Diversity in the Varieties of Global English Used in the
Current Ethnic Setting of Sri Lanka From an Ecological Perspective

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This paper explores the unique nature of super diversity in the varieties of English spoken in the
current ethnic setting of Sri Lanka. Since, historically Sri Lanka has been colonized thrice
respectively by the Portuguese, Dutch and British, the impact bestowed by the British colonization
from 1796 until the fall of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815 is noteworthy. With a lot of socio
economic and socio political and linguistic changes occurred in the course of time for many
centuries, paving the way for English to merge with several local languages such as Sinhala and
Tamil along with productively being used by diverse ethnicities as in Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims
and Burghers, standard and sub standard varieties of English have been emerged. Thus, the
researcher has analyzed disciplinary aspects that she has encountered in this study such as Sri
Lankan English in the public domain, Sri Lankan English in English Language Teaching and Sri
Lankan English literature at a local exposure with the sample of about 60 undergraduates in a
national university in the country for a period of about six months. With such a historical
background of English which has been existing in the country for more than 21 years maintaining
a peculiar position as a lingua franca, according to Prof. Manique Gunasekara (2010), ‘In Sri
Lanka today, most people are quite happy to speak English, and are not interested in which variety
they speak. This attitude is spurred by the immense power of English in today’s postcolonial Sri
Lanka. “The importance of advocating a standard for the language” in terms of Sri Lankan English
has been reiterated by many academics especially in a challenging ELT class room setting in a
context, where “many Englishes” idea have been accommodated (Wasala,2010) Sri Lankan
English and Standard Sri Lankan English also shown further sub standards of the language such
as Malay English, Sinhala English and Tamil English and also the type varied in terms of the
user’s home town with their own distinguished characteristics as morphology and syntax with
their unique practices. However, this variation does not block a local’s understanding of the
communication taking place. According to 45 students of the total, while the controversy has been
prevailing for decades now whether to believe in such an existence of sub varieties and
accommodating them or not in their day to day academic and professional work, the researcher
found out that it is proven to be a very creative and productive process throughout, but the need
for validation is a compulsion of the day, since the student population has faced a considerable
difficulty in following the ‘best practice’.

Key Words: Standard Sri Lankan English, Sri Lankan English, Morphology, Syntax, Standards
and Varieties, Ethnic Setting