

English for the World

DELT 21512



Lesson 02: Sri Lankan English



In this lesson students will be able to:

- Read texts on features of Sri Lankan English
- Make notes on standard and non-standard variety
- Appreciate and analyse short story in Sri Lankan English
- Paragraph writing with topic sentences

muscat
gobbaya
Cracked
muffler
rastiadu
kabal
bibili
Bioscope
patas
giddify
golaya
Bakala
kichbichify
mallung
maru

Video 1

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9pRfd_j2D4

Activity 1

Given below are some English expressions which are commonly used in Sri Lanka.

Do you think that the given expressions are accurate? Share your views with the class.

I look forward to meet you

Every Tom, Dick and Harry will come and stay here

I can't be telling you hundred and one times

My arm is paining!!!

Can you on the AC?

Now... the thing is...

She passed out from Peradeniya last year

He went to different different countries during his internship

I am going to buy some shorteats, you want?

So what's the latest?



Sri Lankan English (SLE)

- Sri Lankan English (SLE) belongs to the family of **South Asian Englishes**.
- English is the **third language** of Sri Lanka after Sinhala and Tamil, and is spoken as a first language by **a small but significant** minority of the population.
- The variety of English spoken by this group is generally referred to as **Standard Sri Lankan English**.



Activity 02

Read the following passage and answer the questions given in the next slide.

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** on by the immense power of English in today's postcolonial Sri Lanka. English is power, and those who wield power have access to English. This is not to suggest that those in power are fluent in English, but they have more access to speakers of English than the majority of users in Sri Lanka.

In 21st century Sri Lanka, access to English is akin to being born with a silver spoon in one's mouth. It is the language of **upward mobility**, and the privileged in society are those whose home language is English. Without English, to some extent, wealth and power are meaningless in Sri Lankan society. A former President of Sri Lanka, Ranasinghe Premadasa, supposedly studied English in adulthood to make himself more **eligible** for public office; in the same way that Margaret Thatcher polished her English to be more eligible to lead her party. In the words of the **sociolinguist** Braj Kachru (1986:1), "English initiates one into the caste that has power and, more important, that controls vital knowledge about the miracles of Science and technology."

(The Postcolonial Identity of Sri Lankan English- Manique Guneseckera)

1. Why are Sri Lankan people not interested in the variety of English they speak?
2. Why is English considered a ‘power’?
3. Explain the status of English in Sri Lanka in the 21st century.
4. What reasons have caused the two significant figures mentioned in the text to study English in their adulthood?

Standard and non- Standard Sri Lankan English

- Among the Sri Lankan English speakers there are two categories of Sri Lankan English as standard Sri Lankan English (SSLE) and non standard Sri Lankan English.
- The non standard variety is also called '**not-pot English**' which is not a politically correct term
- The difference between these two varieties is mainly based on the pronunciation differences (phonological differences)
- SSLE pronunciation is closer to the pronunciation of standard British English

- The SSLE phonology is influenced by the Sinhala or Tamil Languages as most of the speakers are bilingual
- Non standard Sri Lankan English is a marker of social class as it shows that the speaker is more familiar with Sinhala or Tamil rather than English.
- The SSLE speakers have more linguistic privilege, than the non standard English speakers.

Phonological features of SLE

- **Phonology** is the **study of sounds** in a language, and phonological features are the unique characteristics of the **pronunciation** of a particular language.

Word	Standard British English pronunciation	Sri Lankan English pronunciation
1. H <u>a</u> ll	/a/	/o/
2. Hu <u>s</u> band	/z/	/s/
3. A <u>s</u> ia	/zh/	/sh/
4. Ne <u>p</u> hew	/v/	/f/
5. Ce <u>a</u> se	/z/	/s/
6. <u>F</u> ish	/f/	/p/

Characteristics of SSLE and Non- standard Sri Lankan English

- Even though SSLE speakers' pronunciation is closer to the standard British pronunciation there are certain phonological differences in their pronunciation as well which are influenced by their mother tongue.

Ex.

1. The pronunciation of the vowel sounds in words like Gate/ boat
2. in words like measure, pleasure and treasure /ʒ/ sound is replaced with /ʃ/

- Non standard Sri Lankan English speakers also tend to have phonological differences which are influenced by their first language and they also tend to confuse certain sounds with others

1. tend to confuse the 'o' sounds in the words 'hall' and 'hole'
2. overuse the sound /ɔ/ in words like phone and yogurt
3. confuse the /P/ and /f/ sounds in words like profit and pharmacy
4. unable to pronounce consonant clusters and therefore add a vowel to the front of the word – school/ smile/ stable
5. confuse the 's' and 'sh' sounds in words like seat, sheet, cell
6. use 's' sound instead of 'z' in words like /Zoo/

Morphological features of SLE

- **Morphology** is the **study of words**, how they are formed, and their relationship to other words in the same language, and morphological features are the unique characteristics of the words of a particular language.
- Some morphological features found in SLE are:
 - 1) Borrowings
 - 2) Reduplication

1) Borrowings

- Borrowings refer to words that are borrowed (loaned) from another language.
- In SLE, often **Sinhala/Tamil words are borrowed** and directly used instead of the English counterpart.

Eg:

- I will call *amma* (mother) and get her permission.
- She wore a low *konde* (hair-bun).
- Would you like some *kiribath* (milkrice)?
- Your mother's *thosai* is delicious.

2) Reduplication

Reduplication is a unique feature of Sri Lankan English where adjectives and nouns are often **repeated to provide emphasis**.

Eg:

- I brought you some **hot hot** bread straight from the oven.
- You shouldn't worry about such **small small** things.
- They are going to have some **big big** problems if they don't fix it now.

Syntactic features of SLE

- **Syntax** is the set of rules that govern the **sentence structure** in a given language, usually including word order. Syntactic features are the unique characteristics of the sentence structure of a particular language.
- Some syntactic features of SLE are:
 1. Use of tags
 2. Verb/ pronoun deletion
 3. Topicalization

1) Use of tags

Question tags are often used to **turn a statement into a question**. They are frequently used for checking information that we think we know is true. Often in Standard British English, we use question tags as follows:

Eg:

- They do live in Kandy, don't they?
- It was cold yesterday, wasn't it?

In Sri Lankan English, tags such as ***noh*** and ***neh*** are used instead:

- They do live in Kandy, noh?
- It was cold yesterday, neh?

2) Verb/ pronoun deletion (elision)

This is a feature often found in Sri Lankan English speech (colloquial). When speaking in Sri Lankan English, the speaker sometimes **omits the verb of the sentence**

Standard British English	Sri Lankan English
From where <u>are we</u> to get the money?	From where to get the money?
Please <u>wait</u> one minute.	One minute please.

In colloquial Sinhala, the verb alone is sufficient for question formation.

Similarly, in colloquial Sri Lankan English, **the pronoun** is often omitted in speech.

Standard British English	Sri Lankan English
So, how are <u>you</u> ?	So how?
Did <u>you</u> pass?	Passed?

3) Topicalization

In this Sri Lankan English syntactic feature, the main topic of the sentence is brought forward with the verb-phrase following it.

The **normal subject-verb-object** order of Standard British English is **reversed** here.

Eg:

Standard British English	Sri Lankan English
It was all beautifully arranged.	All beautifully arranged, it was.
They are very busy.	Very busy, they are.
She is a really nice person.	A really nice person, she is.

Postcolonial Literature in Sri Lankan English

- Postcolonial writings in Sri Lankan English have played a significant role in representing Sri Lanka and conveying ‘*Sri Lankanness*’ in an international arena, especially through the means of morphological and syntactic features.
- Some writers, such as Carl Muller, are boldly employing ‘Not Pot’ English to convey their thematic concerns while others refuse to use it in their texts; thus rejecting their own class and social identities.
- In Carl Muller’s *The Jam Fruit Tree*, it should be also noted that non-standard English is used with the characters, who do not belong to the upper English speaking class, hence directly linking the text to the social concern of classism.

Activity 04

Read the following extract from *The Jam Fruit Tree* by Carl Muller and identify 05 features of Sri Lankan English.

again. Even when de Jong would pop his head over the fence and say, ‘Hullo, Merrill, haven’t seen you for a long time,’ Merrill would go quite red and lower his eyes and mutter something about being busy. No one could fathom why, and even Papa Werkmeister would say: ‘Such a nice chap, that de Jong. Very fond of children. Don’t know why he doesn’t think of getting married.’

Elaine told Sonnaboy: ‘*Anney*, I don’t know about all this. You promised to marry me, no? Everybody knows this, and you gave ring also—’

‘That’s all right. You can keep ring if you like. Only what I’m saying is that this Beryl is whom I want to marry.’

‘But you said, no? that she is very young and her mama won’t allow. All foolishness, I think. Having me and here I am doing everything you like and all these months you’re coming and everybody knows that we

will get married and all. Supposing you cannot marry this Beryl? Now you are promoted also. I thought we can get married soon. Instead of which you are telling something else.'

'But what to do, Elaine, this Beryl is—is —don't know, men, not like you at all. When I saw her I felt like something. You keep the ring, never mind. You can get any other fellow.'

Language Focus

Structuring Paragraphs

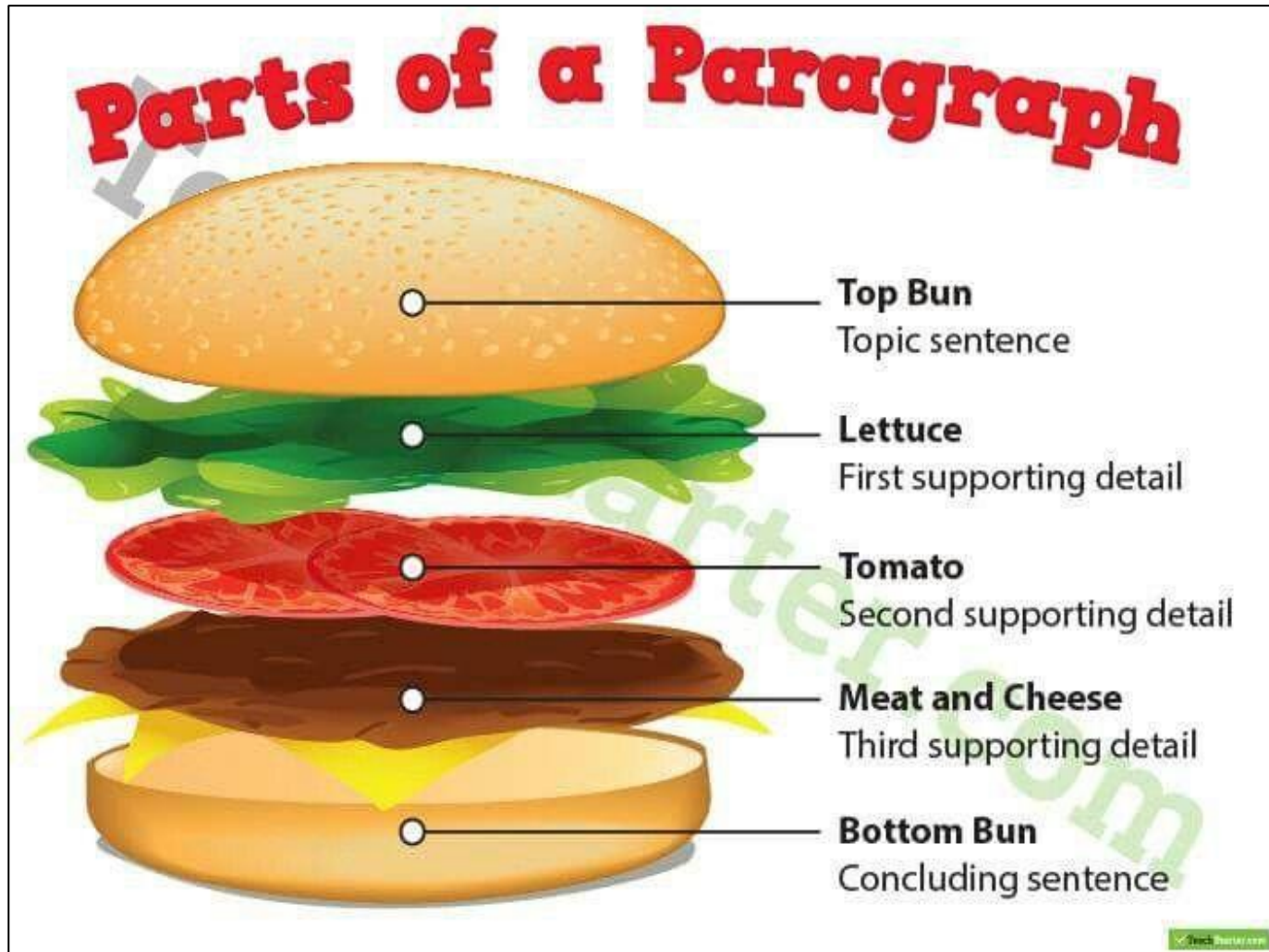
□ *What is a Paragraph?*

- A paragraph is a group of sentences that fleshes out a single idea.
- In order for a paragraph to be effective, it must begin with:
 - ❖ A topic sentence
 - ❖ Have sentences that support the main idea of that paragraph
 - ❖ Maintain a consistent flow

-Monmouth University (2013)

- Follows the **introduction, body and conclusion** format.
- Highlights **one important or key fact** related to the topic.
- The **topic sentence** or the **very first sentence** of the paragraph gives out the **key point** discussed in the paragraph.
- **Supporting sentences** give out **more details** about the key points discussed
- The **concluding sentence**, or the **last sentence** gives out **a message** and **connects** to the next paragraph

A paragraph is like a burger



Example 1



Topic Sentence: it states the main idea of the paragraph.

The most important problem in our city is its poor public transportation system. Thousands of residents rely on the city's buses and taxis to travel throughout this large city, while the Metro Transportation System's daily schedules are totally unreliable. A bus or taxi that should arrive at 7:45 may not arrive until 8:00 or later. Moreover, it is not unusual for a bus driver to pass up groups of people waiting for the bus because he wants to make up for lost time. Unfortunately, people often end up going to work late or missing important appointments. **In order for people to get to their destinations on time, people must allow for waiting time at the bus and taxis stops.**

Concluding Sentence

Supporting Sentences

Activity 05

Read the following sentences and identify the type of message/ data it provides from the boxes below.

- a) The Romans were the first people to build a bridge near the position of today's Tower Bridge.
- b) London has been the English capital for over 1,000 years.
- c) For instance, over 500 years ago the area below the bridge had become a major river port for ships trading with Europe.
- d) Its dominance is due to its strategic site near the lowest crossing point of the River Thames.
- e) For many centuries it has been the centre of the country's economic, cultural and social life.

Topic	Restatement	Reason	Example	Information
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Cohesive Devices (Sentence Connectors)

- Cohesive devices are used to express relationships between ideas and to combine sentences.
- With words or phrases, sentence connectors help you to carry over a thought.

To show order of ideas	To compare ideas	To show difference / contrast	To add more information	To give examples	To show result	To give a conclusion
First	Equally	However	Furthermore	For example	As a result	Finally
Second	Similarly	Nevertheless	In addition	For instance	Therefore	In conclusion
Next	Likewise	On the contrary	Moreover	To illustrate	Consequently	To conclude
Then	Comparatively	Yet	Further	Namely	For that reason	To summarize

Activity 06

Fill in each blank with **first**, **next**, **then**, or **finally**.
Some transitions may fit into more than one blank.

It is easy to make a telephone call if you follow these simple directions. To make the call, _____ you must know the telephone number you are dialing. _____ pick up the phone and listen for the dial tone. _____ you can start dialing the telephone number. If the person answers the phone, begin speaking. If an answering machine clicks on, wait for the beep and record your message. _____ hang up the phone when you have finished your call.

Sri Lankan English: A dialect worth learning

Sri Lankan English is part of the local dialect, a knowledge of which will help the visitor understand and communicate with ease.

One
hundred
thousand
is a **lakh**

Almirah
is a
wardrobe

Aubergine
and **eggplant**
is **Brinjal**
in Sri Lanka

Baila is an **infectious dance music** inherited from the Portuguese

Tooting the horn is a single verb known as **Horning**

To let
somebody
down is
to give a
Dead-rope

Rather than
stressing something
with an '**of course**', we
would say
Otherwise

A group
of friends, family
or people is
lovingly known as
a **jingbang**

To come at
one's leisure is
to **come quietly**

Plain Tea is
tea without milk
in Sri Lanka

A **rice-puller** is any **dish**
that makes **food tastier** for
consumption

A **palm civet**
is a **pole cat**

Tube-light is a
fluorescent light

Frangipani
is **Temple Flower**