



## Features of Written Sri Lankan English in Newspapers: Analysis of Letters to the Editor

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### Abstract

“Sri Lankan English” or “SLE”, is considered as a “South Asian Variety of English” by Kirkpatrick (2008). In relation to the “Dynamic Model of Post-Colonial Englishes” of Schneider (2007), SLE at present is in phase 5 of the model: “Differentiation” (Widyalandara, 2014). Thus, in this “differentiation” phase, SLE is striving to acquire linguistic independence from other varieties, by establishing an internal stability. Hence, this study on SLE morphology and syntax, aims to discuss morphological and syntactic patterns that are distinct to Sri Lankan English with regard to the letters to the editor register in newspapers. Therefore, in this mixed method study, 4 written SLE syntactic and morphological features are analyzed in order to validate the claims on Sri Lankan English. To conduct this research, 144 letters from the “letters to the editor” register in three local newspapers were collected as the primary data and compiled into a corpus. Thereafter the data was analyzed using the electronic corpus analytical tool: “AntConc” and natural language processing tool: “Stanford CoreNLP”. From the analysis, it was evident that the syntactic features such as tendency to be highly formal in writing and the use of substitute “one” are widely used features in SLE. In addition, distinct morphological features of SLE: “Borrowings from Sinhala” and “Use of Latinate/Big words” are also widely used in SLE. Conclusively, from these findings, it was clear that Sri Lankan English has acquired “structural nativization” in relation to morphological and syntactic patterns that are nativized.

**Keywords:** Sri Lankan English, Syntax, Morphology, Corpus Linguistics, Newspapers, Letters to the Editor



## 1. Introduction

“Sri Lankan English” (SLE): the variety of English that was born through the contact situation that occurred between SBE (Standard British English) and the vernacular languages of Sri Lanka: Sinhala, Tamil and Malay, is a consequence of the linguistic influence of the British colonial settlement in 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Currently, Sri Lankan English is accepted as a variety by many linguists such as Kirkpatrick (2008) who lists it as a “South Asian Variety of English”.

In order to provide an analysis on Sri Lankan English morphological and syntactic patterns, the present study is conducted on: “Features of written Sri Lankan English in Newspapers: Analysis of Letters to the Editor.”

According to Mesthrie & Bhatt (2008:200): “Sri Lankan English is not simply ‘English in Sri Lanka’, but a variety with a certain regional and social identity.” Thus, Sri Lankan English doesn’t stand alone by itself, but belongs to world Englishes categorization models such as Kachru (1991) and Schneider (2007).

In order to establish SLE as a variety in the context of World Englishes, there are several studies that are done on Sri Lankan English for many decades. From the studies that have been done on SLE, “The Postcolonial Identity of Sri Lankan English” of Gunsekera (2005) can be considered as an important milestone since it identifies many phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic features that are being used by Sri Lankan English speakers. Moreover, Kandiah (1981), Herat (2005), Vuorivirta (2006), Fernando (2006), Abeywickrama (2007), Senaratne (2013) Widyalkara (2012), Senaratne (2013) and many other scholars have conducted research on Sri Lankan English.

Nonetheless, with regard to Sri Lankan English, Künstler et al (2009) mentions: “In the light of its presence and use in Sri Lanka for more than 200 years, it is not surprising that the English language has not remained unchanged but has undergone a structural nativization”. This can be considered as a valid statement, since SLE has acquired distinct patterns as a variety.

In addition, the Sri Lankan component of International Corpus of English (ICE): ICE-SL is being compiled, ensuring SLE as a standard variety of English that is accepted worldwide. Since not even 25 ICE corpora are available on the varieties of Englishes across the globe, SLE, is privileged as a variety to own its corpus. Currently, only the written component of ICE-SL is available and the spoken component is being developed. The ICE-SL is compiled by Department of English, University of Giessen, Germany in collaboration with Department of English, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

### 1.1. Motivation for the Study

Though adequate studies have been conducted on SLE phonology and Morphology by many Sri Lankan and foreign scholars, the studies that are currently available on SLE syntax, semantics and discourse are very limited. Moreover, the studies that have been done focusing on SLE morphology and syntax using a corpus based methodology are inadequate too.

Furthermore, through the present study it can be analyzed whether the SLE speakers are still facing the “Lankan Schizoglossia”: where the writers avoid using SLE because of the lack of confidence as identified by Kandiah (1981). Nonetheless, through the present study, by refining the SLE morphological and syntactic patterns, the statement made by Künstler et al (2009) on “structural nativization” in SLE could be validated.



Thus, recognizing the research gaps on Sri Lankan English morphology and syntax using corpus based methodologies and as well as to validate the statements by several scholars on prior research, the present study is conducted.

## 1.2. Research Questions

Based on the discussions above, following questions are identified as the research question that is to be addressed.

- How is the Sri Lankan English syntactic feature: “Tendency to be highly formal in writing” used in the letters to the editor register in the local newspapers?
- How is the Sri Lankan English syntactic feature: “Use of Substitute ‘one’” used in the letters to the editor register in the local newspapers?
- How is the Sri Lankan English morphological feature: “borrowings from Sinhala” used in the letters to the editor register in the local newspapers?
- How is the Sri Lankan English morphological feature: “Use of Latinate/ big words” used in the letters to the editor register in the local newspapers?

## 1.3. Research Objectives

Through conducting this research, following objectives are to be achieved.

- 1) With regard to the “letters to the editor” register in newspapers, identifying the frequency of two morphological and two syntactic features of written SLE identified in previous studies by several scholars
- 2) Refinement of aforementioned four features of SLE through mapping done using Natural Language Processing annotators to validate the claims on SLE morphology and syntax.
- 3) Hence, through the acquirement of (1) above, paving a pathway to the wide acceptance of Sri Lankan English.
- 4) Investigating whether the Sri Lankan speakers of English are still facing the “Lankan Schizoglossia” as mentioned by Kandiah (1981)
- 5) Checking whether Sri Lankan English has undergone changes and achieved “structural nativization” as mentioned by Künstler et al (2009)

## 1.4. Literature Review

### 1.4.1. Corpus Based Studies on Newspaper Genres in Sri Lanka

One of the earliest research on newspaper analysis in Sri Lankan English is the unpublished doctoral dissertation of Gunsekera (1989) which is named as “Discourse Genres in English newspapers of Singapore, South India and Sri Lanka.” In this study, the researcher has taken consideration of two genres in the newspapers: lead story and the editorial. The data has been collected from one newspaper from each country: “Daily News” from Sri Lanka, “The Hindu” from India and “The Strait Times” from Singapore. However, Gunsekera (1989) concludes the research findings stating that SLE features are not depicted in the two genres of newspapers the study considered. The author assumes the discourse community of English speakers in Sri Lanka does not accept SLE as the norm of the prestigious discourse. Thus, through the current study it can be investigated whether this situation regarding SLE usage in newspapers is changed at present.

Another study in the two decades that has been done on Sri Lankan English newspapers is the unpublished master’s thesis of Ranaweera (2007) named “Register variation in Sri Lankan English newspapers”. In this study, the author analyses 5 registers in selected Sri Lankan newspapers.



Ranaweera (ibid) mentions several important findings with respect to lexical features and register variation. One such finding is a high frequency of SLE lexical items belong to words that describe religious practices, rituals, functions and festivals unique to Sri Lanka and few kinship terms. (Ranaweera, 2007: 75).

In relation to letters to the editor register, the findings of Ranaweera (ibid) state that there are not many features of SLE found in this register compared to other registers. Author state it could either be a result of “Lankan Schizologlossia”: where the writers avoid to use SLE because of the lack of confidence or because of the comparatively limited number of words in the “letters to the editor” register in the corpus of the study compared to the other registers in the corpus. Ranaweera (2007:64). Thus, through the present study it can be investigated whether this tendency has changed over a decade in the “letters to the editor” register in the newspaper.

#### **1.4.2. Morphological and syntactic features of Sri Lankan English**

Several scholars had done studies that discuss about the features of SLE morphology and syntax. Both written and spoken features are identified through these studies. However, in the present study, only four features are analyzed: 1) High formality in writing 2) use of substitute of “one”, 3) borrowings from Sinhala/ Tamil and 4) Use of Latinate/ big words.

##### **1.4.2.1. High formality in writing**

As Gunsekera (2005) states Sri Lankan English writing tends to be highly formal. Elaborating on that, the researcher mentions: “Sri Lankan English reflects the diglossic nature of Sinhala and Tamil in its writing style. Many Sri Lankans choose to be highly formal rather than risk being accused of being informal or impolite.” (Gunsekera, 2005:133) Hence, this can be considered as one of the most used features in Sri Lankan English written syntax.

##### **1.4.2.2. Use of substitute “one”**

The second syntactic feature of SLE that was analyzed in this study was the use of the substitute “one” which was identified by Herat (2006). According to the researcher, though SBE and American English too use the substitute “one”, in SLE the aspect is slightly differs.

Elaborating on this furthermore, Herat (2006) states this is a consequence of the bilingualism, where the Sinhalese “eka” has replaced “one” in Sri Lankan English. Premawardhena (2003) also comment about that and state the addition of /eka/ ‘one’ as a singular marking for the nouns borrowed from English is significant. Herat (2006) identifies three instances in which the modifier “one” is used in Sri Lankan English. Thus, in the present study, the use of “one” is analyzed according to the following three instances recognized by Herat (2006): 1) Adjectives, 2) Possessives and 3) Demonstrators.

##### **1.4.2.3. Borrowings from Sinhala and Tamil**

One of the morphological feature analyzed in this study is “Borrowings from Sinhala and Tamil.” In Sri Lankan English, there are several borrowings from both Sinhala and Tamil. Gunsekera (2005) describe instances where the code mixing and code switching occur in Sri Lankan English.

In several other studies too, the researchers have found code-Switching and Code-Mixing have a high tendency of occurrence. According to Abeywickrama (2007:74): “Some Sri Lankans may be code-mixing rather than code-switching. Code-switching has always complicated the nature of



spoken texts for speakers of multiple languages and for Sinhala/English bilinguals the addition of a mixed code may now add even greater variety to their language use”. Senaratne (2013) too explains about code mixing: “The mixed constructions in the Sinhala-English corpus reveal phonological, morphological and syntactic patterns of two varieties. In insertion, code-mixes are identifiable by the presence of plural markers.” Vuorivirta (2006) too analyses 15 instances of Code-Switching as well. Thus, it can be considered code-switching and code-mixing are two processes that influence SLE.

#### 1.4.2.4. Use of Latinate/ big words

The final morphological feature that is analyzed in this study is “Use of Latinate/Big words” as identified by Gunesequera (2005) as a feature of SLE. Elaborating on this Gunesequera (2005:134) state: “These characteristics highlight the need of Sri Lankans to use impressive language because mastery of English is a linguistic show of strength.”

## 2. Methodology

In order to conduct this study on the “Morphological and Syntactic features of Sri Lankan English in the newspapers”, a corpus based approach was implemented. For the purpose of investigating the syntax of SLE in newspapers, the register that has been chosen is the “letters to the editor” section in newspapers. After compiling the corpus with the chosen articles, the data was prepared to be analyzed.

### 2.1. Overview of the Research

The steps that were carried out to conduct the research are mentioned in the table below.

Step 1	Referred literature on the studies regarding SLE, SLE Syntax and morphology. Through this, SLE features identified by various scholars were recognized.
Step 2	A background study was conducted on corpus based research that have been done with the use of newspapers registers.
Step 3	The newspapers and the newspaper register to be used for the study was decided.
Step 4	Manual reading of 12 letters written by general public to the editor was done in order to identify the structure of the letters and the morphological and syntactic patterns used. This was conducted as a pilot study.
Step 5	The 144 letters from “letters to the editor” were selected through the online editions of the newspapers and they were separately stored as text files.
Step 6	The electronic corpus was compiled after the coding of the text files consisting of letters. At the beginning of each text file, headers were inserted with the specific file name.
Step 7	Using “AntConc”, features were sought across the corpus. Keywords were used for searching.
Step 8	Using “Stanford CoreNLP” annotators: Part-of-Speech, Constituency Parse etc., the identified features were analyzed.
Step 9	The patterns identified in the features of SLE were categorized according to the relevance.
Step 10	Drawing conclusions from the analysis done and identifying limitations of the research. Also the areas for future research were recognized.

*Table 1: Overview of the research*



## **2.2. Justification of the Research Methodology and Instruments**

### **2.2.1 Rationale for using newspapers**

As mentioned earlier, this research on investigating the features of SLE syntax has been done based on the newspapers. The reason for selecting newspapers as the method of data was the fact that it consists of authentic language usage. According to Stubbs (1996:2) newspaper articles contain the real instances of language in use. In addition, explaining the rationale for choosing newspapers in the study “Discourse genres in English newspapers of Singapore, South India and Sri Lanka”, Gunsekera (1989:1) claims: “newspaper writing is selected as the data for this study because we believe that newspapers represent written discourses readily available to the majority of people in their everyday lives”. Thus, it can be stated that the newspapers are a fine example of authentic usage of written English.

### **2.2.2. Rationale for using the register of “letters to the editor”**

According to Habermas (1989): “The letters-to-the-editor section is one of a few arenas for public discussion by regular citizens, and can be seen as a key institution of the public sphere.” Amongst the many registers available in the newspapers, “letters to the editor” register was particularly chosen for this study since it consists of language used by the general public who are confident to use English in public domains. Thus, a random person from the general public would provide an authentic example of the syntax used by the population who uses SLE in Sri Lanka.

### **2.2.3. Rationale for using a corpus based methodology**

This qualitative study uses a corpus based approach as the methodology of conducting the research. A corpus based approach was implemented as this study deals with a considerable number of letters collected from 3 daily English newspapers in Sri Lanka. Thus, a corpus of compiled letters was used for data analyzing.

According to Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998) using a corpus for structural analysis in linguistics is quite beneficial in many aspects. One such benefit is the fact that it utilizes a large and principled collection of natural texts as the basis for analysis. With respect to the syntactic analysis, Biber, Conrad and Reppen (ibid: 5) suggest to use corpus based studies. According to their view “A corpus based approach allows researchers to identify and analyze complex 'association patterns': the systematic ways in which linguistic features are used in association with other linguistic and non-linguistic features.” This study regarding SLE syntactic features belongs to the linguistic feature according to their classification and that includes lexical associations as well as grammatical associations.

## **2.3. Newspapers Chosen for the Study**

For this study, letters from “letters to the editor” section has been chosen from three newspapers. All the three newspapers are daily English newspapers in Sri Lanka. The three dailies chosen are: “Daily News”, “The Island” and “Daily Mirror”.

“Daily News”: is a government owned newspaper in Sri Lanka that has commenced publishing in 1918. In Daily News, the “letters to the editors” section is named as “citizen’s mail”. This newspaper was chosen for this study as this is one of the most widely recognized dailies in Sri Lanka. “The Island”: an English newspaper in Sri Lanka published by the Upali newspapers commenced publishing in 1981. When referring to the “opinions” (letters to the editor) section in



The Island, it was found that unlike in other newspapers, there is a vast range in the writers of the letters. Hence, it was assumed that the Island newspaper would be able to provide a comprehensive picture of the SLE syntax. Third newspaper chosen for this study is “Daily Mirror”. The rationale for choosing Daily Mirror for this study is the fact that the popularity it has amongst the English readership in Sri Lanka.

#### 2.4. Scope of the Study

In this study, “letters to the editor” register or “opinions” from the aforementioned three newspapers: Daily News, The Island and Daily Mirror are chosen to investigate SLE morphological and syntactic features. The newspapers ranging from 2016-2017 were selected for the study assuming that the linguistic data of two years would provide a variation in the features than the variation occurs within one year.

From the two years, for each month, two letters to the editor were selected from each newspaper for the study. All the letters were taken from the first Monday of each month, from 2016-2017. Thus, the data collected for the study included 144 articles as the below calculation shows.

$$2 \text{ letters} * 3 \text{ newspapers} * 12 \text{ months} * 2 \text{ years} = 144 \text{ letters to the editor}$$

#### 2.5. Data Analyzing

According to Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998), one of the most convenient advantage of using corpus based approach occurs in data analyzing; when using computers to analyze the electronic corpora. Hence, even in this study, the third and final stage: data analyzing of the corpus was done using several technical tools to check the contemporary relevance of the SLE morphological and syntactic features. This stage had two main steps.

- 1) Using “AntConc” to search data across the corpus
- 2) Using “Stanford CoreNLP”: to robust the identified features of SLE syntax.

**Step 1:** In order to analyze the data saved in the corpus, the electronic corpus analytical tool “AntConc” was used. After using several search queries to search the data across the corpus, the contemporary relevance of the Sri Lankan English features that were identified by scholars in prior studies were examined with regard to the data in the compiled corpus. In addition, using the frequency measurements in AntConc, other noticeable features that can be recognized as features of SLE were identified as well.

**Step 2:** In this step, the characteristics that are identified as the features of SLE syntax were analyzed using the Stanford CoreNLP “Constituency Parse” annotators that output the tree diagrams. Moreover, in the situations where in-depth analysis of the features is needed, Stanford CoreNLP annotators such as “lemmas”, “sentiments” and “named entities” were used to generate more accurate results. The rationale to use Stanford CoreNLP annotators for the syntactic analysis is the international acceptance of it as a standard system. Manning et al (2014) described it as “The most prominent toolkits in the field of NLP are Stanford CoreNLP”. However, the results generated by the tree diagrams and other annotators ensured the convenience of the identification of syntactic patterns and features.



### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Tendency to be Highly Formal in Writing

After analyzing the multiple occurrences where the SLE writing acquires a high formality, it was noticed that the occurrences can be classified under two main instances. The identified two instances are: 1) Appreciation and 2) thanking.

Especially with regard to these instances, SLE writers tend to be so formal using several terms to enhance the formality. Thus, the identified highly formal features were classified under these instances.

However, a fact to note is that in the context of other registers in newspapers or some other category like letters and reports, the number of instances where SLE writing acquire a high formality might be different.

##### 3.1.1. Appreciations

With regard to appreciations, Sri Lankan English writing tends to be highly formal appreciating a legacy of a person or a particular action. When searching several terms across the person, it was found SLE writing acquires the high formality in appreciations in different syntactic aspects. Following is an analysis on high formality in appreciations.

###### 3.1.1.1. Morpheme: “Respected”

Through the use of morpheme “respected”, SLE writing attempts to achieve high formality in appreciations. There were 16 instances in which the morpheme “respected” was used in the compiled corpus. Amongst them, 13 instances show high formality in writing.

In the corpus, there were 8 occurrences where the morpheme “respected” was used as an adjective to describe a person or a place. In addition, there were 4 instances in which “respected” was used with the adverb “highly”. Moreover, the use of the adverb “most” prior to the verb “respected” was shown in 1 instance to emphasize on the high formality of the appreciations.

###### 3.1.1.2. Morpheme: “Appreciated”

Another form in which SLE writing attempts to achieve high formality in appreciations is with the use of morpheme “appreciated”. There were 4 instances in which the morpheme “appreciated” was used in the compiled corpus. Amongst them, 2 instances show high formality in writing.

From the analyses of the two instances it was evident that, prior to the morpheme: “appreciated” which is used as a VBN: verb past participle, there is always an adjective (RB) is used. In the first instance, the adjective “greatly” has been used whereas in the second instance, the adjective that has been used was “increasingly”. Thus, it can be concluded that, in order to acquire the high formality in writing in SLE written syntax, when the verb “appreciated” is used in appreciations, usually an adjective is used prior to the verb, in order to emphasize the appreciation.

###### 3.1.1.3. Morpheme: “Honoured”

With the use of morpheme “honoured” too, SLE writing attempts to achieve high formality in appreciations is. There were 15 instances in which the morpheme “honoured” was used in the compiled corpus. Amongst them, 3 instances shown high formality in writing. According to the analyses done through Stanford CoreNLP, it was showed that the morpheme “honoured” is used





with an adjective. In one instance, the superlative form of the adjective is used the adjective phrase: “most honoured”.

### **3.1.2. Thanking**

Even when thanking, SLE writing attempts to acquire high formality to be more courteous. Thus, in the compiled corpus, when thanking instances were searched, there were 24 instances of thanking. The corpus was searched for the keywords “thank”, “grateful” and “owe” to derive these results.

When the instances were analyzed, there were three main grammatical patterns that were identified. The first pattern was that mostly the adverb “so” is used when thanking. There were 2 occurrences of this in the corpus. In addition, to enhance the formality in thanking the adverbial phrase “once again” has been used in the corpus in two instances. Apart from that, in the compiled corpus, there were two instances where an adjective was used when thanking, which was the third identified pattern. One such example was the use of the adjective: “heartfelt”.

### **3.2. The use of the substitute “one”**

The second syntactic feature of SLE that was analyzed in this study was the use of the substitute “one” which was identified by Herat (2006). Moreover, Herat (ibid) has identified three instances in which the modifier “one” is used in Sri Lankan English: Adjectives, Possessives and Demonstrators. Thus, in this analysis, the use of “one” is analyzed according to the three instances.

#### **3.2.1. Substitution of “one” as an Adjective**

When the corpus was searched across to find instances for the occurrence of “one” as an adjective, it was found that there were 16 instances out of the 221 total occurrences of the term “one”.

From the analyses of the instances done using Stanford CoreNLP, it was evident that the “one” is identified as a Cardinal Number. Followed by that was an Adjective and a noun. Thus, it was very clear that the use of “one” in front of an adjective is a common feature in SLE written syntax and it follows the same grammatical flow. In addition, all the identified instances were derived from Noun phrase.

#### **3.2.2. Substitution of “one” as a Demonstratives**

With regard to the use of “one” as a demonstrative, when the corpus was searched for the terms: “this one”, “that one”, “these ones” and “those ones”, “this one” occurred one time and “that one” occurred one time. The reason for the less number of occurrences in “one” as a demonstrative should be the fact that the corpus is compiled of written syntax and “one” as a demonstrative is mainly found in SLE spoken syntax.

#### **3.2.3. Substitution of “one” as a Possessives**

When the compiled corpus was searched to find occurrences of “our one”, “my one”, “her one”, “his one” and “their one”, there was no occurrence of any of the aforementioned terms. Hence, it can be concluded that, though in SLE spoken syntax “one” is substituted as a possessive determiner, in SLE written syntax, it is rarely used, especially with regard to the “letters to the editor” register in newspaper genre.

### 3.3. Borrowings from Sinhala and Tamil

In the present study, when the pilot study was carried out, several occurrences of borrowings were found. Then, the occurrences of those borrowings were searched across the compiled corpus. However, a fact to note is that almost all the borrowings were from Sinhala. The reason for this is probably what Ranaweera (2007:75) mentions: “Majority of the Sri Lankan English vocabulary is derived or borrowed from Sinhala, the majority language of Sri Lanka”.

Moreover, many of the borrowings that were found in the compiled corpus were from Sinhala and they were of cultural and religious terms, especially the terms related to Buddhism. As for the reason of this Ranaweera (2007:59) identifies: “The reason for this could be that it is difficult to find suitable British English and American English translations for the religious terms.”

However, in order to determine the percentages of Sinhala borrowings and the available English synonyms of the borrowings, the corpus was searched. Following table indicates the results.

#	English Synonym	Frequency	Percentage	#	Borrowing	Frequency	Percentage
1	Procession	3	50%	1	Perahera	3	50%
2	Sunday Dhamma classes	1	25%	2	Dahama Pasel	3	75%
3	Kingdom	7	77.7%	3	Rajya	2	22.2%
4	Full moon day	1	33.3%	4	Poya	2	66.6%
5	Chief Incumbent	2	66.6%	5	Nayaka Thera	1	33.3%
6	Devotee	2	66.6%	6	Dayakaya	1	33.3%
<b>Total number of instances</b>		<b>16</b>		<b>Total number of instances</b>		<b>12</b>	

Table 1: Comparison of English synonyms and Sinhala borrowings

As the above comparison clearly shows, still with regard to some words, SLE speakers attempt to use the English synonym of the Sinhala words. Yet, in some instances, like in cultural and religious terms like “Perahera”, “Daham Pasel” and “Poya”, the predominant and the most prominent usage is the Sinhala borrowing. Thus, it can be stated that though in some occurrences SLE written syntax uses the English synonyms, equally it uses the Sinhala borrowings as well.

However, in order to determine how the international NLP systems identify the borrowings of Sinhala in a linguistic perspective, Stanford CoreNLP analysis was done for the identified three terms: “Perahera”, “Daham Pasel” and “Poya”. The analyses of them showed that, irrespective of the fact that the three instances contain borrowings from Sinhala, they were correctly categorized under word categories. Moreover, all the terms are derived from a Noun phrase. In addition, all the aforementioned three borrowings are identified as nouns. Thus, it can be concluded that most of the borrowings from Sinhala to SLE are more or less several nouns.



### 3.4. Use of Latinate/ big words

The final morphological feature that is analyzed in this study is “Use of Latinate/Big words” as identified by Gunesequera (2005) as a feature of SLE. While the pilot study of the current research was done referring to six texts, several high-flown words were identified. Next they were searched across the corpus to measure the frequency of occurrence.

However, it should be noted that in this corpus, there may have been many other Latinate/big words, which could be identified only through manual reading of the whole corpus. Thus, currently only the words that were recognized through the pilot study are analyzed and the following table shows the results of the frequency of the identified high-flown words.

#	High-flown words	Frequency
1	Tantamount	4
2	Beleaguered	2
3	Vituperative	1

*Table 2: Frequency of Latinate/Big Words*

However, another fact to note in this analysis is that the connotation of “big words” may differ from person to person, based on the different comprehension skills. Thus, though for the researcher, the above three are the big words found through the pilot study of the corpus, for another person, the findings of this feature on the same corpus might be different, depending on the comprehension skills. Therefore, with regard to this feature, findings may be subjective.

After referring to above findings, it is clearly evident that Sri Lankan English has distinct morphological and syntactic features, which are found in the “letters to the editor” register in the newspapers.

## 4. Conclusion

### 4.1 Conclusion of Research Findings

#### 4.1.1. Tendency to be highly formal in writing

As identified from the analysis presented in the present study, there are two main incidents where SLE writing in the “letters to the editor” register acquires high formality. The two incidents are: thanking and appreciations.

When appreciating, in the letters of the corpus, the morpheme “respected” have been used to enhance the formality in following instances:

- i) “Respected” as an adjective
- ii) “Respected” with the adverb “highly”
- iii) “Respected” with the adverb “most”

In addition, the morpheme “appreciated” too is used in appreciations, especially with an adjective prior to the word. Moreover, the word “honoured” too is used in appreciations, mostly with an adjective. Through these syntactic patterns, SLE writing acquires the high formality in appreciations.



With regard to thanking, there are three instances according to how thanking achieves the high formality. The three incidents are:

- i) With the adverb “so”
- ii) With the adverbial phrase “once again”
- iii) With an adjective

In all these three incidents, words such as “thank”, “grateful” and “owe” are used. Therefore, it can be concluded that in the “letters to the editor” register in newspapers, Sri Lankan English writing has a tendency to be highly formal using several syntactic patterns.

#### **4.1.2. The use of the substitute “one”**

After analyzing the three instances as identified by Herat (2006) with regard to the substitute “one”, the results showed “one” is not used as a possessive in SLE writing in the “letters to the editor” register.

Yet, there were several instances in which the substitute “one” was used as an adjective as well as a demonstrative. Thus, it can be concluded that SLE writing has the feature of the use of substitute “one”.

#### **4.1.3. Borrowings from Sinhala and Tamil**

From the results gathered from analyzing the data in the corpus, it was evident that SLE writing includes the borrowings from Sinhala in the writing. From the pilot study, 17 words borrowings of SLE were identified to be searched across the corpus. Most of these borrowings either had a religious connotation or a cultural connotation. For most of the borrowings, though there were English synonyms, the tendency was to use the Sinhala borrowing. Probably because the readership is Sri Lankans, the writers are confident to use the Sinhala borrowing than an unfamiliar English term. Thus, it can be concluded that the use of borrowings is a frequently used feature in Sri Lankan English written syntax.

#### **4.1.4 Use of Latinate/ big words**

From the findings, it can be stated that use of Latinate/ big words is a feature of Sri Lankan English. However, since the definition of “big words” differs from person to person, according to their language proficiency levels, the results of this feature may be subjective.

### **4.2. Discussion and Overall conclusion**

However, after analyzing the findings of the research it can be stated that the Sri Lankan English writers are not completely facing the “Lankan Schizoglossia” as mentioned by Kandiah (1981). Though there are several features in which they avoid some Sri Lankan features in writing, with regard to the other features, they are confident to use Sri Lankan English features. Yet, a fact that should be taken in to consideration is the readership of the letters. Probably, the writers use Sri Lankan English syntactic patterns in writing considering the fact that the readership is mainly the local readers, or Sri Lankans living abroad. Thus, they may feel confident to use Sri Lankan English features in writing. In addition, though this is the situation in “letters to the editor”, probably in other registers and other genres, Lankan Schizoglossia may still be existing, and that can be investigated in another study.



Moreover, through the present study, the statement by as Künstler et al (2009) on “structural nativization” in Sri Lankan English can be validated since the present study provides evidences on the nativized morphological and syntactic patterns of Sri Lankan English. The present study shows that the influence of superstrate as well as substrate languages is evident in Sri Lankan English syntax and morphology. Hence, it can be concluded that Sri Lankan English too shows the features of New Englishes through the acquirement of “Structural Nativization”.

Conclusively, it is hoped that through the in-depth analysis provided on SLE morphology and syntax, the present study validates the claims on SLE syntax and morphology. In addition, it is intended that the present study will contribute to refine the codifications of several syntactic and morphological features of Sri Lankan English. Ultimately, it is expected that the present study will pave a pathway to the wide acceptance of SLE.

## 5. References

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