

Making of Local Identities through Jaffna English

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English language today is spoken by several hundred millions of people and it functions in different kinds of societies as a mother tongue, a second language, a vehicle of officialdom, a medium of education and as a language for science, business and commerce. It is also used widely as a lingua franca.

The identity of a nation depends on various factors such as its economy, culture, religion and especially its common language, which though used by a minority, its contribution to the integration of the different communities is essential. Sri Lankan English arose as a result of the situations and circumstances that came into being when British rule was established in Sri Lanka in 1796. Sri Lankan English is now one among several varieties of English which have collectively been called ‘World Englishes’.

This paper on “making of local identities through Jaffna English” reflects how British English has become Lankanised and how within the Sri Lankan English Jaffna variety of English has emerged which signifies the peculiar Jaffna Tamil consciousness, culture and linguistic richness in a linguistic point of view using descriptive method.

In order to express key cultural concepts which are not available in English, speakers of Sri Lankan English often resort to a process of borrowing and altering from local languages. As a result of this, Sri Lankan English and within that Jaffna variety has emerged with vocabulary, expressions and syntactic structures that have their origins in the Sinhala and Tamil languages. In order to limit the scope of the study, this paper analyses the distinctive morpho-semantic and syntactic features of Jaffna English.

As a milestone in the development of Sri Lankan English, many books on Sri Lankan English have been published which reinforce the notion that our variety of English is a variety with its own unique features and this paper also shows how the words and phrases used by Jaffna Tamils in different socio cultural contexts to express their identity are going to serve as a testimony to the lexicology of Sri Lankan English.

Key words: *Identity, World Englishes, Jaffna English, Culture, Linguistics, Morpho-Semantic and Syntactic Features*