

# Interlingual texting: Texting in Sinhala using English fonts

Dr. Rohini Chandrica Widyalandara

Senior Lecturer  
English Language Teaching Unit  
University of Kelaniya  
Sri Lanka

**Abstract-** In the sphere of communication in Sri Lanka using English fonts for recording Sinhala discourse during the use of Short Message Service or Interlingual Texting is very popular. Analyzing such discourse this study argues that the asymmetry in the phonologies of Sinhala and English, and the difficulty in graphically denoting of sounds of Sinhala in English make the deciphering of Interlingual texts complex leading to unintelligibility and ambiguity of the messages. Data analysis further identifies a formal vs. colloquial dichotomy in the register of interlingual texting. The nonvolitional and nonelective transfer of fossilized English loan phonology of Sinhala too is evidenced in the register. The spread of the language of Sinhala Interlingual texting to English print media too is noted in this sociolinguistic analysis.

**Index Terms:** *Interlingual texting, formal vs. colloquial dichotomy, Sri Lanka, multiglossia.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In Sri Lanka the majority of the population across all social strata uses the Short Message Service (SMS) as it is the least cost-effective mode of personal communication and disseminating information. Mobile phones are affordable and the technology is robust and reliable. It works well even in the rural areas with patchy coverage. SMS messages can be stored in the network's server and can be forwarded when the phone appears within a signal range (de Silva et al., 2011)<sup>[1]</sup>. But at present texting using the fonts of the two vernaculars of Sri Lanka: Sinhala and Tamil is not possible. Thus Interlingual texting is a popular mode of communication and texting is done in this unique manner.

Interlingual texting is a record of discourse of one language by means of graphemes of some other language using the medium of SMS. In the context of this study it can be defined as the texting of Sinhala or Tamil discourse using English fonts or English fonts being used to type Sinhala or Tamil messages phonetically by consumers of the SMS on mobile phones in Sri Lanka.

This mode of communication differs from the normal texting where English font and a multitude of abbreviations are used to denote English words. In interlingual texting while the graphemes seen on screen are English the grapheme to phoneme conversion results in Sinhala or Tamil discourse. Thus what is evidenced at present is that interlingual texting generates uncertainty of the accuracy of the messages when translated back to Sinhala or Tamil.

According to Karunaratne et al<sup>1</sup> (2013: 1)<sup>[2]</sup>,

The majority of SMS writers in Sri Lanka transliterate messages because of language barriers, which create various communication problems and ambiguity of messages.

Yet do all users of interlingual texting 'transliterate messages because of language barriers'? This study argues that though interlingual texting in Sri Lanka is used by a majority to overcome language barriers others do so for diverse reasons.

From the president's New Year message through various information dissemination promotions to personal communiqué interlingual texting is used for communicating in Sinhala or Tamil in Sri Lanka. In the first two instances above it is a popular and trendy mode of communicating and creating an affinity with the masses. The use of interlingual texting for personal communication is considered quicker by many users as less time is needed to compose the text. This is due to the fact that though many Sri Lankans are bilingual the dominant language in their repertoire is their mother tongue: Sinhala or Tamil. Thus thoughts come easier in their mother tongue. Furthermore for most bilinguals translating these thoughts to English is a time consuming hunt for translation equivalents in English. Therefore using interlingual texting saves time.

But on the downside, this study argues that a multitude of communication problems occur due to the lack of intelligibility and ambiguity of most messages. One reason for this is the disparity in the phonologies of Sinhala/Tamil and English influencing the graphemic representation of Sinhala or Tamil sounds in English during interlingual texting.

Henceforth this paper restricts its discussion and analysis mainly to interlingual texting in Sinhala.

## II. THE REGISTER OF INTERLINGUAL TEXTING IN SINHALA

This paper analyses interlingual texting as a genre within the registers of multiglossic Sinhala. A register is one of many styles or varieties of a language used for a particular purpose or in a particular social setting. More generally, a register is also used to

---

<sup>1</sup> This research of Karunaratne et al (2013) is an attempt to predict Sinhala sentences in mobile short messages. This is a timely necessity in Sri Lanka. The main advantage of the research is developing an effective algorithm for reducing the typing effort, saving time and avoiding language ambiguity.

indicate degrees of formality in language use. According to Agha (2007: 144)<sup>[3]</sup> ‘a register is a cultural model that reflects social relationships and shared community ideologies through linguistic features’. The register of interlingual texting in Sri Lanka is a worthy example which reflects all the above criteria. It can be broadly divided into a formal register which is used in formal settings where the format is generally impersonal while the informal register reflects idiomatic usages and lexicogrammatical features of Colloquial Spoken Sinhala (CSS). This reflects the diglossic nature of Spoken variety within the multiglossic Sinhala. Gair (1998)<sup>[4]</sup> discussing diglossia in Spoken Sinhala states that the Formal Spoken Sinhala lacks subject-verb agreement of Literary Written Sinhala. He further states that though the basic word order of both varieties can be categorized as SOV, it is much more flexible in the former. Gair (ibid: 226) recognizes the following glosses in Spoken Sinhala,

- 1) Formal spoken Sinhala, which makes use of one or more grammatical features of literary Sinhala (other than verb agreement) with relative consistency. It characteristically makes considerable use of a formal lexicon shared with literary Sinhala.
- 2) Colloquial Spoken Sinhala, which is the language of ordinary conversation.

One feature of Colloquial Spoken Sinhala is the high occurrence of assimilated loanwords from English. Analyzing interlingual texting based on the above classification it can be suggested that the influence of this Formal/Colloquial dichotomy is reflected in its register features.

### III. STANDARD USE OF ENGLISH FONTS TO DENOTE SINHALA DISCOURSE IN LITERATURE VS INTERLINGUAL TEXTING: A REGISTER ANALYSIS

This linguistic analysis of register feature distinction is based on differences in the relative distribution of linguistic features. Any linguistic feature that has a functional or conventional association can be distributed in a way that distinguishes registers. Such features come from many linguistic classes, including the target area of this study: phonology, as the register of interlingual texting is phonetic. This study constructs a premise that the origin of interlingual texting can be traced to the phonetic representation of spoken Sinhala through English fonts in literature.

Linguistic documentation of Sinhala in literature over the ages has used transliteration and it can be suggested that a standard has evolved. I cite examples for a current standard through extracts from literature.

- a) Zubair (2011: 42)<sup>[5]</sup> states that data in his paper is solely from CSS. The following analysis identifies usages which denote the rules for transliterating CSS in his research.

1. rambuTān, mee kaaleTē? eewaa idilēwath thibunade?  
/rabuTān, mee kaaleTē? eewaa idilēwath thibunade?/

[*Rambutang*<sup>2</sup>, in this season? Were they even ripe?]  
(Zubair, ibid)

Note the mid word, upper case *T* used to denote the retroflex plosive /ʈ/ (ඨ in Sinhala) graphically in the first word in the above utterance. This differentiates the retroflex plosive from the voiceless dental plosive /t/ (ට in Sinhala) which is denoted by Zubair (ibid) graphically as *th*. But note that the voiced dental plosive /d/ (ඳ in Sinhala) is represented by *d*. Also note the use of the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) for the velar nasal /ŋ/. But the most significant usages are the letter *a* for the open central vowel /a/ and the IPA symbol ə for the mid central vowel /ə/ thus differentiating the two sounds in the transliteration. This differentiation between these two phonemes is deemed necessary especially when they occur as vowels inherent to consonant graphemes of Sinhala. Also note the use of double vowel letters to designate a long vowel sound: *mee* /me:/

2. maməmə kəæmə iyuwwa  
/maməmə kəæmə ijuwa/  
[I cooked food myself.] (ibid)

In the example above the IPA symbol for the front mid vowel /æ/ (ඞ in Sinhala) is used to differentiate the pronunciation from other contenders as /a/ and /ə/.

- b) Hilpert (2006: 267)<sup>[6]</sup> too uses similar symbols for transliteration. But the dental plosives /t/ and /d/ are denoted as *t* and *d* respectively as seen in the example below.

1. gedərə yanne!  
/gedərə janne/  
home go!  
[Go home!]

2. gamba bootələ-yen pəne-la gijaa  
/gamba bootələjen pənəla gijaa/  
The frog from the bottle escaped  
[The frog escaped from the bottle]

- c) Chandralal (2010: 31)<sup>[7]</sup> discussing the Romanization used in his book titled *Sinhala* identifies the usages *t*<sup>3</sup>, *d*<sup>4</sup>, *T*<sup>5</sup>, *D*<sup>6</sup> for the phonemes /t, d, ʈ, d/ respectively.

1. wæTə digeTə mal.  
/wæTə digeTə mal/  
fence along flowers  
[(there are) flowers along (the) fence]

<sup>2</sup> Lychee: a small fruit originally from China, with sweet white flesh and a single large seed inside. A seasonal fruit in Sri Lanka.

<sup>3</sup> ට in Sinhala.

<sup>4</sup> ඳ in Sinhala.

<sup>5</sup> ඨ in Sinhala.

<sup>6</sup> ඩ in Sinhala.

What is evidenced in the above transliterations is the strategic use of IPA symbols/uppercase graphemes to differentiate between phonemes. This minimizes ambiguity.

As this study traces the origin of interlingual texting through transliterations recorded in literature on Sinhala it cites the following usages in other scholarly work on Sinhala where, for example, the English graphemes *th*, *dh* are used to denote the aspirated sounds /tʰ/, /dʰ/ respectively.

Karunatilake in 2001 conducted a diachronic analysis of the evolution of the phonology of Sinhala. He discusses the merger of the dental stops with the aspirated equivalents in Old Indo Aryan which coalesced as dental stops in Old Sinhala and backdates to 1c. BCE. The transcription used for the phonemes denotes the dental stop written as *t* and its aspirated equivalent as *th* graphemically: *tera*<sup>7</sup>; *sthavira*<sup>8</sup> (Karunatilake, 2001: 11)<sup>[8]</sup>. He (ibid) further differentiates between the dental and the retroflex sounds. For example the retroflex /t, d/ (ට, ඩ) respectively in Sinhala) are graphically represented by *t, d* respectively with a dot diacritic below the letter. Note that Zubair (2011)<sup>[9]</sup>, Hilpert (2006)<sup>[10]</sup> and Chandralal (2010)<sup>[11]</sup> use *T* and *D* instead.

In other literature too the graphemes *th* are used for transcribing the aspirated sound /tʰ/ and *dh* for /dʰ/. But recall that Sinhala has a diglossia between written and spoken language. Thus though the aspirated graphemes occur in written Sinhala they do not carry a phonemic value.

In most informal interlingual texting at present the register is Spoken Sinhala and deciphering *th* as /tʰ/ carries validity. But the use of the graphemes *th* to signify the phoneme /tʰ/ would lead to ambiguity if the register of interlingual texting gains in formality and aspires to represent the aspirated letters, for example, /tʰ/ and /dʰ/ of Sinhala.

Based on the above analysis it can be suggested that one main reason for the ambiguity in the register of interlingual texting is that the user's scope of word entry is restricted to the fonts of the 26 letters of the English alphabet. This creates a multitude of problems when deciphering interlingual texts. Table 1 below highlights some areas which are liable to create ambiguity during interlingual texting.

Table 1: Several Sinhala letters with a high frequency usage which create ambiguity during interlingual texting

Description	Sinhala letters which need differentiation	Current symbols for transliteration in literature	Letter in interlingual texting
Voiceless dental plosive /tʰ/	ට	t	th
Voiced dental plosive /dʰ/	ඳ	d	d
Voiceless retroflex plosive /t/	ට	T	t
Voiceless dental plosive /d/	ඩ	D	d
Open back vowel /a/	අ	a	a
Central mid vowel /ə/	ඈ	e	a
Front low mid vowel /æ/	ඈ	æ	a

<sup>7</sup> /tera/ තෙර

<sup>8</sup> /sthavira/ ස්ථවිර

Thus analyzing the register of interlingual texting what is noted is that the use of *th* for the voiceless dental plosive /tʰ/ and *t* for the voiceless retroflex plosive /t/ denotes an accepted norm. But the other five usages result in ambiguity during deciphering. Moreover this is only one area which gives rise to problems in decoding interlingual texting. Two other areas identified in this study are misspelt English words and the occurrence of deviations from Standard Sri Lankan English pronunciation in loanwords assimilated from English to Sinhala. These features many arise in the informal register of interlingual texting but not in its formal counterpart.

#### IV. FORMAL REGISTER OF INTERLINGUAL TEXTING

Stylistic variations in language cannot be judged as appropriate or not without reference to the participants in the interchange. The formality of interlingual texting too is generated through the sender-receiver status. Note the formal nature in the Sinhala segment of the New Year greetings sent in 2014 (Figure 1 below) where the sender is the then president of Sri Lanka.

Note that 'Oba Samata Suba Nawa Vasarak Wewa!' utilizes English font to type Sinhala words. In 'Ungal Anaivarukkum Puththandu Nalvalthukka!' English font is used yet again to type Tamil words. Thus the text in Figure 1 below uses a trilingual mode of transliteration.

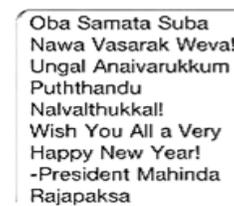


Figure 1: The 2014 New Year message from the president of Sri Lanka<sup>9</sup>.

Following are some short examples of other formal SMSs<sup>10</sup> shortlisted from the mobile phone inboxes of 15 randomly selected Sri Lankan bilinguals on 6 June, 2014. They are broadly categorized as formal dispatches as they typify promotional communiqués sent by service providers in Sri Lanka to consumers.

- i. STAR FRIENDS thulin obage priyathama tharuwa<sup>11</sup> ...  
Star Friends through your favourite star<sup>12</sup>

samaga SL vs SA cricket match eka ...  
with Sri Lanka vs. South Africa cricket match the

<sup>9</sup>Source: <https://www.google.lk/search?q=texting+in+sinhala&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&saom%252F2013%252F05%252Ftea-be-or-not-tea-be.html%3B213%3B320>

According to the editorial of the Daily Mirror the current President Maithripala Sirisena's new year 'message was identical to the one Rajapaksha sent on January 1, 2014'

<http://www.dailymirror.lk/69399/editorial-avurudu-text-andunanswered->

<sup>10</sup> Henceforth all words of SMSs are highlighted. In each selection the highlighted section denotes the original appearance of the text with English fonts used to type Sinhala words.

<sup>11</sup> A film star.

<sup>12</sup> The second line records the closest broad signification of each word.

**narabeemata awasthawak!!! Kondesi adalewe.**  
to watch an opportunity. Conditions apply.

[An opportunity to watch the cricket match Sri Lanka vs. South Africa with your favourite star through Star Friends. Conditions apply.]<sup>13</sup>

ii. **Anuradhapure yanna 365 amatha Mobitel**<sup>14</sup> ...  
To Anuradhapure to travel 365 call Mobitel

**m-ticketing wethin denma dumriya pravespath** .....  
m-ticketing through now train tickets

**wenkara ganna. Gasthu ha kondesi adala we.**  
reserve payments and conditions apply

[To travel to Anuradhapura call Mobitel (and) through m-ticketing book train tickets now. Payments and conditions apply.]

#### A. Informal register of interlingual texting

The following personal communiqués are categorized under Informal register as the rhythm and idiom of CSS is more evidenced when compared to the promotional communiqués discussed above. Additionally code mixing is more prevalent in these texts.

i. **mee api tama at hom. tatta yanne ne.**  
Here, we still at home. Father going not

[We (are) still at home. Father (is) not going.]  
Note the misspelt *hom* in the above text.

ii. **mama kata kerapu 3 wil eka aava.**  
I called three wheeler came  
[The three wheeler I called came.]

iii. **ane mis ada exam liwa.**  
Oh!<sup>15</sup> miss today exam wrote  
[Oh! miss I wrote for the exam today.]

iv. **mage yaluwek konde firm kala. shook.**  
My friend hair permed. Nice.  
[(one of) my friend(s) permed her hair. (It is) nice.]

The word *firm* in example iv above illustrates substitution of *f* for *p* which is a characteristic in weak bilinguals who deviate from Standard Sri Lankan English (SSLE) pronunciation. Personal communication with the sender led to the discovery that the word *firm* was used for *perm* an abbreviation for a *permanent* hair style.

<sup>13</sup> The restructured sentence broadly following the grammatical word order of English is indicated by [] and is given in the third line..

<sup>14</sup> A mobile telephone company in Sri Lanka.

<sup>15</sup> This is the closest transliteration in the given context which conveys dissatisfaction on the performance at a particular examination.

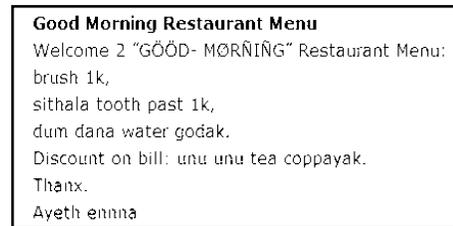


Figure 2: A text sent in the morning to room occupants of a restaurant

Source: <http://www.cutesmszone.com/sms/sinhala-sms/>

Note the misspelt loanword *paste* in Figure 2 above. The repeated use of *1k*<sup>16</sup> for Sinhala *ekak* too gains attention. A high frequency of code mixing is also evidenced.

#### Good Morning Restaurant Menu

Welcome to Good Morning restaurant Menu:

Brush<sup>17</sup> 1k *ekak* (one)  
Sithala<sup>18</sup> (cool) tooth past<sup>19</sup> 1k: *ekak* (one)  
Dum dana (steaming) water godak (a lot)  
Unu unu (hot hot) tea *coppayak* (cup)  
Ayeth *enna* (come again)

Although the above formal/informal messages may lead to slow deciphering the context, for most Sri Lankan receivers, generate clarity of the intended meaning. But it is noticed that a high rate of ambiguity is generated in most interlingual texts resulting in communication problems.

#### V. COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS GENERATED THROUGH AMBIGUITY OF MESSAGES

Ambiguity is clearly evidenced in the following extract which was posted on internet. Though my mother tongue is Sinhala transliterating the message was tedious and was without an acceptable outcome.

Just got a text-message with what I think is Sinhala or Tamil. Curious what it means!  
**raththaran dannana kawruth hariyatama danaganda gramasawak kanaggan ahanda kiyanda wana ayata mathaka na hari yatama hoda tc bay jP sorry hoda man danna**<sup>20</sup>

I was equally curious. I record my attempt at transliteration. The underlined words represent guesses at a probable word. As indicated below the first section of the extract can carry two transliterated meanings:

i. **raththaran dannana kawruth hariyatama danaganda** ...  
/rattəran danne kavuru<sup>19</sup> harijətəmə dəngandə/  
Gold knows everybody exactly to know  
[Everybody who knows gold to know exactly should .....]

<sup>16</sup> In Sinhala 1 is *eka*. Thus 1+ k = *eka* + k = *ekak*.

<sup>17</sup> This is a tooth brush.

<sup>18</sup> I would transliterate 'cool' as *siithala* සීච්ච. *sithala* සීච්ච could generate the meaning 'thought' out of context.

<sup>19</sup> paste

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.reddit.com/r/translator/comments/1gik5s/just\\_got\\_a\\_textm\\_essage\\_with\\_what\\_i\\_think\\_is/](http://www.reddit.com/r/translator/comments/1gik5s/just_got_a_textm_essage_with_what_i_think_is/). (Retrieved 13 June, 2014)

<b>gramasawak</b>	<b>kanaggan</b>	<b>ahanda</b>	<b>kiyanda...</b>
/gra.məse.wəkə	keneggen	ahandə	kijandə/
Gramasewaka	(from a)	ask	tell (to)
[Tell to ask from a gramasawaka <sup>21</sup> ]			

ii. **raththaran**      **dannana**      **kawruth.**<sup>22</sup>      .....

/rattəran	dannæ:	kavurut /
Raththaran, <sup>23</sup>	do not know	nobody.

[Dearest, nobody knows.]

<b>hariyatama</b>	<b>danaganda</b>	<b>gramasawaka</b>	<b>kanaggan...</b>
/harijətəmə	dəngandə	gra.məse.wəkə	keneggen
exactly	to know	gramasewaka	(from a)

**ahanda**      **kiyanda.**

ahandə	kijandə/
ask	tell (to)

[To know exactly tell (to) ask from a gramasewaka.]

Of the two transliterations above the second is more logical as the responsibilities of a *gramasewaka* does not include giving information about the price of gold. The rest of the extract though equally difficult to transliterate is less ambiguous as seen below.

<b>wana ayata</b>	<b>mathaka</b>	<b>na hariyatama</b>	<b>hoda...</b>
/ʋənə ajətə	matəkə	næ: harijətəmə	hōdē:/
Others	remember	cannot exactly	okay

[Others cannot remember exactly okay!]

<b>tc</b>	<b>bay</b>	<b>jP</b>	<b>sorry</b>	<b>hoda</b>	<b>man danna</b>
/ti: si:	bai	je: su pihitai	sori	hōdē:	man danna: /
Take care	bye	blessings of Jesus	Sorry	okay	I don't know

[Take care, Bye! Blessings of Jesus! Sorry okay, I don't know]

Note the usages *bay* and *jP* especially the latter which is a unique abbreviation in Sinhala interlingual texting<sup>24</sup> for *jesu pihitai*.

Linguistically these interlingual text messages create a new register in Sinhala and accelerate the rise of Colloquial Spoken in Written Sinhala communiqués in functional domains. While some Sinhala texts written in English font can be confusing to many proficient users of Sinhala, including myself, most habitual users of this form of texting know how to do a speedy transliteration.

<sup>21</sup> A *gramasewaka* or *Grama Niladhari* is a Sri Lankan public official appointed by the central government to carry out administrative duties in a *Grama Niladhari* division, which is a subunit of a divisional secretariat. The duties of a *Grama Niladhari* include issuing of permits, gathering statistics, maintaining the voter registry and maintaining peace by settlement of personal disputes. They are responsible to keep track of criminal activity in their area and issue character certificates on behalf of residents when requested by them.

<sup>22</sup> Punctuation is added from this point to get the sense of the extract.

<sup>23</sup> An endearment for someone highly valued such as dearest but loosely used in this context.

<sup>24</sup> I needed help during deciphering *jP*.

But it has to be noted that there is a high frequency usage of assimilated English loanwords in Sinhala especially in personal communiqués.

## VI. ENCROACHMENT OF INTERLINGUAL TEXTING FORMATS TO CURRENT ENGLISH PRINT MEDIA

On the other hand what is linguistically disturbing is the encroachment of interlingual texting to current print media. Below is an extract from the *Sunday Times* of Sri Lanka which is a premier upmarket English-language publication with a wide readership.

The caption which is the title line of this feature article in Figure 3 below bears evidence of the encroachment of Sinhala words typed with English letters into English print media. The register is CSS which is trendy but reflects erroneous usage of Sinhala which creates humour as it conveys that the writer, though a proficient user of English, is a user of 'broken Sinhala'<sup>25</sup>.



Figure 3: A caption which uses English font to write Sinhala words from a featured article in print media<sup>26</sup>

In the caption extracted from Figure 3 cited below the word *ekkek* /ekkek/ results in the gemination of the letter *k* and *maddhi* has a non aspirated *d* and an aspirated *dh* signifying the following in Sinhala.

අනෙක් එක්කක් මද්දි ද?

Aney<sup>27</sup>... ekkak maddhi de<sup>28</sup>?

<sup>25</sup> In Sri Lanka the emergence of deviations from SSLE is termed as the practice of using 'broken English'. An equivalent can be found in 'murdering Queen's English'.

<sup>26</sup> The photo depicts a midwife tucking into 'a creamy ice cream cone while clutching another one most probably for a colleague'.

<sup>27</sup> Other possible significations in the given context obtained from a *Madura online dictionary* are: *Oh, dear, dear me!* Or the word may be used for chastising someone for a mischievous deed.

(transliteration is from Madura dictionary <http://www.maduraonline.com/?find=+dear>)

<sup>28</sup> A question marker in Sinhala.

/ane: ekkak maḍḍhi ḍə?/  
Ah! one not enough  
[Ah! Is one not enough?]

But the irony is that the words should be *ekak* /ekak/ and *maḍi* /maḍi/ and the correct Sinhala question is:

Aney ..... .. ekak madide?  
/ane: ekak maḍiḍe?/  
අනේ එකක් මḍිḍ?

Thus what is witnessed is while the learner English users resort to a high frequency usage of assimilated loan phonology in interlingual texting most bilinguals who are proficient in English evidence learner user features of Sinhala, even in CSS, during their attempts at producing Sinhala words typed with English letters.

#### VII. SUMMARY STATEMENT

In sum what can be concluded is that the advent and establishment of CSS is strongly evidenced in areas where written discourse was formerly Formal or Literary. Disanayaka, way back in 1976<sup>[12]</sup>, had perceived the first notions of this sociolinguistic evolution in Sinhala.

The gradual but steady influx of patterns of Spoken Sinhala into writing, coupled with changes within literary Sinhala itself, has brought about a number of variants in literary usage (ibid: 31).

Furthermore according to Disanayaka (ibid: 32) the formulation of a literary Sinhala standard has led to an impasse ‘between the two main schools of thought, the puristic, which maintains that the pristine purity of the language must be preserved at any cost, and the pragmatic, which recognizes change in language as a natural phenomenon’.

Even if interlingual texting is given recognition under ‘the pragmatic which recognizes change in language as a natural phenomenon’ in this instance the change is controlled by a large population of mobile phone users with differing levels of proficiency in Sinhala and English. Furthermore the register is at present denied a standard which is difficult to achieve due to the restrictions imposed by the number of letters and symbols which could be used during message construction. It is evidenced that interlingual texting flouts even the norms of usage in the phonological grammar of CSS in literature. Moreover what is of importance is that the rise of interlingual texting results in the acceleration of the use and the fossilization of ill spelt English words and deviations from SSLE pronunciation in assimilated loanword phonological contours especially in weak Sinhala/Sri Lankan English bilinguals. The nonvolitional and nonelective transfer of fossilized loan phonology to English speech discourse will further alienate these bilinguals from SSLE pronunciation. Though most English loanwords when used in a matrix of Sinhala flout SSLE norms, according to Senarathne (2009)<sup>[13]</sup>, it is acceptable in CSS discourse. Senarathne (ibid: 55) discussing such usages in a Sinhala matrix states,

It is important to note that as lone lexical items occurring in predominant Sinhala utterances these nativizations are not considered as mistakes or errors.

She further observes that these nativizations have occurred in the integration of lone words into Sinhala creating unexpected phonological patterns. Based on this premise flouting the norms of SSLE pronunciation in English loan assimilations occurring as lone words in a Sinhala matrix, for example in interlingual texting, which are utterances in CSS discourse would be acceptable.

Thus at present in the evolutionary status of Sinhala there is a vigorous preference for the pragmatic which requires a shift from literary to CSS in most registers in functional domains. Sociolinguistically this can be identified as a withdrawal from the linguistically difficult code to the undemanding. In the context of interlingual texting the entry of its register with a high rate of assimilated loanword phonology to written formats which depict CSS is not only detrimental to the struggle to protect the purity of Sinhala it will also accelerate the rate of occurrence of deviations from SSLE pronunciation in S/learner SLE bilinguals.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] H. De Silva, D. Ratnadiwakara, & A. Zainudeen, Social Influence in Mobile Phone Adoption: Evidence from the Bottom of Pyramid in Emerging Asia. *Information Technologies and International Development*, 2011, 7, 3: 1-18.
- [2] M. S. Karunaratne, L. D. J. F. Nanayakkara, K. Ponnampereuma, Sentence Prediction on SMS in Sinhala Language. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 2013, 3, 12.
- [3] A. Agha, *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- [4] J. W. Gair, *Studies in South Asian Linguistics: Sinhala and Other Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- [5] [9] C. Zubair, Ideologies of Purity and Corruption: The Local Impacts of Sinhalese Nationalist Discourses Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Symposium: About Language and Society. *Texas Linguistics Forum*, 2011, 54:40-49.
- [6] [10] M. Hilpert, Auxiliaries in spoken Sinhala Functions of Language, 2006, 13, 2: 259–283.
- [7] [11] D. Chandralal, *Sinhala*. John Benjamin, 2010.
- [8] W. S. Karunatilake, *Historical phonology of Sinhala: from old Indo-Aryan to the 14th century A.D.* S. Godage. Colombo, 2001.
- [12] J. B. Disanayaka, *National languages of Sri Lanka 1- Sinhala*. Department of Cultural Affairs: Sri Lanka, 1976.
- [13] C. D. Senarathne, *Sinhala- English code mixing in Sri Lanka: sociolinguistic study*. LOT: Netherlands, 2009.

#### AUTHOR BIO



Dr. Rohini Chandrica Widyalandara received her Ph.D. and M.Phil. degrees in Linguistics from University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. She read for her M. Ed. in TESL and Diploma in TESP at the University of Manchester, UK under the Hornby Trust Award granted by the British Council. Currently she is a Senior Lecturer at the English Language Teaching Unit, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

E mail: [rdhrcw@yahoo.com](mailto:rdhrcw@yahoo.com)

