

**CONTACT EFFECTS OF SINHALA AND TAMIL LANGUAGES
ON SRI LANKAN ENGLISH NOUN-PREPOSITION
COMBINATIONS**

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Introduction

Languages are said to *bein contact* when they are used alternatively by the same persons. The practice of alternatively using two languages thus is called *bilingualism*, and the persons involved, *bilingual* (cf. Weinreich, 1953:01). In bilingual language processing, 'one language is rarely totally deactivated when the bilingual speaks or listens to the other language, 'even in completely monolingual situation (Thomason, 2001:53). Therefore, languages in contact tend to influence one another, causing the languages to restructure. Restructuring of languages in a contact situation can affect all systems of a language. Of these, phonology and lexis are the most vulnerable. In contrast, syntax and grammar tend to be much more stable. Therefore, grammatical innovations take time to establish. The present paper discusses such a grammatical innovation: Noun - Preposition combinations (PNs).

After the arrival of the English language in Sri Lanka in the late eighteenth century, it has been in contact with Sinhala and Tamil languages. Additionally, almost all present-day users of Sri Lankan English (SLE) are either bilingual or multilingual (cf. Mendis&Rambukwella, 2010:183). Therefore, it is inevitable that Sinhala and Tamil exert effects on SLE. How restructuring of English phonology and lexis has happened in SLE has been described in studies such as Gunsekera (2005) and S. Fernando (2003) respectively. However, restructuring happening in SLE grammar has been paid less attention to. As discussed in Kumara (2017a) and Kumara (2017b), particle/preposition use is an area in SLE grammar which shows contact language effects.

Just as prepositions go into combinations with verbs in *prepositional verbs*, and with adjectives in *prepositional adjectives*, they

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form combinations with nouns as well. As Quirk et al (1985:1222) states choice of preposition remains the same after morphologically related verbs, adjectives and nouns as in *differ from*, *different from*, and *difference from* or *participate in* and *participation in*. However, there are also cases in which this correspondence is not observed, as in *proud of vs pride in*. The objective of the present study is to find PNsthat have a significant frequency of occurrence in SLE and to investigate if Sinhala and Tamil have an effect on their significance of occurrence.

The meanings expressed by prepositions in English are represented in Sinhala and Tamil both by case markers and postpositions. Table 01 below shows major equivalents in Sinhala and Tamil for the five prepositions in English selected for the study. As the table shows, the first three prepositions, *with*, *from*, and *for* find both case marker equivalents and postposition equivalents in Sinhala and Tamil; the fourth, *about*, has only postposition equivalents; the fifth, *at*, does not find either a case marker equivalent or a one-to-one postposition equivalent in Sinhala and Tamil for most of its meanings. Therefore, it is hypothesised that the incidence and frequency of use of PNs with *about* will be fewer than those with *for*, *from*, and *with*, and it will be even less with *at*.

Preposition	Sinhala equivalents		Tamil equivalents	
	Case markers	postpositions	Case markers	postpositions
with	/-n/ (auxiliary)	/sam g /	/oo u/, /u an/ (sociative)	/muulam/, /ko u/
from	/(g)en/ (ablative)	/sit /, /vetin/	/iruntu/ (ablative)	/mutal/ and /vi u/
for	/t / (Dative)	/sad ha:/	/kku/ (Dative)	/a:kka/
about	?	/gaen /	?	/parri/
at	?	?	?	?

Table 01: Major equivalents for the selected prepositions in Sinhala and Tamil

Methods and procedure

The present study employs a corpus-based methodology as its primary analytical procedure. A corpus (plural corpora), which is a computer-readable collection of texts or transcribed speech representative of a language or a variety, can basically be used to get information on frequencies of words, and phrases. Corpus access software, or concordancers, are used in arranging such digitalized language data to find patterns in language use. Data for the present study are extracted from 2 types of written language corpora representing SLE, which are compared with data from parallel corpora representing British English (BE), the historical input variety of SLE; as well as Indian English (IndE), in order to effectively evaluate the significance of occurrence of the selected structures in SLE.

The first type of written language corpora used in the study is from the written parts of the respective components of International Corpus of English (ICE) (Greenbaum, 1996). The second type of written corpora used in the analysis is a large online database called the corpus of Global Web-based English GloWbE (Davies & Fuchs, 2015), which is composed of 1.9 billion words in 1.8 million web pages from 340,000 websites (including newspapers) in 20 different English-speaking countries. ICE corpora data were analysed using the concordancer, Wordsmith Tools-Version 5 (Scott, 2008), and the results were normalized to 1 million words. For GloWbE, the corpus web interface was used as the concordancer, and the results were normalised to 100 million words.

Results

Because of the word limit restrictions of this abstract, results of the significant PNs in SLE are described only with regard to preposition *for*. PNs with *for* that are significant in GloWbE-SL data show two central tendencies: the preposition of some of them alternates with the preposition *to*, while that of others alternates with the preposition *of*. As a whole, alternation of *for* with *to* seems to be different representations of the dative case, whereas alternation of *for* with *of* is a dative-genitive alternation. Table 02

below shows these two types of PNs with *for* are significant in SLE. One example from each type is presented below.

PNs with 'for' in SLE alternating with 'to'		PNs with 'for' in SLE alternating with 'of'	
for	to	for	of
Commitment for	Commitment to	Autonomy for	Autonomy of
Invitation for	Invitation to	Coordinator for	Coordinator of
Merit for	Merit to	Greed for	Greed of
Obstacle for	Obstacle to	Guarantee for	Guarantee of
Panacea for	Panacea to	Homeland for	Homeland of
Peace for	Peace to	Requisite for	Requisite of
Reverence for	Reverence to	Secretariat for	Secretariat of

Table 02: PNs with *for* significant in GloWbE-SL

Out of those combinations in which *for* alternates with *to*, 'merit for' was found once both in ICE -SL and in ICE-GB among the ICE components under scrutiny. In GloWbE corpora, the normalised frequencies of the combination are 11, 25, and 116 for GB, Ind, and SL components respectively. Thus, its occurrence is significant in SLE. As figure 01 below shows, in BE the frequency of 'merit to' as a percentage of frequency of 'merit' is twice as percentage frequency of 'merit for', whereas in SLE (and in IndE) the percentage frequencies of the two alternatives are almost similar.

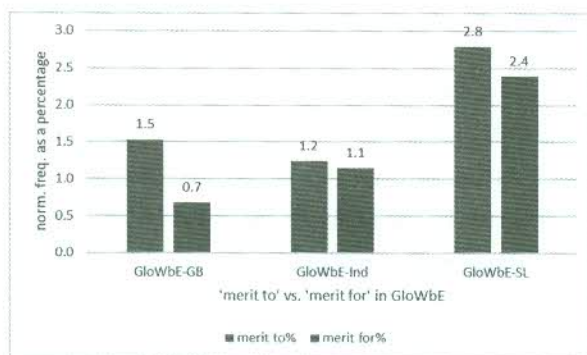


Figure 01: Normalised frequencies of 'merit to' vs 'merit for' as a percentage of normalised frequencies of 'merit' in GloWbE corpora .

In 'greed for', which was found twice in ICE-Ind and once in ICE-GB, *for* alternates with *of*. In GloWbE corpora, the normalised frequencies of the PN are 25, 71, and 279 for GB, Ind, and SL components respectively. Percentage frequencies of the two alternative PNs shown in figure 02 below show an increasing trend of 'greed for' and a decreasing trend of 'greed of' towards the SL end of the graph.

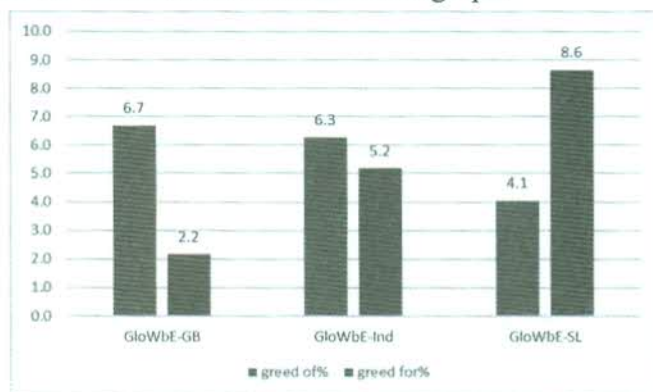


Figure 02: Normalised frequencies of 'greed of' vs 'greed for' as a percentage of normalised frequencies of 'greed' in GloWbE corpora

Discussion

Figure 03 below shows the Sinhala and Tamil equivalents of one example sentence each for 'merit for' and 'merit to' extracted from GloWbE-SL. The data in the figure reveal that the equivalents of both *to* and *for* in Sinhala is /tə/, and that in Tamil is [kku/kkāṇa]. This representation of both prepositions by the same contact language equivalent may have caused the bilingual SLE user to use 'merit for' significantly unlike in the case of BE users. A similar exemplification is done in figure 04 below for Sinhala and Tamil equivalents of 'greed for' and 'greed of'. As the figure shows, *of* in the structure either has no representation (Tamil) or has the equivalent of *in/for* (Sinhala), whereas an equivalent for *for* is readily available in both contact languages. This may explain the significance of occurrence of 'greed for' in SLE.

Sinhala: *api devijantam pin dija jutuj'*
 ↓ ↓
 Gloss: We the Gods to as well merit give have to
 SLE: We have to give merit to the Gods as well.

Sinhala: *ovunge: nijagija dema:pijantə pin pəminivi:mə navvavanne*
 ↓ ↓
 Gloss: their dead parents for merit bestowing cease
 SLE: Cease bestowing merits for their dead parents.

Tamil: [Nām katavuḷukku pūjai ceyya vēṇṭum]
 ↓ ↓
 Gloss: We the Gods to devotion do have to
 SLE: We have to give merit to the Gods as well.

Tamil: [Iṇṭa em peṇḍikaḷukkāṇa nām ceyyum pūjalkalai niṇṭtikkoḷḷa vēṇṭum]
 ↓ ↓
 Gloss: dead parents for we do devotion cease should
 SLE: Cease bestowing merits for their dead parents.

Figure 03: Sinhala and Tamil equivalents of 'merit for and 'merit to in example sentences taken from GloWbE-SL.

Sinhala: *balaḷeḷi giḷḷukama saḷḷa: puḍḍaṇiḷa muḷḷa*
 ↓ ↓
 Gloss: power in/for greed for sacred principl
 SLE: Sacred principles for greed of power.

Sinhala: *paḷəḷə dḷunta:ve: balaḷəḷə giḷḷukama*
 ↓ ↓
 Gloss: the ruling junta of power for the greed
 SLE: The greed for power of the ruling junta.

Tamil: [Patavi ācaṭṭkāṇa pūṇṭa koḷṭakai]
 ↓
 Gloss: power greed for sacred principles
 SLE: Sacred principles for greed of power.

Tamil: [Aṭeyalarin patavi maṇṇuṇ atikaṇṭṭiṇṭāṇa pēṇṭai]
 ↓ ↓
 Gloss: the junta ruling and power for greed
 SLE: The greed for power of the ruling junta.

Figure 04: Sinhala and Tamil equivalents of 'greed for and 'greed to in example sentences taken from GloWbE-SL.