

Borrowings in the Sri Lankan English Spoken by Moors: The Influence of Sri Lankan Muslim Tamil and Arabic

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This study aims to expand the description of Sri Lankan English through a descriptive analysis of the sub-variety produced by the Sri Lankan Moor community, reflecting on the multilingual, multi-ethnic, and multicultural landscape of the country. The current description not only involves the speaker's status and region in society but can involve religious, ethnic, and racial background as well in addition to the relevance and priority given to said background. Researchers have acknowledged the existence of sub-varieties spoken by Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and Burghers and the unique vocabulary used by Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. At present, a significant amount of research on lexical differences seen in SLE has been dominated by the influence of the Sinhala language and culture due to the hegemonic role it plays in Sri Lankan society, its wider use and larger population, as well as linguistic ideologies. Whereas little attention has been paid to the contact and influence of not just Tamil, but also Sri Lankan Muslim Tamil, which has been considered to be a less prestigious variety of Tamil in Sri Lanka and faces negative connotations. The contact and influence of other languages that are not commonly spoken by the Sinhala majority and are relevant in terms of religion and ethnicity, such as Quranic Arabic, is also a gap to be explored as little research has been done on the sub-variety of Sri Lankan English that is used by Moors. This study thus explores the borrowings from Sri Lankan Muslim Tamil and Arabic in the Sri Lankan English spoken by Moors. As the researcher is a member of the Sri Lankan Moor community the study uses consensually recorded conversations, recorded interviews in the home of informants and a focus group discussion with members of the community in order to compile a small corpus. Through a descriptive analysis of the collected data, the study identifies context-relevant borrowings that include those that occur during weddings, funerals, festivals, and prayer functions as well as those used in day-to-day life to talk about things, feelings, actions, greetings, and terms of address. Through this, the study seeks to understand how users of English adapt the language to suit their requirements and contexts. The results are indicative of how users decolonise English by taking ownership of it thus moulding it to suit their communicative needs in a post-colonial context. It also draws attention to the de-hegemonising of SLE and research done on it, now expanding its description beyond the

Sinhala dominant studies, reflecting the multiethnic and multicultural speech communities in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Borrowings, Moors, Sri Lankan English, Sub-variety