# Contact Language Influence on Sri Lankan English Prepositional Verbs

M.D.S. S. Kumara[1]

## Abstract

*Although English has quasi-official status in Sri Lanka as a link language, average user of Sri Lankan English (SLE) seems to still have doubts regarding the standards and norms of SLE. In order to empower the SLE user, adequate description or codification of SLE is vital. To this end, a research gap is found particularly in empirical investigations of SLE grammar. The present paper investigates a grammatical feature of SLE, Prepositional Verbs (PVs), using written language data from two standard corpora representing SLE, British English, and Indian English. The paper also aims at tracing possible contact effects from Sinhala and Tamil on the creation of innovative PVs in SLE because English has been in contact with these contact languages in Sri Lanka for over 200 years. Analysis of the data from the two corpus environments using corpus access software (concordancers) results in several PVs that show significant frequency of occurrence in SLE compared to the other two varieties. Out of these, the creation of 'enrol for/in' as opposed to 'enrol at', 'teach for' as opposed to 'teach', and 'inquire from' as opposed to 'inquire of' seems to have been influenced by the equivalents of these PVs available in Sinhala and Tamil. However, the use of 'educate on' in place of 'educate about', 'participate at' in place of 'participate in', and 'employ at' in place of 'employ in' shows an opposite tendency, which may be a result of (over) application of 'learnt' rules, which can be attributed to the primarily educational acquisition contexts of SLE.*

### Keywords

[1] DELT-Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, skmenikpure@gmail.com

## Introduction

According to the constitution of Sri Lanka (1978), English is 'the link language', whereas Sinhala and Tamil are official languages (Article 18) (Constitution, n.d.). Additionally, Article 22 of the constitution, elaborating the functions of English in administration, states the citizens' right to function in English on a par with either Sinhala or Tamil. However, as Fernando, S. (2010) states, English was used in Sri Lanka as "the old weapon of social oppression- 'English as the marker of a multifaceted socio-psychological cultural package of social exclusion'- whenever and wherever possible to scare away other socially mobile persons from displaying their English-speaking competencies in public." This may be why successive governments have been taking steps to bring English to the reach of the average Sri Lankan, as observed by Bernaisch (2015) regarding campaigns like *Speak English Our Way*:

"It is particularly noteworthy in this context that, although equipping the Sri Lankan workforce with adequate English skills to make it more productive in a competitive international market certainly is an overarching motive for the campaigns, the distinct identity of SLE, which has been largely neglected in the past, is also addressed." (p. 52)

Thus, recognising the distinct identity of SLE on a par with other varieties of 'New Englishes' such as Indian English, Singapore English, and even Australian English, for that matter, will create a sense of belonging in the present day SLE user who would, in turn, view English not as an instrument of social exclusion and oppression but as an instrument of communication and employment. This will also help expel myths about SLE such as: it's substandard English, it's being promoted for the underprivileged masses, and it will make us unintelligible to the rest of the world (cf. Fernando, D., 2010, p. 126). This, in turn, will help in 'Value Creation' in the devalued our own variety of English, SLE, which is, doubtlessly, needed for 'Sustainable Development' as fearless use of English is needed for the present-day workforce of Sri Lanka.

In order to empower the SLE user, adequate description or codification of SLE is vital. So far, this has mainly been done in SLE phonology and morphology. Comparatively, SLE grammar has been paid less attention to. One reason for such a less focus on the grammar of 'New Englishes' is that grammar tends to be much more stable and resistant to change comparatively. As Schneider (2007) points out, when grammatical innovations do emerge, they start out at the intersection of grammar and lexis. The present paper studies such area in the lexis-grammar interface of SLE, preposition use, with special reference to verb-preposition combinations or 'Prepositional Verbs (PVs)' in SLE. According to Quirk et al (1985, p.1155), 'A prepositional verb consists of a lexical verb followed by a preposition with which it is semantically and/or syntactically associated.' As it should be obvious, the major focus is on innovative or hitherto unrecorded PVs. Further, as Mendis and Rambukwella

(2010) observe, all speakers of SLE today are bilingual and some are trilingual. In bilingual language processing, one language exerting influence on the other (and vice versa) is inevitable. Therefore, the present paper also attempts to investigate whether the use of these innovative PVs in SLE has been influenced by the contact languages of SLE, Sinhala and Tamil.

As Parakrama (1995, p.34) observes, much of the writings on SLE have been based on random examples and personal experience. Therefore, 'the findings of linguists remain more impressionistic than necessary, and even the acceptability of the few cited examples is contested' (ibid). Baker (2010, p.94) also points out that 'humans do not always make accurate introspective judgments regarding language, instead relying on cognitive and social biases'. In contrast, corpus methods rely on 'real-world instances of language use in order to derive rules or explore trends about the ways in which people actually produce language' (ibid). Additionally, as Mukherjee (2012, p.202) shows, large-scale corpora of SLE provide a systematic way of describing SLE which is not only 'empirically sound' and 'linguistically plausible' but also 'socio-culturally and politically acceptable', in light of 'the current debate on language standards and norms in Sri Lanka'. Therefore, the present study is primarily corpus-based.

## Literature review

As early as in 1955, Passé described features of 'Ceylon English', which he called 'translation errors', 'all instances of translation from the local languages into English' (p.14). These included PVs such as *ask from, fool with, play out, smile with, describe about,* and *discuss about.* Halverson (1966), while calling the features such as those described by Passé (1955), 'dialectical peculiarities' instead of 'errors', incorporated influence from Tamil in addition to that from Sinhala. He pointed out that *play out* 'trick a person out of' cannot be a translation of Sinhala /ṭattu kərənəva/ 'make a touch' as Passé states because there is no correspondence between 'play' and 'touch', but a better equivalent could be Tamil /vileja:di po:tton/, or /keliya/ 'harmed' in 'low' Sinhala. Thus, both Passé and Halverson have not systematically analyzed the linguistic systems of the contact languages.

Gunesekera (2005) mentions three PVs in SLE as cases of 'overuse of prepositions', which occur both in speech and writing: *pose off, sit for,* and *cope up with.* She states that these examples were considered errors initially, but they seem to be now part of the language. Meyler (2007) marked the first dictionary of SLE, which is an important milestone in the evolution of SLE. This dictionary contains approximately 2,500 examples of SLE lexical and grammatical items. It provides dictionary entries for over 100 instances of innovative PVs with a distinctive semantic identity and/or different PVs including a dropped or added preposition, which are used in SLE. Fernando (2007) conducted an acceptability study (mostly among teachers of English) and found that there is a high acceptance

of some distinctively SLE PVs, and also that there is a collective sense of what is acceptable and not acceptable. The PVs she studied include additions such as *cope up, bear up, take (it) up,* and *pose off*; substitutions such as *pass off, blow off, throw out,* and *look at*; semantic changes/extensions such as *pass out,* and *get up*; and coinages such as *come down,* and *fall into.*

With the introduction of computer corpus projects such as International Corpus of English (ICE) (Greenbaum, 1996) – Sri Lankan component, and South Asian Varieties of English Corpora (SAVE) (Bernaish et al., 2011) – Sri Lankan component, an increasing number of studies on SLE, with special emphasis on lexico-grammar, have appeared. Mukherjee (2008), and Mukherjee (2012), for example, illustrated how corpus-based extraction of distinctive lexico-grammatical features 'can help to put the description and codification of the standard variant of Sri Lankan English on an empirical footing' (Mukherjee, 2012: 207). Kumara and Mendis (2010) categorized SLE specific phrasal verbs found in SAVE-SL, drawing on Meyler (2007). Mendis and Rambukwella (2010) also make references to PVs based on standard corpora data of SLE. Mendis (2010), while recognizing a stronger local flavor in the use of PVs such *as pass out, put on (weight),* and *cope up with* in more informal genres of writing, states that the use of some of these PVs would be considered errors or examples of non-standard use by English Language Teaching (ELT) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) practitioners nevertheless. Bernaish (2015) also provides quantitative corpus linguistic insights into SLE at lexical, and lexico-grammatical level, including PVs with *up, out* and *off* as prepositions. The foregoing review of the treatments on preposition use in the previous studies of SLE depicts that the studies so far have been limited either because they are impressionistic, e.g.: Passé (1995), Halverson (1966); or incomprehensive e.g.: Gunesekera (2005). Additionally, these studies have not comprehensively evaluated the effects of contact phenomena in the emergence of innovations in the area of preposition use in SLE.

## Methodology

### Selection of prepositions for analysis

Meanings expressed by English prepositions are expressed in the two contact languages of SLE - Sinhala and Tamil - both by postpositions and case markers. Thus, certain meanings expressed by the English preposition *for* are represented in Sinhala by the Sinhala dative suffix /tə/ and in Tamil by the Tamil dative suffix [kku]; similarly, some meanings expressed by the English preposition *from* are denoted by the Sinhala ablative case suffix /(g)en/ and Tamil ablative case marker [iruntu], and some meanings expressed by the English preposition *with* are represented by the Sinhala 'auxiliary' (Gunasekara, 2002, pp. 91-92) case suffix /-n/ and Tamil 'sociative' (Lehmann, 1989, p. 37) case markers [ooṭu] and [uṭʌn]. Additionally, certain meanings expressed by the English preposition *for*

are represented by the Sinhala postposition /sʌd̃əha:/ and Tamil (bound) postposition [a:kə]; meanings of *from* by the Sinhala postposition /sitə/ and /veṯin/ and Tamil postposition [mutʌl] and [viṯṯu]; and meanings of *with* by the Sinhala postposition /sʌməgə/ and Tamil postpositions [mu:lʌm] and [koṇṯu]. Because of this two way lexicalisation of these prepositions by the local languages, it was hypothesized that the three prepositions – *for, from,* and *with* - would go into combinations with verbs significantly in SLE, and they were selected for analysis.

In addition to these three prepositions, two other prepositions were selected as controls: the first out of the two is *about*, of which a one-to-one equivalent does not play a role as a case suffix in Sinhala or Tamil. However, it does have postposition equivalents both in Sinhala - /gænə/ or /pilibʌd̃ə/ - and in Tamil – [paṟṟi]. The second control preposition is *at*, which does not have either a case marker equivalent or a one-to-one postposition equivalent historically in Sinhala or Tamil for most of its meanings from the point of view of the local language dominant bilingual SLE user. As almost all contemporary users of SLE are bilinguals, who bring English into contact with the other language(s) in their mind, it was hypothesized that the incidence and frequency of use of PVs with *about* will be fewer than those with *for, from,* and *with*, and it will be even less with those with *at*.

## Corpus environments

The present investigation is primarily corpus-based. A *corpus* (plural *corpora*), which is a computer-readable collection of texts or transcribed speech representative of a language, can basically be used to get information on frequencies of words, and phrases. Corpus access software, or concordancers, is 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. However, the present paper does not attempt to distinguish between SLE and IndE in terms of contact language influence, primarily because contact languages of SLE are also from the main language families of the contact languages of IndE.

The first type of written language corpora of the present study's corpus environment is from the written parts of the respective components of ICE, namely Sri Lankan component (ICE-SL), Great Britain component (ICE-GB), and Indian Component (ICE-Ind). ICE corpora provide comparable language data from each variety with a high level of representativeness covering a wide range of genres. Each written component of the ICE consists of approximately 400,000 words. The second type of written corpora used in the analysis is a large online database recently made available. It is 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 online newspapers and blogs) in 20 different English-speaking countries. The relevant components to the present study contain 46,583,115 words of SLE (GloWbE-SL), 96,430,888 words of IndE (GloWbE-Ind), and 387,615,074 words of BE (GloWbE-Gb). This large database is useful in detecting those innovative features of SLE which are low-frequency phenomena.

## Data analysis

ICE corpora data were analyzed using the concordancer, Wordsmith Tools-Version 5 (Scott, 2008), with the five selected prepositions as the search word and verbs occurring with it at positions 01, 02, and 03 to the left of it (L1, L2, and L3) as collocates in all three written components. In order to exclude adverbial combinations, all concordance lines were manually read. The frequencies of the selected concordances were normalized to 1 million words because the word count of each ICE component is not exactly the same. Selected PVs in the three ICE components were, then, categorized as *recorded*, *partly-recorded*, and *unrecorded* based on the combinations' extent of availability in the online dictionaries indexed at *Onelook dictionary search* <http://www.onelook.com/>. If the combinations are not recorded in any of the online dictionaries indexed at *Onelook dictionary search*, they were categorized under *unrecorded*. If the combinations are available in a wide range of dictionary sites indexed at *Onelook dictionary search*, including Oxford, Cambridge, Collins, or Macmillan, they were categorised under *recorded*. If they are not recorded in any of the above dictionary sites, but recorded only in the online *The Free Dictionary*, they were categorised under *partly-recorded*. From the *unrecorded* PVs, those that occur 05 or more times in ICE-SL were considered for evaluating contact language influence. Additionally, as ICE corpora are comparatively small in size, *unrecorded* PV types selected through the analysis of ICE corpora data were searched in GloWbE corpora using its online interface as the concordancer under individual scholar license. With GloWbE, the verb (lemma) was used as the search term, and the selected prepositions as the first collocate to the right of the verb lemma. The frequencies of these PV types in GloWbE corpora were normalized to 100 million words, and those that hit over 100 normalized counts of the raw frequencies in SL component but lesser in the two other GloWbE components were manually read in order to exclude adverbial combinations.

## Results

### Significant unrecorded PVs in ICE-SL

Analysis of ICE corpora data resulted in the following *unrecorded* PVs that hit over 05 tokens only in ICE-SL data: 'adopt for', 'enrol for', 'sit for', 'amend with', 'deposit with', 'gift with', 'remain

with', 'prepare from', and 'educate about'. Although there are also combinations with the preposition'at', such as 'situate at', and 'estimate at', they do not qualify to be PVs because their prepositional objects refer to adverbial references such as place, rate etc. Out of the significant PVs in ICE-SL, 'sit for' has been described in Kumara (2014) and Kumara (2018); from the others, two PVs that are significant in SLE in a contact linguistic perspective are presented below. Other PVs, in spite of their having one-to-one preposition equivalents in Sinhala and Tamil, do not suggest strong contact language effects on their creation.

*Enrol for*

The PV 'enrol for' occurs 05 times in ICE-SL data and once in ICE-GB data. Cross-checking with GloWbE corpora data revealed that the combination hits over 100 occurrences per hundred million words in both SLE and IndE data (120 and 131 hits respectively), whereas in BE data it occurs only 25times per hundred million words. The three prepositions that collocate with [enrol] at R1 position in the entire GloWbE corpus most frequently are 'in', 'at', and 'for'in the descending order of frequency. Thus, 'enrol for' appears to be a case of 'replacing the preposition' of competing structures such as 'enrol in' and 'enrol at'. Therefore, normalised frequencies of the combinations 'enrol in', and 'enrol at' in GloWbE were also calculated and the counts for all three combinations were worked out as a percentage of the normalised frequencies of the total occurrences of the verb lemma [enrol] as shown in Figure 1 below. Data in Figure 1 shows, 'enrol for' shows a significant percentage of occurrence in the two new varieties of English compared to that in BE (over twice as much as that in BE) unlike 'enrol at' and 'enrol in'. For 'enrol in' too the figures are higher in the new varieties, but the differences are not as marked. For 'enrol at', the count is higher in BE, albeit marginally.
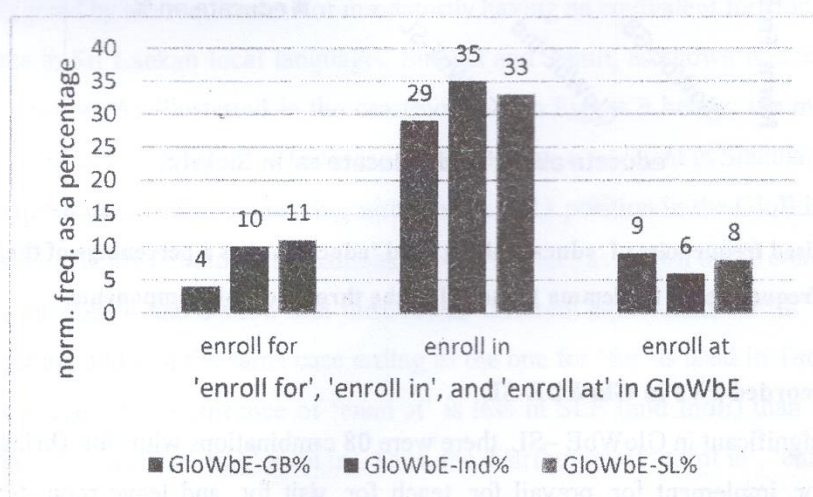


**Figure 1. Normalised frequencies of 'enrol for', 'enrol in' and 'enrol at' as a percentage of normalised frequencies of [enrol] in the three GloWbE corpora.**

*Educate about*

'Educate about' also occurs 05 times in the ICE-SL written component, but it does not occur in ICE-GB or ICE-Ind. The normalised frequencies of this PV in GloWbE-SL, GloWbE-Ind, and GloWbE-GB are 62, 57, and 51 respectively. The meaning of this PV resembles the meaning 1.2 of 'educate, v' given in Oxford Dictionaries online, 'give (someone) training in or information on (about*[1]) a particular field' (Educate, n.d), and it is expressed using the PV 'educate on' as well. The normalised frequency counts for the latter PV in GloWbE components are 73, 43, and 29 in the respective order as in 'educate about'; thus the differences in frequency between SLE and BE data seem more marked in 'educate on'. As the normalised frequencies of the lemma [educate] itself differ among the GloWbE components, the frequencies of 'educate about' and 'educate on' were worked out as a percentage of the lemma frequency, and the percentages are shown in Figure 2. As the figure shows, the percentage occurrence of 'educate about' is highest in GloWbE-GB, while GloWbE-Ind records the next highest, and GloWbE-SL the lowest. For 'educate on', the trend is the other way around, with GloWbE-SL recording the highest and GloWbE-GB the lowest.
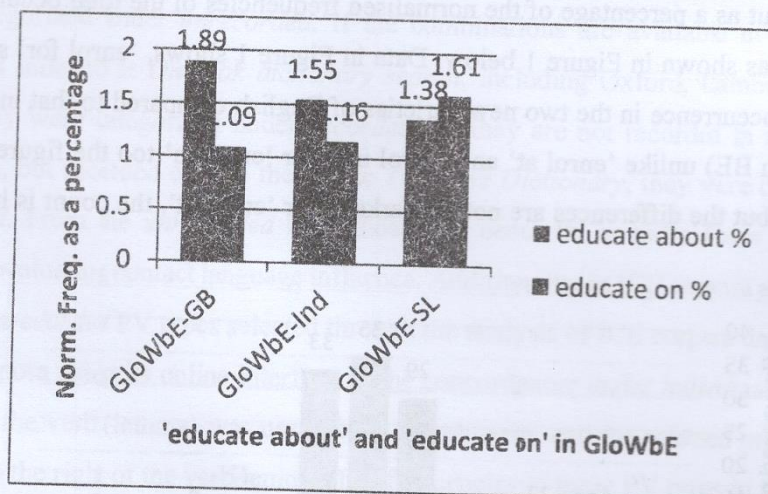


Figure 2. Normalised frequencies of 'educate about' and 'educate on' as a percentage of the normalised frequencies of the lemma [educate] in the three GloWbE components.

## Significant unrecorded PVs in GloWbE-SL

Among the PVs significant in GloWbE –SL, there were 08 combinations with 'for' (bring for, detain for, go abroad for, implement for, prevail for, teach for, visit for, and leave room for); 07 with

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[1]Addition in parentheses is mine

'with'(affect with, arise with, function with, practise with, take place with, construct with, and fall with); and 02 each with 'from' (translate from, and inquire from); and 'at' (employ at, and participate at), which are twice as frequent in GloWbE-SL as GloWbE-GB. Out of these, none of the combinations with 'with' show significant contact language influence. In most of them, instrumental case markers or postpositions are available in Sinhala and Tamil as equivalents of 'with', which may have supported the higher frequency of these PVs in SLE data. However, there is no evidence to suggest that local language habits of the SLE user necessitate him/her to opt to these PNs, for example, over a competing PV or a simplex verb. Among the significant PVs with 'for', 'teach for' shows contact language influence. In others, the preposition 'for' refers mainly to the 'purpose' of the action, and in spite of having one-to-one local language equivalents, there is no strong evidence to claim contact language influence for them to become distinctive in SLE. From the two PVs with 'from' that have significance of occurrence in GloWbE-SL, 'translate from' is used in the same way it is used in BE data, but 'inquire from' shows signs of contact language influence. The two PVs with 'at'- 'employ at' and 'participate at'- are also described below as instances of employing a learnt 'rule' against the lexical choice presented through contact languages, similar to the instance of 'educate about/on' presented in the preceding sub-section. However, page limit restrictions of the present paper do not warrant detailed descriptions about frequency details of these PVs significant in GloWbE-SL and their competing structures.

## Discussion

The significant occurrence of 'enrol for' in SLE (and IndE) shown in the preceding section may have been triggered by the requirement of mandatorily having an equivalent for 'for' in the corresponding structures in Sri Lankan local languages, Sinhala and Tamil, as shown in constructions 1 and 2 in Figure 3 below. As illustrated in the construction 3 in Figure 3 below, the most frequent PV with 'enrol' in GloWbE, 'enrol in', also finds a corresponding equivalent in Sinhala. However, the second most frequent preposition collocating with 'enrol' at R1 position in the GloWbE corpora, 'at', finds its translation equivalent to be the same as the one for 'in', as shown in the construction 5. Similarly, the constructions 4 and 6 show that there are no different equivalents for 'at' and 'in' in Tamil for this structure, and that the same case ending as the one for 'for' is used in Tamil. This may be why the percentage total occurrence of 'enrol at' is less in SLE (and IndE) than that in BE (Figure.1) unlike that in 'enrol for' and 'enrol in'. Thus, the distribution of 'enrol in', 'enrol at', and 'enrol for' in SLE seems to have been triggered by the availability (or non-availability) of local language equivalents for the meanings expressed by the relevant prepositions.

1. Sinhala: /ʌamun kihipəɟenek riʃvəviɟia:lə aɟia:pənəjə saɟiəha: ɖe lija:paɖintʃivija/
   Gloss: children    a few    university  education   for   also   enrolled
   SLE:    A few children also **enrolled** **for** university education

2. Tamil: [Õrucila māṇavarkaḷ    palkalaikalakattukku uḷvāṅkapp aṭṭaṇar]
   Gloss: a few    children    university education for  **enrolled**
   SLE:    A few children **enrolled** **for** university education

3. Sinhala: /vivurtə viʃvəviɟia:ləjehi lija:paɖintʃivənə sisun/
   Gloss:    open university   **in**  **enrolling**   students
   SLE:     Students enrolling in the open university

4. Tamil: [Tiṟanta palkalaikalakattiṟku māṇavarkaḷ cērkkappaṭukiṟārkaḷ]
   Gloss: open     university    **for**  students   **enrolling**
   SLE:   Students **enrolling** in the open university

5. Sinhala: /vivurtə viʃvəviɟia:ləjehi lija:paɖintʃivi:mətə perə/
   Gloss:    open university   **in**  **enrolling**  before
   SLE:    Before **enrolling** at the Open University

6. Tamil: [Tiṟanta palkalaikalakattiṟku terivāvataṟku muṉpu]
   Gloss:    open university    **for**  **enrolling**  before
   SLE:   Before **enrolling** at the Open University

**Figure 3. Sinhala and Tamil equivalents of sample constructions for 'enrol for', 'enrol in', and 'enrol at' from GloWbE-SL.**

With regard to 'educate about' and 'educate on', the constructions 7 through 10 in Figure 4 below illustrate that the Sinhala and Tamil equivalents for both 'about' and 'on' are similar: /pilibʌɖ͂õvə/ in Sinhala (/gænə/ informally) and /paṟṟi/ in Tamil. In fact, they are more the direct equivalents of 'about' than that of 'on'. The comparative higher percentage frequency of 'educate on', which is not supported by the direct lexical choice in Sinhala and Tamil, in GloWbE-SL than that in GloWbE-GB suggests that influence of contact languages has not played a role in this instance. Instead, the preference of 'educated on' over 'educated about' in SLE data can be attributed to SLE's aquisitional contexts, which mainly include classroom learning as a second language. The meaning and the preposition choice of 'educate' in this structure show that, in the said meaning, the verb behaves as a 'non-prototypical disquisition verb' (Hartford, 1989, p.104), in which the Topic of the disquisition Land Mark (TLM) is coded with the lexicalized path (preposition) either 'about' or 'on'.

As hinted in the dictionary meaning of 'educate' above, 'on' may have been introduced as a preposition denoting *aboutness* (Mukherjee, 2010, p.225) to the SLE learner in teaching/learning situations, and through other inputs such as media. Whereas both the alternative with local language

lexical support – 'educate about' -, and the other *learnt* alternative – 'educate on'- are available in the *feature pool* (Mufwene, 2001, p. 4) for the SLE user, the latter alternative seems to have been preferred by the SLE user in this case.

7.  Sinhala /suləbʰə  rɔːgə gæɛnə ɟʒʌnəʈaːvə ɖænuvʌʈ kərʌnnə apəʈə puluvʌn/
    Gloss: common diseases **about** people          **educate**          we can
    SLE:   We can **educate** people **about** common diseases.

8.  Tamil: [Nāṅkaḷ camūka nōykaḷaip **parri** makkaḷukku **teḷivupaṭuttalām**]
    Gloss:      We common   diseases **about** people        **educate**
    SLE:   We can **educate** people **about** common diseases.

9.  Sinhala / paːrisərikə vipʌrjaːsə **pilibʌɡɔ̄və** paːsæl sisun ɖænuvʌʈ kere: /
    Gloss:  environmental change     **about**     School children **educated** are
    SLE:   School children are **educated on** environmental change.

10. Tamil: [  Cūḻal mārram    **parri** pāṭacālai māṇavarkaḷiṭku **karpikkappaṭukiṟatu**]
    Gloss: environmental change **about** School children          **educated** are
    SLE:   School children are **educated on** environmental change.

**Figure 4. Sinhala and Tamil equivalents of sample constructions for 'educate about', and 'educate on' from GloWbE-SL.**

Among the PVs having a significant frequency of occurrence in GloWbE-SL presented in the 'Results' section, 'teach for' shows contact language influence in that the case environments of its corresponding local language equivalents induce the SLE user to opt to the PV over its simplex verb alternative, 'teach'. Additionally, the preference of 'inquire from' in GloWbE-SL over 'inquire of', preferred in GloWbE-GB, is also motivated by the contact languages' preference to a preposition equivalent of 'from' over that of 'of'. However, the two PVs with 'at'- 'participate at' and 'employ at'- testify that phenomena other than contact language influence are also involved in the creation of PVs in SLE, just as in the case of 'educate about/on'. In addition to following the common trend in using [participate] with the preposition 'in', and other prepositions such as 'to' and 'for', all of which have lexical support in contact languages of SLE, 'participate at' is significantly used in SLE, perhaps, because the SLE user tends to (over) apply a 'learnt rule' regarding the use of 'at' to refer to 'events' etc. Similarly, in spite of the local language lexical support for 'employ in', SLE users seem to use 'employ at', following the learnt behaviour that 'at' is used to refer to specific places of employment.

## Conclusion

In sum, it can be concluded that as a result of long term contact of English with Sinhala and Tamil in bi/trilingual language processing of Sri Lankans, linguistic habits of the use of preposition equivalents in Sinhala and Tamil have exerted influence on the use of prepositions in combination with verbs in SLE. This was particularly made apparent in the detailed analysis of 'enrol for' and its two competing PVs. Two other PVs, 'teach for' and 'inquire from,' also show contact language influence on their creation although detailed analyses of them were not presented due to page limit restrictions. Additionally, data used in the study also testify that phenomena other than contact effects are also operative in the creation of PVs in SLE. Such a prominent phenomenon recognized to be operative is (over) application of 'learnt rules', which may have resulted in the primarily educational aquisitional contexts of SLE. Whereas the detailed analysis of 'educate about/on' illustrated this phenomenon, the PVs 'employ at' and 'participate at' also exemplify that. These 'learnt rules', in fact, represent 'the common core of established native varieties of English' (Mukherjee 2007:182), but as much of the data supportive of these combinations are from GloWbE, which consists of only web genres, more representative data, including data regarding acceptability, are required before their '(over) application' could be attributed to 'L2-internal creative autonomy' (ibid).

Finally, ICE components have been used in the present study as the more representative starting point to recognize the combinations, and GloWbE components have been used to test the combinations' significant presence in SLE data. However, this procedure has two main limitations for arriving at conclusive decisions about contact effects on SLE particle use: For one, GloWbE data, although advantageous in terms of corpus size, exclude very formal written genres such as research papers and printed books. Additionally, in the process of tracing contact effects, it is desirable to investigate which of the contact languages of SLE would exert salient effects on the creation of each of the combinations presented in the paper, for which first language backgrounds of the informants are needed. Available metadata in GloWbE are not sufficient for this purpose. Therefore, in order to further investigate the prevalence of the recognized combinations in a representative sample of SLE users, to study the acceptability levels of the combinations, and to evaluate the possible effect from each contact language on their creation, further investigations such as elicitation procedures are needed. Additionally, as suggested by the anonymous reviewer of the present paper, it is also necessary to delineate the distinction between the formal and informal uses of the SLE-PVs discussed in the paper in terms of genre and context. The suggested elicitation procedure, which is the next stage of the present study, will be used to address this necessity as well.

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