

## **SOME OBSERVATIONS ON CODE MIXING PRACTICES OF SRI LANKAN BILINGUALS**

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Code-mixing refers to the linguistic behavior of bilingual speakers who import words or phrases from one of their languages into the other one. This study presents some structuralist and sociolinguistic observations on code-mixing practices of Sri Lankan bilinguals. The reference 'Sri Lankan bilinguals' is used here in a narrow sense denoting the Sinhalese speech community who speak English as a second language. Accordingly it has been observed that code-mixing takes place mostly in the colloquial speech of such Sinhalese speakers when they are in informal social contexts. They tend to borrow lexical items from English when speaking in their mother tongue. Most of these borrowings are technical terms. Yet it has been observed that words belonging to all word classes are borrowed from English at different rates depending on the fluency of the speaker in English. This has become a spontaneous practice in colloquial speech that if someone avoids English borrowings in his speech it will sound artificial and humorous to the others. To the contrary in writing, deliberate attempts are made to avoid English borrowings. Language teachers, purists, and conservatives vehemently oppose these code mixing practices since it has become fashionable for some private broadcasting stations as well. They fear that the continuation of code mixing might result in making Sinhalese language a creole in the near future. However this study presents some observations on the causes and consequences of code mixing along with the social attitude towards the practice. Data for the study were primarily collected through participative observation and they have been analysed on the principles of structural linguistics and sociolinguistics.

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