

Words from the ‘margins’: Exploring Sri Lankan English borrowings in the classroom

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Abstract

The use of Sri Lankan English (SLE) vocabulary among Sri Lankans themselves has been the focus of some debate. While some studies have found that teachers of English tend to reject SLE vocabulary, particularly borrowings, in the classroom, other researchers observe that such avoidance is more prevalent among the so-called non-standard users of SLE. However, studies that focus on specific types of vocabulary, or on specific genres of writing, are rare in SLE studies. In particular, despite the current interest in the pedagogical implications of World Englishes, there are few studies that investigate SLE used in texts produced in the classroom. This study thus aims to investigate the use of SLE borrowings in written texts by learners of English who can be considered users of non-standard SLE. The study takes the theoretical position that the appropriate use of SLE vocabulary is part of the sociocultural competence, a significant learner competence, of the learner. Using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, this exploratory study attempts to analyse the nature and the extent of SLE borrowings found in 27 informal written samples on a culture specific topic by a group that tends to be marginalized in SLE studies, the adult language learner of English. The findings of the study revealed an unexpected extent of usages and identified two strategies of uses, explication and exemplification, indicating that the so-called non-standard users display a sociocultural competence that has significant implications for classroom practice.
(238 words)

Keywords: Sri Lankan English, borrowings, sociocultural competence

1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 SLE BORROWINGS

Among the many word formation processes of Sri Lankan English (SLE) vocabulary such as affixation, compounding, initialisms, clipping and semantic shift, borrowings have been the focus of extensive documentation (Passé 1955, Gunesequera 2005, Meyler 2007, Sivapalan et al 2010, Fernando 2012). Borrowings from Sinhala, Tamil, Pali, Sanskrit, Portuguese, Dutch, Malay and Arabic (Gunesequera 2005, and Meyler 2007, Fernando 2012) reflect the diverse linguistic influences on the variety. Gunesequera (2005) has identified three types of SLE borrowings (hereafter SLEBs): **direct borrowings** from local languages such as *perahera* and *pooja*; **indirect borrowings** (also called loan translations or calques) such as *funeral house* and *milk rice*; and **hybrid compounds** such as *poya holiday* and *cholakam winds* that combine words from local languages with English. As demonstrated by the examples above, SLEBs are not limited to single word units but can also consist of two- or three-word compounds (*funeral house, milkrice; ground-breaking ceremony, Maha Siva Rathri*) as well as multiword units that include idiomatic expressions such as *hanging on the sari pota* (Gunesequera 2005). SLEBs occur in several registers, from the ceremonial to the extremely informal, in both spoken and in written genres. According to Fernando (2012), hybrid compounds such as *chena cultivation* have appeared in English documents since the 19th century when British colonials borrowed words from local languages to describe local practices and beliefs.

1.2 SPEAKERS OF STANDARD SLE AND SLE VOCABULARY

Most of the research on SLE vocabulary, including borrowings, is based on the speakers of Standard SLE (SSLE), traditionally defined as the variety spoken by the members of the urban English speaking middle and upper classes for whom English is a first language (Kandiah 1981, Gunsekera 2005, Meyler 2007, Mendis and Rambukwella 2010). Having learnt it at home, this group habitually uses English in a range of personal, social and official functions. However, the majority of Sri Lankans speak it as a second or third language in more restricted contexts, often having learnt it formally in a classroom. The SLE spoken by this large and heterogeneous group can vary quite considerably, with its proficient members, who tend to be educated bilinguals, now part of the SSLE speaking community, and its less proficient members being considered speakers of non-standard SLE (NSSLE). This group has little access to English: they are infrequent users of the language who have not been able to acquire it in the classroom with much success, and the language they produce is generally marked by deviations from SSLE.

While Gunsekera (2005) describes the phonological features of NSSLE, a description of the syntactic features of NSSLE writing can be found in Parakrama (1995), who describes features “that are unacceptable in elite Lankan usage” (1995: 125). These include deviations in subject/verb agreement, articles, prepositions, spelling, punctuation, and in the use of the continuous form that do not exist in formal, written SSLE. Here, Parakrama’s observations highlight the variation in spoken and written SSLE, in which some of the syntactic features listed here such as variations in the use of articles and prepositions are accepted in informal SSLE speech.

Although no studies that focus on the use of SLE vocabulary among NSSLE speakers exist, Gunsekera (2005) observes that borrowings are confidently used by speakers of SSLE, while they tend to be avoided by those who speak it as a second language. This was subsequently explored in a study by Medawattegedera and Devendra (2006) who, through a questionnaire survey, found that most teachers of English considered several widely used SLEBs to be unacceptable, and rejected them particularly in writing. The only type of borrowing that had some acceptance was hybrid compounds such as *poruwa ceremony*, *bana preaching* and *pirith chanting*, suggesting that the use of SLE vocabulary is discouraged in the language classroom. As the majority of Sri Lankans acquires English in such settings, this could perhaps indicate why borrowings tend to be avoided by those who learn English as a second language, particularly in the written form.

A survey of Sri Lankan fiction in English revealed that some contemporary creative writers use significantly more SLE vocabulary when compared with early writing in the 1960s (Fernando 2011). A considerable amount of SLE vocabulary belonging to several semantic categories such as food and edibles, clothing and ornaments, kinship terms, household items and furniture, titles, professions and terms of address was identified in the 20 short stories that were analysed in this study. The largest number of SLE vocabulary was found in references to culture-specific food and edibles, with 130 words used by four contemporary writers. The writers used previously codified SLE vocabulary as well as their own lexical innovations, in particular examples of code-mixing from other local languages.

1.3 SOCIOCULTURAL COMPETENCE AND SLEBS

While previous research states that proficient speakers of SLE use SLEBs extensively, Parakrama (2010) makes a more direct connection

between the non-acknowledgements of SLE in the largely ineffective English language teaching (ELT) programmes in Sri Lanka. According to him, a part of the failure of ELT in the country is its “devalue(ing) of authentic Lankan experience, metaphor and idiom, and calls for an alien and alienating variety and world-view of English” (2010: 95). This argument affirms that English is a local language, with one of its significant functions being the communication between fellow Sri Lankans, a distinguishing feature of Outer Circle Englishes (Kachru 1995). The absence of SLE in the classroom and the enforcement of an “alien”, exonormative variety that is inadequate for the expression of local experiences can inhibit a language learner’s ability to communicate in English in such a classroom.

As borrowings in particular convey local experience in a WE context, the confident use of SLEBs can thus be considered a communicative competence that enables speakers using English in the country to give expression to local Sri Lankan experiences with authenticity and specificity, particularly when equivalents do not exist in the exonormative models. The communicative competence to use the language appropriate to the context in which it is used has been described as sociocultural competence in second language learning (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell 1995, Lee and McChesney 2000, Pawliskowka-Smith 2002, Celce-Murcia 2007). While these studies do not define sociocultural competence from a World Englishes paradigm, Pawliskowska-Smith’s definition resonates closely with the use of WE vocabulary within a local context: “sensitivity to register, dialect and variety, stylistic appropriateness, a sensitivity to naturalness and the knowledge of cultural referents when using English” (2002:7). The appropriate use of SLE vocabulary can thus be considered a sociocultural competence in a local context of usage where a borrowing, for example, will

display a sensitivity to most, if not all, aspects listed in Pawliskowska-Smith's definition. Sociocultural competence can therefore be considered a significant learner competence in the English teaching and learning situations in Sri Lanka.

This paper thus takes the theoretical standpoint that the appropriate use of SLEBs in the local context is an indication of the sociocultural competence of the speaker. On the one hand, competent speakers of SLE will display a sensitivity to register, dialect and variety in their use of SLEBs, as well as a naturalness and the knowledge of cultural referents through their awareness and use of SLEBs, as demonstrated by skilled users of SLE such as creative writers who use SLEBs extensively in their writing. On the other hand, the avoidance of SLEBs can demonstrate a lack of sociocultural competence in a user. .

1.4 CRITICISMS AND LIMITATIONS OF SLE VOCABULARY STUDIES

A study of SLEBs cannot be undertaken without considering some of the limitations in SLE studies. Despite research in the area spanning several decades, studies that address the complexity and diversity of contemporary usages of SLE vocabulary are still lacking: According to Fernando (2012), "SLE vocabulary has at present dynamically extended its numbers as well as the strategies of generating new vocabulary," and thus recommends that, "in the 21st century, linguists need to research extensively in this field exploring the pressures and counter pressures giving rise to the future development of SLE vocabulary; and conducting research in specific areas of vocabulary in order to refine and redefine the nature of SLE vocabulary" (Fernando 2012: 177).

The lack of focus on the variation that exists in what is rejected as 'non-standard' SLE is still evident, despite Parakrama's 1995 call to

include the usages of non-standard speakers in SLE descriptions. Thiruvarangan (2012) argues persuasively that the language of the so-called non-standard speakers of SLE needs to be taken into consideration for its functional as well as its ideological significance.

Descriptions of SLE have also been criticised for their inherent Sinhala bias (Sivapalan, Ramanan and Thiruvarangan 2010). Indeed, the features hitherto codified, including SLEBs, in Gunsekera (2005) and Meyler (2007) for example, are largely from Sinhala, suggesting that the majority language is the sole lexifier of SLE. Borrowings from Tamil are only minimally reflected in these descriptions, which the researchers themselves allude to with regret. Sivapalan et al (2010), presenting several unique phonological, syntactic and lexical features of Jaffna English, a variety informed by Tamil, that have hitherto been absent in SLE wordlists, call for a description of SLE with a greater representation of its regional variation.

According to Parakrama (1995), SLE studies tend to be “impressionistic” and “subjective”, based on “random examples and personal observations” (1995: 34). This criticism, too, is still largely valid, because even in current descriptions (Gunsekera 2005 and Meyler 2007 for example), the inclusion of vocabulary items is mostly based on informed, but individual decisions of their acceptability. Parakrama’s view, “nothing like a large-scale study sociolinguistic study or a systematic study has been undertaken” (1995: 34), is reiterated in more recent writing as well (Mendis and Rambukwella 2010, Fernando 2012). These views underscore the dearth of studies of SLE vocabulary: despite the codification of many SLE vocabulary items, studies that focus on specific topics, contexts, types of speakers, genres, and registers are still largely absent in SLE studies.

Despite increasing interest in the pedagogical implications of WE research (Bhatt 2001, Canagarajah 2006, Kirkpatrick 2007), existing studies are rarely informed by SLE usages in the classroom. Canagarajah (2006), for example, examines the place of WEs in academic writing, affirming the need to consider teaching/learning practices: “The classroom is a powerful site of policy negotiation. The pedagogies practiced and the texts produced in the classroom can reconstruct policies ground up” (2006: 587). Despite the call to reject “monolingualist ideologies” and “linguistic hierarchies” even within academic writing, SLE research that examines any type of written texts produced in the classroom is largely non-existent.

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

Given the nature of SLE vocabulary studies hitherto described, and the gaps in the research identified, this study aims to focus on the use of SLEBs in the classroom by adult learners who can be identified as NSSLE speakers. Basing its exploration on the contention that such speakers are unwilling to use SLE vocabulary (Gunesequera 2005), and thus avoid its usage, the study explores the use of SLE borrowings by such a group in texts written on a specified topic in a classroom context. It is hoped that this study will enhance our understanding of SLEBs in classroom use by revealing to what extent, and how, SLEBs are used by this specific group when discussing a culture-specific topic that would necessitate the use of SLE vocabulary, based on the theoretical standpoint that the use of SLEBs to describe culture-specific subject matter displays the sociocultural competence of the users.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

3.1.1 QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

According to Dörnyei (2007: 245), quantitative content analysis “involves the counting words, phrases or grammatical structures” of “specific categories” which are often preconceived, and are useful to reveal a descriptive, surface level meaning of the data. This is also referred to as ‘manifest level analysis’ (Dörnyei 2007, Berg 2001). Thus, a quantitative content analysis was first conducted in order to identify the extent of usage of the three different types of SLEBs deductively -- direct borrowings, indirect borrowings and hybrid compounds – which are predetermined categories from existing research discussed in the literature review. The SLEBs in the texts were identified based on the researcher’s awareness. The results, presented through percentages and graphs, show the number of SLEBs of the three categories found in the samples, and the percentages of these SLEBs in each category.

3.1.2 QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

A qualitative content analysis, which allows categories to emerge through a more interpretive analysis of the data (Dörnyei 2007), was then conducted. Also called ‘latent level analysis’ (Dörnyei 2007, Berg 2001), this allowed the researcher, through an inductive process, to first identify the semantic categories of the three types of SLEBs, and then to identify the strategies with which these SLEBs have been

incorporated into the texts. Thus, here, frequently occurring SLEBs in the results of the quantitative content analysis were selected and then analysed in context in order to identify patterns of use. The results of this analysis will be discussed using appropriate extracts of the written samples.

3.1.3 JUSTIFICATION FOR A MIXED METHOD

The analysis of SLEBs in this study thus includes an identification, a quantification and a classification of the SLEBs at word-level, as well as a sentence- and discourse-level analysis of how they were incorporated into the text. A mixed approach was deemed more appropriate for this study because a purely quantitative content analysis, while it will yield significant numerical data on the extent of SLEB use, will not reveal ways in which they can exist in the texts beyond the word-level.

3.2 THE PARTICIPANTS

The participants of the study comprised 27 adult learners of English who had achieved an intermediate level of proficiency after completing an English language learning course of 100 hours. The participants, of whom 26 spoke Sinhala as a first language while one spoke Tamil, were from Colombo, Jaffna, Kalutara, Kandy and Kurunegala districts. They can be considered speakers of non-standard SLE as the language they produce is generally marked by several features of non-standard grammar /syntax such as those described by Parakrama (1995), as well as their level of proficiency. At the same time, by the end of the course, the participants had gained confidence and fluency in writing and speech.

3.3 THE WRITING SAMPLES

The 27 writing samples produced by the participants were responses to an informal letter writing task on a specific topic that required the use of SLEBs. The prompt was as follows: “Write a letter to a friend abroad describing a festival you celebrated recently. In the letter, you should describe how you prepared for the festival, for example the food you cooked and the things you bought, and the activities you engaged in.” They were written as timed essays in a classroom. The topic was selected on account of its popularity among teachers as an essay topic, as well as its frequent appearance in teaching materials and assessments.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

The writing samples comprised 23 letters describing the Sinhala / Buddhist New Year, one describing the Tamil / Hindu New Year, and three describing Christmas. Twenty-four participants addressed their letters to a Sri Lankan friend who lives overseas, while three letters were written to an unseen non-Sri Lankan pen-pal. The majority of the texts were of a length appropriate to the prompt, of 150 words or more. Section 4.1 below discusses the results of the quantitative content analysis, while 4.2 presents the findings of the qualitative content analysis.

4.1 THE USE OF SLEBS AT WORD LEVEL

The 24 writing samples that described the Sinhala and Tamil New Year revealed an extensive number of SLEBs, a total of 77 consisting of direct borrowings, indirect borrowings, and hybrid compounds. Among them, four semantic categories were also identified: food,

customs and beliefs, games and contests, and kinship terms. The main findings are presented in the two charts below:

Chart 1: SLEBs used by the participants

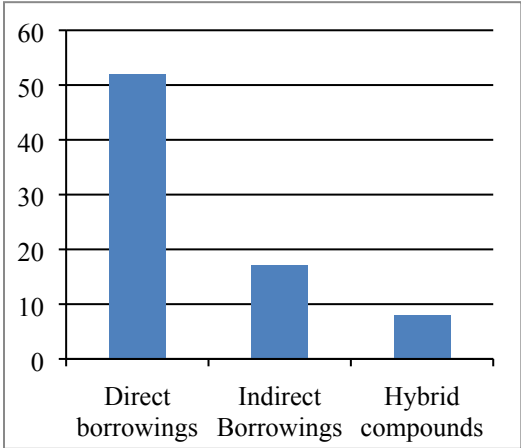
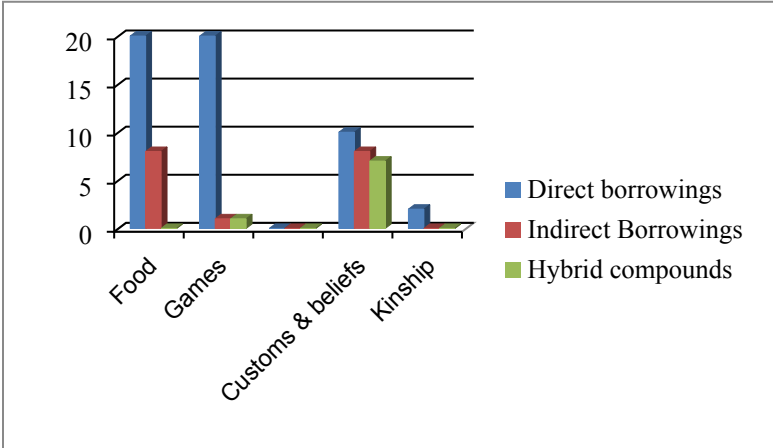


Chart 2: Categories of SLEBs used



According to Chart 1, the main type of SLEBs used by the participants by far was direct borrowings, with a total of 53, or 68% of all SLEBs. The 17 indirect borrowings amounted to only 22% of the sample.

There were eight hybrid compounds, amounting to 10%, in the sample. As Chart 2 demonstrates, the SLEBs in the sample comprised the semantic categories of food items, games and contests, customs and beliefs, and kinship. They consisted of single word, two-word and three-word units (see table in Annex 1 for the number of words, types of borrowings, and categories).

Some direct borrowings and indirect borrowings were used with some frequency: *kevun* and *kokis* occurred eight and 14 times respectively, *milk rice* occurred nine times, while *nonagathaya* and *oil cakes* occurred six times each.

The largest number of borrowings belonged to the category of food, with 28 different food items named by the participants (Chart 2). Specific borrowings from Sinhala and Tamil were widely used to name traditional food. With a total of 20 direct borrowings, they outnumbered the codified indirect borrowings such as *milk rice* and *milk toffees*; and hyponymous terms such as *new year food*, *festival food items*, and *traditional sweets*. Similarly, 20 direct borrowings referred to games and contests, while there was a significantly fewer indirect borrowings and hybrid compounds in this category. Kinship terms yielded only direct borrowings, and there were no hybrid compounds referring to food.

SLEBs used by the participants included the codified as well as the participants' own lexical innovations. They included examples of code-mixing such as *charithra* and *warithra* instead of the English terms *customs* and *taboos*, and traditional games such as *onchili*, *lissana gaha* and *kamba adeema* for which English equivalents exist, suggesting that the participants used the Sinhala terms when they were unaware of the English equivalent. Other lexical innovations include the participants' own translations: *village foods* from the Sinhala

gamey kema, and *new year princess* instead of the codified and widely used SLE direct borrowing *Avurudu Kumari*.

The lack of SLEB kinship terms was notable in the texts. Except for one occurrence each of *periamma* and *periappa*, the texts revealed an avoidance of frequently occurring SLE direct borrowings such as *amma*, *thatha*, *appa*, *akka*, *aiya*, preferring the often non-specific English equivalents such as *brother* and *sister*.

A few participants used hybrid compounds such as *koha bird*, *Erabudu tree*, *Erabudu flowers*, *avurudu season*, *nekath time*, *vesak festival*, and *asala full moon day*. Many of these are codified and widely used in written genres. At the same time, with a total of eight, the use of hybrid compounds was significantly low, particularly in comparison with the extensive use of direct borrowings. As previous research suggests that hybrid compounds have a little more acceptance among teachers of English when compared with direct borrowings and indirect borrowings (Medawattegedera and Devendra 2006), the paucity of this category of SLEBs is quite significant.

4.1.1. VARIANT SPELLING

Variant spelling, particularly of SLE direct borrowings, was also observed in the samples. One of the most frequently occurring food items had seven spelling variations: *keun*, *kaum*, *kavm*, *kavum*, *kavun*, *kewun*, *kewum*. Several others had at least two variants: *kokis* / *kokiss* / *cokies*, *aurudu* / *avurudu*, *atirasa* / *athirasa*, *peni/pani*, *peni valalu* / *peni walalu*, *Ehela/Ahala*. This reflects the lack of uniformity in the spelling of SLEBs found in written genres such as creative writing and newspapers (Meyler 2007). While it would be easy to dismiss some of these variations as learner ‘errors’, they reveal the complexities of SLEB orthography: in addition to the orthographic variation found in

published sources, they also the point to the inadequacies in English orthography that prevent the accurate reflection of Sinhala and Tamil phonology.

4.2 SLEBS AT SENTENCE AND DISCOURSE LEVEL

The qualitative content analysis of SLEBs at sentence and discourse level which was then undertaken revealed certain patterns in which SLEBS were incorporated into the texts. Two specific strategies, explication and exemplification, were identified, which are described below.

4.2.1 EXPLICATION

In some scripts, the SLE direct borrowing *nonagathaya*, a culture-specific term from Sinhala that refers to an astrologically-defined period of time before the New Year dawns, was often framed within an explanation of its meaning. Given below are five examples:

- I On this day is very special time. It Sinhala people called nonagathaya. In that time we do not any works. We are going to temple. And we not a cooking this time. (WS 06)
- II Do you remember the “Nonagathaya. In that period we cant do any without worship. Only think that we do is go the temple and do the worship.” (WS 10)
- III New year came we go to temple and did religes activites in that period. This is called Nonagathaya. Nonagathey mean we stoped work and doing religes activites. When the nonagathaya finised people light the crackers and rang the temple bell. (WS 16)

IV Do you know Anne, there some ritual in our New Year festival. One is “Nonagatha”. At the Nonagatha we can’t do works. At that time we go to the temple and worship. (WS17)

V Firstly many of works finish before follow to time schedule. That period is means Nonagathaya. That period for worships. (WS 26)

In these extracts, the participants have used the term with an introduction and an explanation of the activities during this time, such as the avoidance of work and the engagement in religious activities. This effectively conveys the meaning of the term through its context. The extract below offers a more elaborate explication of the food item *ponkal*:

VI “I think you know that sippy, murukku, vaday, ponkal. Sorry you do not know the ponkal. This is a Sri Lankan food. Most of Sinhalese are call kiripath. Tamil people are call chakkaraiponkal/venponkal. ... Now I tell you Venponkal how to make it. First you want some rice, some milk, cooker. Secondly you start the cooker. Heat the pot and put the some rice and water. This rice is getting soft. After mix the milk. Two or three minutes you can off the cooker. ” (WS 27)

Here, the participant’s explication of *ponkal* includes an introduction to the food item with a reference to its Sinhala name and its variation, as well as a description of its cooking process.

4.2.2. EXEMPLIFICATION

Another strategy used by participants to incorporate SLE vocabulary was exemplification, which consisted of listing SLEBs as examples,

usually introduced with a hyponym in the preceding statement. The examples below illustrate the use of this strategy to introduce SLE direct borrowings that refer to traditional food items and traditional games (my emphasis):

VII these days my mother too busy. She is cooking (making) **some sweets** for us. Like dodol, kevan, cookies, aluwa.” (WS 03)

VIII Before four or five days, we prepared number of **sweets**, like kaludodol, paniwalalu, kavum. The day before New year day we prepared **other sweets** like kokis, walithalapa. (WS 05)

IX On 11th and 12th April my mum and grand mother made lot of **New year foods**. They made oil cake, coconut cake, ‘Aluwa, Welithalapa, Asmi, kokis, Mun kevan. I called them New year foods, because we are only making them for New year. (WS 11)

X Usually we engage in so many **games**, like “porapol gaseema”, chakgudu, kanamutti bideema. (WS 05)

XI We started to play some **traditional games**. like olida keliya, eluwan kema with some kids in the village (WS 07)

XII We played many funny **games** with them. Pancha, kamba adima, Thacchi panima and ect... (WS 08)

In the extracts above, the participants have preceded their use of the SLEBs that refer to traditional sweetmeats with the hyponyms *sweets* and *New year foods*, and traditional games with the hyponyms *games* and *traditional games*, effectively introducing the SLEB to the reader.

4.3 USE OF MECHANICS

In addition to explication and exemplification, the use of mechanics in the presentation of SLEBs was also examined. Several direct borrowings were capitalized, underlined, or used within single or double quotation marks. There were no such mechanics used with indirect borrowings. All the direct borrowings are capitalized in the WS11 above, while the indirect borrowings *oil cake* and *coconut cake* remain in lower case. The participants' use of mechanics, similar to the variant spelling, also reflect the way in which SLE direct borrowings are often used in genres such as creative writing and newspapers.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the marginal, so-called NSSLE speakers, contrary to previous opinion, not only use SLEBs fairly extensively, but also employ various strategies to incorporate them into their written texts. The participants' use of direct and indirect borrowings as well as hybrid compounds in three semantic categories found in the study, with direct borrowings found to be the most widely used type of borrowings, was extensive. This demonstrates that the participants display a significant level of sociocultural competence as they have been able to display, through their use of SLEBs to describe local food, games and contests, and customs and beliefs of the Sinhala and Tamil New Year, a "sensitivity to naturalness and the knowledge of cultural referents when using English" (Pawlikowska-Smith 2002: 7).

The significant number of culture-specific SLEBs in this study also illustrates the link between the use of SLEBs and the specific genre and topic of the writing task, in this case, an informal written text

describing a cultural event, in which the use of certain borrowings is unavoidable. This study thus highlights the often ignored aspect of SLE vocabulary studies: that their use is invariably underpinned by the specificities of topic, genre and register of the speech or writing event, and is, ultimately, unfixed and dynamic.

Examples of explication and exemplification that were identified in the texts indicate two consistent processes in which SLEBs are incorporated into the informal written texts produced in the classroom. This finding is significant in that it illustrates how even less proficient users of English are able to incorporate SLEBs effectively into their texts.

The nature of the participants' use of SLEBs as demonstrated in this study highlights a significant area in which the sociocultural competence of English language learners in Sri Lanka needs to be addressed. While the study sheds light on how language learners, given the opportunity, use SLEBs extensively in their writing, it also demonstrates the need to acknowledge and even endorse this in classroom practice. As such, the findings also suggest the need for systematic strategies which would facilitate the incorporation of SLEBs into certain genres of texts produced in the classroom.

While this study reveals a fairly extensive use of direct borrowings from Sinhala as it was the first language of the majority of the participants, there is a marked paucity of borrowings from Tamil and other languages of the country as the sample lacked Tamil speakers. Studies that focus on the borrowings from other local languages are necessary to address the needs of the diverse pedagogical and cultural contexts in the country. In addition, as this study is limited to SLEBs in informal writing, further studies that investigate other types of

vocabulary, other registers, other areas of SLE such as syntax, and other topics and genres of texts will shed more light on SLE usage in the classroom. Finally, the need for a definition of sociocultural competence that takes into account language variation in the context of World Englishes is also highlighted by this study. (4,578 words)

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Annex 1

Table 1: SLE borrowings used by the participants:

	Food	Games and contests	Customs and beliefs	Kinship terms	Total
Direct borrowings	aggala, aluwa (f 07), asmi (f 05), athiraha / athirasa (f 03), chakkaraiponkal, dodol, hathmaluwa, kaludodol, kavum (f 08), kiribath (f 04), kokis (f 14), munkawum, murukku, pani walalu (f 02), ponkal, sippy, vaday, venponkal, walithalapa (f 02), munkavun (Total: 20)	Andayata kiri kavima, Banis kema, Chakgudu, Elle, Eluwan kema, Kamba adima, Kana mutti bidima, Kathuru onchillawa, Kotta pora, lissana gaha nagima, onchilli, / onchilla, pancha, pancha dameema, pancha keliya, porapol gaseema, Sagaunu amutha sevima, Sigithi avurudu kumariya, Olida keliya, Thacchi panima, “avurudu uthsava” (Total: 20)	aurudu udawa, avurudu uthsava, charithra and varithra, lipa gini melavima, mesha, mina, nonagathaya (f 06), Punya Kalaya, rathinga (Total: 10)	periamma, periappa (Total: 02)	52 68%
Indirect borrowings	milk rice (f 09), milk toffees, oil cakes (f 6), coconut cake, new year food, festival food items, village foods, traditional sweets (Total: 08)	New year princess (Total: 01)	auspicious time (03), crackers, hearth, festival season, festival food items, New Year festival, old year, cuckoo bird (Total: 08)	(Total: 00)	17 22%
Hybrid compounds	(Total: 00)	Avurudu games (f 03) (Total: 01)	nekath time / traditional nekath time, Aurudu season, koha bird (f 02), Wesak festival, Asala full moon day, Erabadhu flowers Erabadhu tree (Total: 07)	(Total: 00)	8 10%
TOTAL	28	22	25	02	77

“f” denotes frequency, or the total number of occurrences in all the scripts.