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PAPER

**Investigating the Sociocultural Competence of Learners of English as a Second Language in Sri Lanka through Sri Lankan English Borrowings in the Classroom**

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The vocabulary of Sri Lankan English (SLE) is an extremely dynamic area of language, as revealed in written as well as in spoken texts, in formal and informal registers. In particular, borrowings from other languages are used widely in speech, and in written genres such as newspapers and creative writing.

However, in the English language teaching classroom, anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a tendency to avoid the use of SLE borrowings by teachers and material writers. Such a negative attitude towards SLE borrowings can hinder the development of learners' vocabulary as well as their sociocultural competence. Sociocultural competence as defined by Celce-Murcia et al (1995, 2007) is a significant learner competence which refers to the ability to use the target language in a socioculturally appropriate way. As the vast majority of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in Sri Lanka need to use, and to display competence, within a SLE speaking community, neglecting the acquisition of SLE vocabulary can be seen as a hindrance to gaining proficiency in the language.

Within this context, this study investigates the use of SLE borrowings in the classroom using qualitative and quantitative approaches. With its theoretical underpinnings located in studies in World Englishes and in the principles of English Language Teaching, this study aims to shed light on the extent of the usage, or non-usage, of SLE borrowings in English language teaching, as well as possible reasons for such practices in the ESL classroom in Sri Lanka.