

## Most prominently used variety of English in Sri Lankan YouTube channels: A study on vocabulary differences

E.M.A.N. Ekanayake<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English Language Teaching, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

The rapid expansion of English in contemporary Sri Lanka has led to its widespread use across social media platforms, particularly on YouTube. This study investigates the varieties of English employed by Sri Lankan YouTube content, focusing on food and travel channels with regard to vocabulary. Drawing upon Kachru's Three Circles Model of World Englishes (1985), which conceptualizes the spread of English globally through inner, outer and expanding circle, this research examines the linguistic choices made by Sri Lankan content creators. The study analyzed a corpus of six Sri Lankan YouTube channels using AntConc 3.5.8, employing a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative analysis of linguistic features with qualitative assessment of contextual usage. The results revealed a significant distribution pattern: British English (BE) (71%), American English (AE) (29%), and Sri Lankan English (SLE) (15%). Key vocabulary variations were identified across different semantic fields, including footwear terminology (BE "trainers" vs. AE "sneakers"), food-related terms (AE "French fries" vs. BE "chips"), and clothing terminology (AE "underwear" vs. BE "underpants"). The predominance of BE reflected the strong colonial influence in SLE usage, while the presence of American variants indicated the growing global media influence. Notably, the 15% presence of SLE demonstrated the evolution of a distinct local variety, particularly evident in cultural descriptions and local terminology. Examples included unique food-related terms ("rice and curry", "short eats"), cooking terms ("tempering", "rice boiler"), and travel-related vocabulary ("three-wheeler", "up-country"). As Senaratne (2017) notes, social media language reflects the linguistic practices of the masses. The findings support Mendis and Rambukwella's (2020) observation that the Sri Lankans tend to use their own variety in speech, suggesting the standardization of Sri Lankan English as a distinct variety. This finding reflects Sri Lanka's position in Kachru's Outer Circle while demonstrating the dynamic interaction between the colonial legacy and the contemporary global influences in digital communication.

**Keywords:** Englishes, SLE, YouTube, Varieties, Vocabulary

---

\*anuththaranikethani@gmail.com  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9906-3349>