integrated political capital Colombo and much more culturally resilient than the many other tourist-heavy cities on the Southern and Eastern coasts.

Reading Signboards

Signboards with transliterated English words are commonplace all over Kandy district and are represented in the sites of this study - Kandy town, Peradeniya, Katugastota, and Pilimatalawa. Following in the pragmatic tradition of Labov and others, the attempt here is to observe the day-to-day language use of individuals and analyze language change in 'apparent time' by comparing borrowing in similar industries (Labov, 1963). Driving around Kandy and its vicinity, I conducted an extensive visual survey - observing the phenomenon while noting and recording signs of bilingual language use and transliterated English loans. There were hundreds and hundreds of these signs; they were trilingual, bilingual and monolingual and written in all three scripts, but it was rare to see signs without Roman script English or transliterated loan words. This study focused on English/Sinhala signs, of which 100 were chosen for collection and further analysis based on their display of transliterated English loan words. There were many translated words for 'newly' adopted social changes such as certain kinds of communication services, but also many transliterations – primarily from English to Sinhala but also from Sinhala to English. Many of these signs contain dozens of

transliterated words. From these 100 signboards, nearly one third (30 shops) were deliberately selected for follow-up interviews about linguistic choices. Using a semi-structured interview schedule, shopkeepers were queried on their choices of particular loanwords and some customers were also asked about the significations of the signs they encountered.

Types of Industries.

Transliterated loanwords were found most commonly in shops and industries such as: Beauticulture, Electronic and Electrical businesses, Mechanical services and Hardware shops, Schools, Classes Courses and other Educational services, Automotive Sales & Repair, Printing Copying, and Typesetting businesses along with recent 'Communications' shops, and even Medical and Insurance industries. They were also found in general shops, stores and small hotels. What can this list tell us about borrowing English transliterated loans? The types of industries which are widely adopting transliterated English loans on their signs are primarily involved in selling products and services which are fairly new to 'modern' Sri Lanka. Except for education and medical facilities, these industries represent more recent technical developments in Sri Lankan social life. However, even education and medical industries have changed in their form since independence – both shifting greatly due to privatization of some services. The general shops, stores and small hotels have been in Sri Lanka for a longer duration and thus as expected, many of the words used in the signs in these locations were integrated loans.

Parts of Speech

What parts of speech do these loans represent (Poplack, Sankoff, & Miller, 1988; Brown, 2003)? Brown (2003) posits that when borrowing occurs in the context of language contact, there is a hierarchy of adoption whereby nouns are first borrowed, followed by verbs, adjectives, adverbs and interjections. In a similar vein, Peeters & Sannasgala (1975) demonstrate that nouns are the most common Dutch loans in Sinhala. This study revealed that the vast majority of loans were nouns, followed by adjectives along with a couple of verb forms and one conjunction.

For nouns, one can distinguish between those which define the type of shop such as hotel or pharmacy, those which describe the shop as a house, centre or store and those which describe the products and services sold in the shop – farm, medical, motors, electric, jewelry, spices, insurance, photocopy, property rental, legal services. Adjectives were used for describing the stores as well: original, central, new, united, modern, and general among others. The conjunction *And* (and) was used in place of the Sinhala equivalent *saha.*

But being declarative rather than discursive in nature, it is difficult to draw more general conclusions about the patterns of speech inherent in signboards. What

is interesting here is that written language is often thought to be less susceptible to borrowing due to its higher degree of formality. But in the particular Sinhala register studied here – written colloquial Sinhala – borrowings seem commonplace. The question here is: is this register then more formal than colloquial spoken Sinhala and less formal than peasant literature, and if so, what are the implications of that level of formality for language use and change? Further, what and how does this written register communicate to its readers?

Types of Loans

As to be expected, integrated English loans were commonly found. Some of the most common of these were: *hotel* (hotel), *klinik* (clinic) and *storas* (stores). Other integrated English loans include *tayar* (tyre) and *kar* (car). These integrated loans were widely understood and it is uncommon to read (or hear) Sinhala equivalents for these terms.

Nonce cultural loans were found in the newly developed industries. For example, at an automobile parts store, the word *windaskarin* (windscreen) was used while at a repair shop the word *jak* (jack) was displayed. Other words that had Sinhala translations but still used loans include - *wil* (wheel) and *oyal* (oil), each of which can translate into *rode* and *tel* respectively. These latter can be considered to be core loans because they have Sinhala equivalents which are sometimes used in spoken colloquial Sinhala, but nonce loans because they are relatively new borrowings – 'nonce-core' loans. A comparison between written colloquial and spoken colloquial forms could lead to some interesting findings that could point out the distribution and acceptance of these nonce loans.

Viewed at the macro-level, the variety that was mentioned earlier could be seen as a natural occurrence in languages in contact and even in borrowing. There were many instances where in the same industry, shopkeepers made 'stylistic' choices in their communication on signboards. For example, computer was written as both *pariganakaya* and *kompiyutaraya* (computer), radio was written as *guwanviduli yantraya* and *radiyo* (radio) and television was written as both *rupawahini* and *tivi* (TV). Similarly, *henna pratikara kirima* was also written as *henna tritmant* (henna coloring treatment). This variation of words for the same product within the same industry could signal either competition between languages and stylistic choices made by shopkeepers (perhaps to accommodate different clienteles) or indicate that the process of language change (integration of loan) has yet to reach some equilibrium or standardization of acceptable usage.

Marked loans, a more pronounced characteristic of spoken Sinhala, were less common. Nevertheless, although there were no instances of marked noun or adjectival loans, there were several instances of verb-constructions that made their

way into written signboards – examples include *kopi kirima* (to photocopy) and *waeks kirima* (to wax).

Understanding Linguistic Choices

Why did shopkeepers choose particular English words to put on their signboards? What factors drove their linguistic choices and what messages did they hope to convey?

Necessity

Several interviewees claimed that they did not know the words for their loan in Sinhala. This implied that either there was none (which accounts for a cultural loan) or they simply did not have access to adequate linguistic resources. In these cases, necessity due to a lexical deficiency was the reason cited for their choice of using English transliterated loans on their signboards. Two examples demonstrate this response - *camera plasgan* (camera flashgun – note the choice to use the "p" instead of one of the new "f" symbols) and *blendar* (blender). Both of these recent technical developments which are now spreading throughout the community require loans. In another shop, the name of the shop *siti storas* (city stores) was not understood. It was used because this shop was a satellite of another shop in Colombo with the same name. When told that the word *siti* (city) was an English word, it still did not evoke comprehension until it was mentioned that it was the translation of *nuwara* (city). In this case, the relatively smaller English language repertoire of the shopkeeper led to a simple imitative gesture of borrowing. Future research should survey various social categories (socio-economic status, level of schooling, first and second languages, and ethnicity) to determine the extent to which these impact language attitudes and language preferences. In some cases, new technologies and accompanying cultural developments are leading to the development of non-English terms. Examples include the 'marked' Sinhala compound *sita karana* ("making cold") for the English word refrigerator and a more Sanskritized loan *redisodana yantraya* for the English words washing machine. It is noteworthy here that English is not the only stylistic choice, even in the contemporary context of globalization, for creating new vocabulary in Sinhala.

Stylistics/Signaling/Preferences

Several shopkeepers asserted the importance of certain words for their business. This importance stems both from the kind of industry (such as beauticulture) for which the word is used and the general prestige surrounding the use of English. It was clear that the use of these words was designed to signal to customers something about the shop aside from what the shop actually did or sold. In these cases loans were generally used to signal 'modernity' and 'development'. The most obvious case of this is the use of the transliterated English word *famasi*

(pharmacy) instead of the commonly known Sinhala word *osuhala* or *osusala*, although there were certainly many of the latter as well and these were often in bilingual signboards. These decisions were at least partially made to signal what type of medicines - western, prescription-based medicine v. ayurvedic medicines - can be purchased at *famasi* stores. In another example, when asked why he used the English transliterated word *sentral* (central) and not the commonly known and spoken Sinhala word *madhyama* in his signboard, the shopkeeper replied, "that word does not suit my shop." In this case, it was not necessary to use the particular word chosen because the shopkeeper clearly had a larger repertoire to chose from, but the preference for the English word was an attempt to signal something intangible but important – the aura of English in its association with modernization and development.

Alignment

Several shopkeepers talked about the importance of aligning particular words with other loanwords. For example, a communications and printing shop which already had loans to describe the shop may use modifiers such as *niw* (new) instead of *alut* or *nawa*, or *orijinal* (original) instead of *mul*. Similarly, a hotel (integrated English loan) could be accompanied by a modifier to describe the hotel as *hotel niw paradais* (hotel new paradise) or an automobile parts store could be described through several aligned loans as – *ayiland tayar sentar* (island tyre centre). Moreover, the incidences of the conjunction *and* (and) instead of *saha*, came only between two already transliterated English loans – *tred sentar and komiyunikeshan* (trade centre and communication). *Hed masaj* (head massage) was used even though the word *oluwa* (head) is commonly used in spoken and written Sinhala. Alignment was not always important to every shopkeeper. For example, *her mostara* (hair curling) is a mixed loan, which uses hair from English and *mostara* from Sinhala, as is the example of *niw lanka liibadu* (new Lanka furniture), which combines an English nonce-core loan with a Sinhala word for furniture. It is not clear if there is a triggering mechanism that requires stylistic alignment in some cases and not in others.

Political Economic, and Other Imperatives

Finally, several shopkeepers discussed the complicated Sinhala words – especially loans taken from Sanskrit – that were simply an inconvenience to use. For example, one shopkeeper said that *pariganaka wadhan sakasuma* (computer typesetting) was too long a word. In another case, the Sinhala words were longer compared to English loans. For example, at one electronics shop the shopkeeper stated that *rupawahini* (TV) took up too much room on his sign – especially where he had to list many other items. Given that he had to pay by the character for sign construction, this issue became a pressing economic problem for him. In another

example, one shopkeeper spoke about the government regulation of medicine, pointing out that to use the word *osuhala* or *osusala,* one must pay the government agency responsible for regulating medicine. In this case, a policy shift toward the privatization of medicine and the accompanying monopoly by the government on the use of certain words for access to certain products and services has had an impact on borrowing in the linguistic arena. In a third example, *fam* (farm) shops, which sold some chicken and other farm products, never used the term Sinhala word *goyipola* or *govipola* (farm). All these shops were developed in conjunction with an NGO project that promoted the development of small scale businesses, and came in a packaged form that included the necessary funding, training and the title *fam.*

Some English words are borrowed to fill a lexical deficiency (either actual or perceived) and sometimes borrowings are a product of political and economic imperatives. In either of those cases, signboard loans are not a product of shopkeepers' 'choices' in any meaningful sense. When a shopkeeper does 'choose' to use particular English words, including those nonce-core loans for which equivalents exist in the Sinhala lexicon, he is most likely signaling to consumers what *kind* of product he is selling, expecting that that is indeed what consumers desire. There is no question that the linguistic repertoire of the shopkeeper plays a part in determining which words are borrowed and how. But interviews with consumers revealed that they did not often understand the literal meaning of particular transliterated English words, even if they understood its signification from the context of its use, i.e. its association with other aligned words on the signboard and the shop itself. In that sense, one could argue that shopkeepers are selling not only their products, but the English loans as well, and in that discursive moment when consumers engage in the interpretive act of reading and understanding transliterated English words, Sinhala in this one register shifts, if only ever so slightly.

Understanding the Dimensions and Dynamics of Language Contact, Use and Change

The examination of transliterated English words on shop signboards in the streets of Kandy confirms, elucidates and adds to many of the findings of existing sociolinguistic theory. The first is the importance of history. Loanwords, Peeters & Sannasgala point out, "do indeed bear witness to historical events" (Peeters & Sannasgala, 1975:250). Sinhala, like all languages, is a historical repository upon which many different events such as colonialism, trade, nationalism and now globalization have left their traces. Indeed, as I have argued earlier, many loans from other phases or eras of globalization such as during the two thousand years

contact with Tamil or the early colonial contact with Portuguese and Dutch, are so well integrated that their 'authenticity' is never in question. There has been a great deal of previous borrowing in Sinhala and the major difference between earlier periods and the contemporary context of globalization is the intensity, duration and speed of increased contact. What we are witnessing right now is the latest encounter of Sinhala with English. Among the three 'colonial' languages, English has now been in contact with Sinhala for nearly as long as Dutch or Portuguese but is much more widespread across the island. If duration, intensity and rate of contact are significant factors in determining the extent of borrowing, one might expect English to leave its traces upon Sinhala much more strongly and visibly than the other two languages, and the current phase of American-led globalization will only intensify this process. While the onslaught of Westernization that English represents is certainly a cause of concern, the previous vibrancy and resilience of Sinhala leaves one optimistic about its ability to adapt and grow from this process. Hence the distinction between integrated English loans and nonce English loans that I have made here is a historical one and it remains to be seen how many of the latter become transfigured as the former.

Second, as the above analysis has also demonstrated, linguistic changes reflect larger culture changes. Many scholars have contended that language contact is a by-product of cultural contact (Clyne, 2003; Myers-Scotton, 2002, Thomason & Kaufman, 1988). Like English itself, the story of Sinhala is a story of cultural contact. All cultural changes require new ways of defining one's social world, many of which require nonce cultural loans. But borrowing during periods of rapid social change in particular often comes primarily from the dominant cultural donor language, even when translated substitutes exist in the recipient language.[16] The degree or intensity of contact also plays a part in the borrowing process. This of course is particularly evident for minority languages, but there is no question that the contemporary contact of Sinhala with English is a wide and intense one, with modern forms of communications (television, radio, advertising, internet, etc) being saturated with English, a language that has a particular cultural salience and diglossic power in the context of contemporary globalization. Reflecting on the advertising register, Premawardhena (2003) argues that in the electronic and print media, borrowing seems to have changed to reflect more English loans than the 'tradition' of Sanskrit loans. In order to examine the intensity of contact more thoroughly, these other registers (especially television) need more attention. The

[16] This paper has primarily addressed contact with a dominant English language. It should be noted that the Indian language of Hindi is also a major cultural export, especially through Bollywood films that are enormously popular in Sri Lanka. In this study, Indian-English words like henna and threading were found fairly extensively in the beauticulture industry.

increased number of exchanges between speakers (or writer and reader) that use English offers the possibility of more innovation opportunities. That is, it should be expected that within an ecology of language use in an environment of language contact, more exchanges mean many more opportunities for loans and more possibilities of linguistic changes. From this study, it is clear that English words that are associated with the technology and culture of contemporary globalization are rapidly proliferating in the communicative register of commercial signboards and it is possible that many of these nonce cultural and core loans will become integrated into the language over time.

But thirdly, in addition to language contact, the internal dynamics of the recipient society can also significantly affect the amount and quality of borrowings. In this regard, the language maintenance efforts of the Sri Lankan government are particularly noteworthy, in particular the efforts to Sanskritize or Sinhalize loans. It is possible that Sinhala maintenance efforts will attempt to revive existing Sinhala equivalents or create new Sinhala equivalents to reverse the integration of nonce core and cultural loans, but it is not clear how effective official maintenance efforts are in stalling colloquial linguistic changes. Still, maintenance efforts can certainly play a part in either accommodating or retarding the process of language change and language shift.

Fourthly, this paper has demonstrated that the diglossic and multiglossic macro-level structural relations between English and Sinhala as well as between varieties or registers in Sinhala impact the social domain of use and exist in a dialectic with the attitudes, preferences and repertoires which form the foundation for the choices that individual shopkeepers make regarding language use in sign boards. Given the multiglossic relations between English, Sinhala and different Sinhala registers, which tend to influence the type of loaning which occurs in these signboards studied, the question of why this type of borrowing occurs at this time has to do eventually with the 'stylistic' choices of individual shopkeeper. To focus on the communicative function of these loans, I would like to draw on and revise Paolillo's (2000) concept of public-ness, which he equates with a higher level of formality. The use of English loans may mark prestige (in an attempt to entice potential buyers into the shops) but not a formal closure (given that many Sinhala speakers have developed an interlanguage level of proficiency in English) which has the potential for reducing business. English itself may be formal, but English loans transliterated in Sinhala script are an informal attempt to negotiate what is at times a lack of lexical specificity in Sinhala and at other times an attempt to 'stylize' communication through these loans in order to accommodate one's audience. The register of 'written colloquial Sinhala' that this paper has developed and examined is precisely such a medium where formal English can be informalized, even in a

written form that is otherwise less susceptible to borrowing. Even when these attempts to stylize communication are not met with comprehension, i.e. when the readers do not understand the transliterated words, it is quite possible that the effective communication of the general message may eventually play a part in integrating the word into the Sinhala lexicon (while some words may simply cease to be used after some time). This may be how an English word like *niw* (new), instead of its Sinhala equivalents *alut* or *nawa,* becomes integrated over time.

Finally, the repertoires or linguistic capital of individual speakers, speech communities and social groups play a central part in the actions of individuals as they negotiate their social worlds. It is important to be clear about the role and place of English and its relation to Sinhala in Sri Lanka. English is spoken as the mother tongue by a very small segment of the population. In addition, the educational system is not producing a large number of English proficient school leavers (Gair, 1983; Wickramasinghe, 2000). This situation gives those who do have high levels of English proficiency a competitive edge in a society where English still holds high levels of prestige. What does this mean to shopkeepers who place English loans on their signs? Fernando (1977) argues that poor English acquisition results in a restricted lexical transference, where only limited understanding of English reduces their possible language acts. The linguistic repertoire of the average Sri Lankan may not include formal spoken or written English (this may change as more English is brought back into the educational system) and this partially explains the penetration of a particular kind of English in this register as well. In this study, small scale business shopkeepers (middle-class to lower middle class) may only draw from a reduced repertoire of English and their borrowing reflects this restriction. In other words, social and individual levels of English proficiency matter heavily in the process of borrowing.

Conclusion

Though drawing on data from the local, one should not lose track of the broader strokes of history. This paper has attempted to recount a small part of the latest chapter in the ongoing story of Sinhala. As all stories, this one too has been written from a particular perspective and has entailed certain exclusions. The first has to do with gender. In some of the industries surveyed, the services or products were more or less gender-specified. For example, beauticulture is an industry generally visited by women, whereas automotive industries may be visited more by men. This is a broad generalization that as for all cultures, only holds partially true for Sri Lanka. But it was clear from the interviews, that women were more likely than men to understand the beauticulture terminology and loan words used in these signboards.

The gendered aspects of language contact and linguistic change would likely yield some very interesting analysis. Second, interviews revealed that many of the shopkeepers were Muslim, even though the interviewees were not pre-selected along ethnic lines. Mohan (2000) argues that due to a number of social factors, Muslims in Sri Lanka are more likely to use language pragmatically and acquire English skills. The ethnic dimensions of English borrowings would be another interesting area of further research.

I would like to end by suggesting some likely avenues for further expanding this kind of research in important and interesting new directions. First, future research should also examine the phonological and morphological development of the type of language contact studied in this paper. With the lack of an "f" in Sinhala, my study found the use of four different "f" phonemes- three as recent script developments and another as the default "p" phoneme. Second, the promotion of Hindi in South Asia through film and other industries (such as beauticulture) should be examined more thoroughly. The contact between four South Asian languages – Sinhala, Hindi, Tamil (also being proliferated through films) and English (which now has a distinctively South Asian flavor) – is an interesting and complicated encounter with its own unique dynamics. Third, we need to develop a stronger understanding of Sinhala maintenance efforts – both formal and particularly informal. Lastly, future research should also focus on larger trends in a wider advertising register - trends such as script mixing as was found in some poster board product advertising during this study. Overall, the story of *how* nonce loans become integrated over time, what social forces play a part in that process and which registers are particularly key in that transition over the long term are all questions that need sustained scholarly attention. I hope that this paper has created a renewed interest in examining linguistic borrowing issues in Sri Lanka.

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