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***The Translation of Humour in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart***

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**Abstract**

This paper is an in-depth evaluation of the translation of humour in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, a novel which has been translated into the French Language as *Le monde s'effondre* by Michel Ligny. Since humour is an interesting and important aspect of human life, this paper examines the cultural, linguistic and semantic challenges posed in the translation of humour in a novel originating from a culture different from that of the translator. For translation to be judged effective and faithful, the sentiments evoked in the readers of the original texts must also be felt by the readers of the target texts. Adopting the Interpretive Approach, the paper reveals that Michel Ligny has demonstrated great understanding of the culture of the source text. The paper concludes that the translator has been faithful in the translation of humour in *Things Fall Apart*.

Keywords: Humour, Translation, Interpretive Approach

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## Introduction

Humour is an interesting aspect of human life and varies from culture to culture. Humour plays a very vital role in human society. Humour acts as the conveyor belt through which man's tension, frustrations, fears, apprehension, gloom and even grief, evaporate from his body. It must be stated here clearly that humour is not just an outlet for man's over-heated emotions and passions. It is also a medium through which people pass their time in excitement.

In contemporary societies, it is remarkable that men and women have taken humour to another level. We know of people both within the African societies as well as in the western world, who make a living out of humour. The Nigerian Television Programme "Night of a thousand laughs" is an apt example of humour that attracts income. The Afro-American comedian Bill Cosby achieved fame through a skilful handling of humour. We can say the same for programmes like "Mr. Bean", "Some Mothers do have them", "AY Live", "Mr. Bones", "Tom and Jerry" and the popular children series "Home Alone". Life would be gloomy without humour.

It is no gainsaying that humour does not only operate on the oral level. In written literature humour has continued to exist especially through comedies. Comedy is usually accentuated by laughter-inducing scenes, statements, and actions.

*Things Fall Apart*, which was published in 1958 was translated into French by Michel Ligny as *Le monde s'effondre* (1966). This novel, like Achebe's second novel *No Longer at Ease*, has been translated German, Italian, Spanish, Slovene, Russian, Hebrew, French, Czech and Hungarian. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* cannot be classified as a comedy. Nevertheless, even in tragedies and tra-comedies, humour is thrown in from time to time in order to lift the fog of sadness a bit.

In deciding on what translation technique to use for a given text, it is crucial for the translator to distinguish between meanings while keeping the purpose of the translation in mind. The purpose of translation, as summarised by Peter Newmark, (1991:45), political and humanistic. Politics and humanism form an integral part of any culture. By extension, cultural exchange is one of the basic functions of translation seeing that language is an element of culture. Thus, translating any text is a gradual phenomenon ranging from literal translation, which is a purely productive activity and not a creative one (Károly, K. 2008). De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:3) assert that in order to become communicative, texts must meet certain "standards of textuality". By "textuality" they mean the status of a linguistic entity or configuration of entities as a text of a natural language. Humour is very much present in *Things Fall Apart* and also helps in alleviating the heaviness of the tone of the story. Its adequate and acceptable translation into French should therefore be Michel Ligny's preoccupation as a translator.

## Background to the study: Scope and Types of Humour

Humour is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. However, for this paper, we are going to limit ourselves to four kinds of humour, namely: *jokes, satires, scatology* and *accidental humour*. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Low –Priced Edition (1984), defines a joke as *anything said or done to cause laughter or amusement; a person, thing or event that is laughed at and not taken seriously*. Nilsen and Nilsen (2000) identify four basic types of jokes: (a) the concealing of knowledge later revealed, (b) the substitution of one concept for another, (c) an unexpected conclusion to a logical progression, and ( d) the slipping-on-a-banana-peel.

Satire can be defined as a literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking towards it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn or indignation (Abrams, M.H. 2005:284).

Scatology is defined by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as “great interest in human bowels, bodily waste” etc. It is actually a word of Greek origin with the root “scato” which means “faeces” or “excrement”. [Odebunmi, A. and Ogunleye, K. 2003:244]. In the context of humour, scatology refers to jokes about bodily functions and the parts of the body not usually talked about in polite societies (Nilsen & Nilsen 2000:261).

Again, Nilsen & Nilsen (ibid:175) identify the following types of accidental humour: (a) creating new names for already existing eponyms e.g. PhD – piled higher and deeper.

There are some popular examples in the Nigerian society like

- (a) \* NEPA plc – Never Expect Power Always please light candle
  - \* IBB – International beg beg
  - \* ITT – International thief thief (these last two were coined by the deceased activist-juju musician, Fela Ransome Kuti).
  - \* OYO – on your own
  - \* IBO – I before others
  - \* WWW.com – women with wings come onto me.
  - \* OBAMA—ordinary black African managing America
- b. putting clipped forms or letters and numbers together and making them sound like words e.g. Alinco 4 u – Alinco for you.  
With the advent of ICT, this form of accidental humour has become very popular. Text messages on the GSM are generally written in this makeshift shorthand manner e.g. dnt 4get 2c me – don’t forget to see me.
- c. short and easy-to-read messages. Some allude to sexual intercourse e.g. nurses do it with care...
- d. pattern based on the idea of wind-up dolls e.g.  
The Elizabeth Taylor doll: wind it up and it wrecks two marriages.

The Frank Sinatra doll: wind it up and it chases another doll (Nilsen & Nilsen, Ibid:175).

It is interesting to note that all the four types of humour discussed can be found in *Things Fall Apart*.

### **The Translator as creator and reproducer**

In a functional approach to translation, great emphasis is laid on target language production of text and on the fact that the text in the target language should meet the expectations of the target readers as well as the textual requirements of the target culture (Jakobson (1993), Neubert (1985:18), Neubert and Steeve (1992:7), Snell-Hornby, Honig, Kusmaul and Schmidt (1998:58-60), Vincze (2004:29). One of the qualities of a good translator is that of creator.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a historical novel depicting the advent of the Europeans into Ibo culture and society. As producer and creator, Ligny needs to be well versed in the Ibo culture and history because in Thriveni's opinion (2001):

*Awareness of history is an essential requirement for the translator of a work coming from an alien culture.*

This is because the translator, through his/her translation communicates to an audience the translated intention of the original author (Newmark, 1991:115). This tallies with Levy's (1989:38) opinion that the objective of translating is to impart the knowledge of the original to the foreign reader. This is why the translator must guarantee that his utterance is a faithful representation of the original: that is, resembles it in relevant respects (Wilson and Sperber, 1986:137). So Ligny, in order to produce a viable and useful work, must be well grounded in the cultural, social and political realities that add up to what we call the background of the novel (Ojo-Ade, 1989:160). It is against this backdrop that we are going to assess Michel Ligny as creator and producer of *Things fall Apart* as *Le monde s'effondre*.

### **Evaluation of Michel Ligny's Translation of Humour in *Things fall Apart***

In this section, we shall take Achebe's version of each incident first and immediately after will come Ligny's version. For better evaluation, we have subdivided the humour under the four types of humour earlier mentioned in 1.2.

#### **Translation of Jokes**

- a. *(i)The story was always told of a wealthy man who set before his guests a mound of foo-foo so high that those who sat on one side could not see what was happening on the other, and it was not until late in the evening that one of them saw for the first time his in-law who had arrived during the course of the meal and had fallen to on*

*the opposite side. It was only then that they exchanged greetings and shook hands over what was left of the food (pg. 26).*

*On racontait toujours l'histoire d'un homme riche qui avait placé devant ses hôtes une si haute montagne de fofo que ceux qui étaient assis d'un côté ne pouvaient voir ce qui se passait de l'autre, et il fallut attendre jusque tard dans la soirée pour que l'un d'eux voie pour la première fois son frère par alliance qui était arrivé pendant le repas et s'était attablé du côté opposé. Ce fut alors seulement qu'ils échangèrent des congratulations et se serrèrent la main par-dessus ce qui restait de la nourriture (p. 50).*

The main activity of the translation here is that of transmission of culture. The practice of many people eating from the same dish at the same time is purely cultural and truly African. Ligny has successfully translated this cultural practice plus the humour of the extra-ordinary foo-foo into the target language.

- b. *"It is like the story of white men who, they say, are white like this piece of chalk" said Obierika. He held up a piece of chalk..." And these white men, they say, have no toes". "And have you never seen them?" asked Machi.*

*"Have you?" asked Obierika*

*"One of them passes here frequently"... "His name is Amadi". Those who knew Amadi laughed. He was a leper, and the polite name for leprosy was "the white skin" (pg. 51-52).*

*"C'est comme l'histoire des hommes blancs qui, à ce qu'on dit, sont blancs comme ce morceau de craie", dit Obierika. Il tendait un morceau de craie... "Et ces hommes blancs, à ce qu'on dit, n'ont pas de doigts de pied".*

- *Et tu n'en as jamais vu? Demanda Machi.*

- *Et toi? Demanda Obierika*

- *L'un d'eux passe souvent par ici, dit Machi. Son nom est Amadi. Ceux qui connaissaient Amadi éclatèrent de rire. C'était lépreux et le nom poli pour la lèpre était "la peau blanche" (p. 91).*

- c. *You told us with your own mouth that there was only one god. Now you talk about his son. He must have a wife, then. (pg. 103).*

*"Vous nous avez dit de votre propre bouche qu'il n'y avait qu'un seul dieu. Maintenant vous parlez de son fils. Il doit avoir une femme, alors" (pg. 177).*

- d. *It was said that he wore glasses on his eyes so that he could see and talk to evil spirits (pg. 106).*

*On disait qu'il portait des verres sur les yeux de sorte qu'il pouvait voir les esprits du mal et leur parler (p. 180-181).*

- e. *The white missionary was very proud of him and he was one of the first men in Umuofia to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion, or Holy Feast as it was called in Ibo. Ogbuefi Ugonna had thought of the feast in terms of eating and drinking... he had therefore put his drinking-horn into his goatskin bag for the occasion (pg. 123).*

*Le missionnaire blanc était très fier de lui, et il fut un des premiers hommes d'Umuofia à recevoir le sacrement de la Sainte Communion, ou du Saint Repas comme on l'appelait en Ibo. Ogbuefi Ugonna avait cru que le Repas consistait à manger et à boire... il avait donc mis sa corne à boire dans son sac de peau de chèvre à cette occasion (p. 20).*

- f. *There was once a man who went to sell a goat. He led it on a thick rope which he tied round his wrist. But as he walked through the market he realized that people were pointing at him as they do to a madman.*

*He could not understand it until he looked back and saw that what he led at the end of the tether was not a goat but a heavy log of wood (pg. 79).*

*Un jour, un homme était allé vendre une chèvre. Il la menait au bout d'une solide corde qu'il avait enroulée autour de son poignet. Mais tandis qu'il déambulait à travers le marché, il se rendit compte que les gens le désignaient du doigt comme on le fait pour un fou. Il n'y comprit rien jusqu'à ce qu'il tourne la tête et voie que ce qu'il tenait en laisse n'était pas une chèvre, mais une lourde buche de bois (p. 139).*

In text (b) Achebe uses hyperbole. The white man is not really as white as chalk but the speaker just wants to make jest of the mysterious white man. The reference to their toe-less legs and the allusion to leprosy adds colour to the humour.

The translation of “white like this piece of chalk”, “have no toes” “passes here frequently” and the surprising revelation “His name is Amadi” rendered into French respectively as “blancs comme ce morceau de craie”, “n’ont pas de doigts de pied”, “passe souvent par ici” and “son nom est Amadi” makes the target reader to be equally entertained as the source reader. The reader in the target language is also made to appreciate the ignorant exaggerations of the illiterate villagers of Umuofia in which is embedded the humour.

In (c) the phrases “with your own mouth” “now you talk about his son”, “a wife then” which make the white missionary look like a liar, and their translation into French as “de votre propre bouche”, “maintennt vous parlez de son fils” “une femme

*alors*” carries scintillating humour. The word “*own*” carries heavy ridicule and its inclusion in the translation by Ligny as “*propre*” carries this heavy ridicule across into the target language. The humour here is crowned by the insinuation that God has a wife and this is also properly translated. This joke, actually, has a satirical undertone.

In texts (d) and (e), which Ligny translates word for word, the humour here is not hidden at all. The naked jokes are well translated into the target language.

In text (f) the humour manifests in the tail end of the narrative “*he looked back and saw what he led at the end of the tether was not a goat but a heavy log of wood*”. The obvious but imagined consternation, shame and confusion of the man whose goat had been exchanged for a log of wood by a smart thief puts this joke along the line of “slipping-on-the-banana peel”. This humour has been adequately translated.

We can say, on the whole, that Ligny’s translation of jokes respects the concept of faithfulness in translation.

### 3.3 The Translation of Satire

The story of *Things Fall Apart*, like George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* can, to some extent, be said to be a satire depicting the futility and the foolishness of fighting against a more formidable foe. However, for the purpose of this research work we have only picked out isolated instances of humour that we consider to be satirical.

- a. *Each group there represents a debt to someone, and each stroke is one hundred cowries. You see, I owe that man a thousand cowries. But he has not come to wake me up in the morning for it. I shall pay you, but not today. Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them. I shall pay my big debts first (pg. 6).*

*Chacun de ces groupes représente une dette envers quelqu’un, et chaque trait cent cauris. Vous voyez, je dois mille cauris à cet homme. Mais il n’est pas venu me réveiller le matin à leur sujet. Je vous paierai, mais pas aujourd’hui. Nos anciens disent que le soleil brillera sur ceux qui sont debout avant de briller sur ceux qui sont à genoux au dessous d’eux. Je paierai mes grosses dettes d’abord (p. 14).*

We find this humour in the instance when Unoka’s friend, Okoye, came to ask for his debt from Unoka. Instead of pleading for more time to raise the money, Unoka burst into laughter. He laughed so much that tears stood in his eyes. Okoye, the creditor, was amazed. Then Unoka showed him some lines he had drawn on the wall of his hut

with chalk and addressed his creditor friend in the text we have just cited. In fact, Okoye's reaction to this effrontery is even more humorous:

- b. *Okoye rolled his goatskin and departed ( pg 6).*  
*Okoye roula sa peau de chèvre et partit (p. 14)*

In this text, we see how Unoka, the debtor, succeeds in ridiculing his creditor in an amusing way. The crown of the satire here is the quiet, resigned and calm acceptance of failure by Okoye as well as his silent departure. The term "goatskin" would seem to be untranslatable into a culture that has had no experience of goatskin mats. However, Jakobson (1971) is largely in favour of translatability because he sees translation as operating within languages as well as between them. Thus we see that Ligny has translated "goatskin" as "peau de chèvre" in the manner that makes the reader understand that the object is a kind of mat for sitting down. The satire in the source language has been adequately translated into the target language.

- c. *The Oracle said to him: "Your dead father wants you to sacrifice a goat to him".*  
*Do you know what he told the Oracle? He said, "Ask my dead father if he ever had a fowl when he was alive".*

*L'Oracle lui dit: "votre père défunt désire que vous lui sacrifiez une chèvre". Savez-vous ce qu'il répondit à l'Oracle? Il lui dit: "Demandez à mon père défunt s'il a jamais eu un poulet à lui quand il était en vie".*

The satire here is knee-deep. Obiako, the subject of the discussion here, has not just ridiculed his dead father who was poor. He has also ridiculed the Oracle by talking back to the Oracle, a feat no mortal in Umuofia had ever attempted. Ligny has translated the humour here including the derisive undertone into the target language.

- d. *On a moonlight night it would be different.*  
*The happy voices of children playing in open fields would then be heard. And perhaps those not so young would be playing in pairs in less open places... (pg. 7).*

*Par une nuit de clair de lune, c'aurait été différent. On entendait alors les voix heureuses d'enfants jouant en plein champ. Et peut-être les moins jeunes jouaient-ils deux par deux dans des lieux moins ouverts...*

In 'd' Achebe is insinuating that even in the village setting, there is illicit romance. In fact, the phrases "those not so young", "playing in pairs", "in less open places" are

pregnant with satirical humour. Ligny has captured the spirit of this satire in rendering them as “*les moins jeunes*” “*jouaient-ils deux par deux*” and “*dans des lieux moins ouverts*” respectively. In fact, Ligny had the choice of translating “*in pairs*” as “*en paires*” but he opted for “*deux par deux*” which is more suggestive than “*en paires*”. It is the suggestiveness of Achebe’s context and choice of words that harbour the humour here.

- e. . *If I hold her hand  
She says, “Don’t touch”.  
If I hold her foot  
She says, “Don’t touch”.  
But when I hold her waist beads  
  
She pretends not to know” (pg 83).*

*Si je lui tiens la main  
Elle dit: ne me touche pas.  
Si je lui tiens le pied  
Elle dit: ne me touche pas.  
Mais quand je tiens sa ceinture de perles,  
Elle feint de l’ignorer.*

Apart from the satire in the song, the musicality of repetitions in the song gives it aesthetic beauty which evokes excitement in the reader. Ligny displays his bilingual proficiency and bi-cultural competence in translating “*la main*”, “*le pied*” and “*ceinture de perles*” which makes the target reader to be inspired, touched and aesthetically entertained in the same manner as the source language reader. Ligny’s translation of linguistic items “*if I hold...*”, “*if I hold...*” as “*si je tiens...*”, “*si je tiens*” is an indication of his high literary insight and aesthetic sensitivity of Achebe’s oral poetry. The caricature of women’s pretence when it comes to romantic situations is where the satire lies. This caricature, the derision as well as the aesthetic quality of the song have been properly translated into the target language.

- f. *“They want a piece of land to build their shrine”; said Uchendu to his peers...  
“We shall give them a piece of land”. He paused and there was a murmur of surprise and disagreement. “Let us give them a portion of the Evil Forest. They boast about victory over death. Let us give them a real battlefield in which to show their victory”.  
They laughed and agreed, and sent for the missionaries. They offered them as much of the Evil Forest as they cared to take. And to their amazement the missionaries thanked them and burst into song (pg. 105).*

- *“Ils désirent une pièce de terre pour bâtir leur sanctuaire, dit Uchendu à ses pairs... Nous allons leur donner une pièce de terre”. Il fit une pause et il y eut un murmure de surprise et de désaccord. “Donnons leur un morceau de la Forêt Maudite. Ils se vantent de remporter la victoire sur la mort. Donnons-leur un vrai champ de bataille où ils puissent montrer leur victoire”. Ils rirent et acquiescèrent et envoyèrent chercher les missionnaires... ils leur offrirent une aussi grande portion de la Forêt Maudite qu’ils voulurent en prendre. Et à leur plus grande consternation les missionnaires les remercièrent et entonnèrent une cantique (p. 180).*

The satire in this exchange is deep. The suggestion of offering the dreaded and eerie Evil Forest to the missionaries evokes laughter but it is aimed primarily at deriding the white missionaries who are ignorant of the significance of the Evil Forest. On the other hand, the villagers are on the receiving end of this satire because they, too, are ignorant of the powers of the white man’s God. Although, Ligny has translated the satire we are of the opinion, as we remarked earlier, that *“la Forêt du Mal”* would have been a better equivalent for *“Evil Forest”*. *“Mal”* carries more weight than *“maudite”* which could mean *“damned”* or *“cursed”*. *“Mal”*, which literally means *“Evil”* evokes fear, the macabre, and even death, which is more in line with the context of the scene.

### **The Translation of Scatology**

a. *“Who will drink the dregs?” He asked.  
“Whoever has a job in hand”, said  
Idigo, looking at Nwakibie’s elder  
son, Igwelo, with a mischievous twinkle  
in his eye (pg. 15).*

*“Qui boira la lie?” demanda-t-il  
“Quiconque a une affaire en train” dit  
Idigo en faisant Igwelo, le fils aîné de  
Nwakibie, un clin d’oeil malicieux (p. 30).*

In ‘a’, Igwelo, the victim of this humour, has just married a new wife. The thick dregs of palm-wine, according to Achebe in the story, is believed to increase a man’s libido. What the speaker implies here is that Igwelo needs to impress his new wife with his sexual prowess.

In polite African societies, sexual intercourse is generally not talked about openly yet it is humorously discussed here among the drinking men. Ligny in his translation carries this humour into the target language.

- b. *“If, on the other hand, Uzowulu should recover from his madness and come in the proper way to beg his wife to return she will do so on the understanding that if he ever beats her again we shall cut off his genitals for him”. The crowd roared with laughter (pg. 65).*

*“Si, d’autre part, Uzowulu devait guérir de sa folie et venir selon les règles supplier sa femme de revenir, elle le ferait, étant bien entendu que, si jamais il la battait de nouveau, nous lui couperions les parties génitales”. Un énorme éclat de rire monta de la foule.*

We see scatology at work here again. Except in the classroom environment, genitals are generally a topic reserved for adults. Women and young people, if they must discuss these parts of the body, do so in hushed voices. The scene here is the village square where the masquerades are judging cases with the whole village agog with excitement.

Nevertheless, we see Odukwe, whose sister married Uzowulu and who receives beatings all the time from the husband, shouting this threat, in anger, about his inlaw’s genitals in the village square, with women and children present, ridiculing Uzowulu’s manhood to the general amusement of the crowd.

We need to commend Ligny’s translation of certain meanings here. By translating “*in the proper way*” as “*selon les règles*” he applies the technique called “*modulation*”. Modulation, according to Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), is a variation in the message whose purpose is to make the message clearer in the target language. “*Selon les règles*” aptly translates the meaning embedded in “*in the proper way*”, which suggests that there are laid down rules according to the customs and tradition of Umuofia to settle such matrimonial matters.

- c. *“We had meant to set out from my house before cock-crow”, said Obierika. But Nweke did not appear until it was quite light. Never make an early morning appointment with a man who has just married a new wife”. They all laughed (pg 99)*

*-“Nous avons décidé de quitter la maison avant le chant du coq”, dit Obierika.  
“Mais Nweke n’est pas apparu avant qu’il ne fasse complètement jour. Il ne*

*faut jamais donner de rendezvous à l'aube  
à un homme qui vient juste d'épouser  
une nouvelle femme". Tous rirent (p. 171).*

Here, Obierika and two others, came to visit Okonkwo in exile. We see how they joke about sexual intercourse freely and openly here. Michel Ligny rendered this scatology into French adequately.

### **The Translation of Accidental Humour**

- a. *These court messengers were greatly hated in Umuofia because they were foreigners and also arrogant and high-handed. They were called 'kotma', and because of their ash-coloured shorts they earned the additional name of Ashy-Buttocks (pg. 123).*

*Ces messagers de la cour étaient profondément hais à Umuofia parce qu'ils étaient étrangers en même temps qu'arrogants et brutaux. On les appelait 'kotma', et à cause de leurs short couleur de cendre, ils méritèrent le nom supplémentaire de Fesses-Cendrées (p. 211).*

'Kotma' is an accidental humour derived from the wrong pronunciation of the words 'court messenger' by the illiterate villagers. "Ashy-Buttocks", as Achebe himself has already explained, stems from the colour of the shorts worn by these court messengers.

- b. *Many people laughed at his dialect and the way he used words strangely. Instead of saying 'myself' he always said 'my buttocks' (pg 102).*

*Beaucoup riaient de son dialecte et de la façon bizarre dont il utilisait les mots. Au lieu de dire 'moi-même' il disait toujours 'mes fesses' (p 174).*

The humour here is purely accidental because if the man's (the interpreter's) dialect had been the same as that spoken by the villagers of Umuofia, there would not have been anything humorous in the context. The fact that what he said in his strange dialect meant 'my buttocks' also puts this humour under scatology. Ligny, again, has translated the text literally, thus keeping the target reader aesthetically entertained in the same manner and to the same degree as the reader of the original text.

## **Conclusion**

It can be seen that the translator, Michel Ligny, has been able to translate many elements of the African culture in *Things Fall Apart* but has failed in some instances.

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*A Study of an Online Community of Practice for EFL Learning in a Chinese University*

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**Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to report the investigation of an online communication group as a supplementary media for student learning English; and to report how communication online may facilitate student learning and student-teacher relationship. Drawing literature on reflection and Communities of Practice (CoPs), a case study was undertaken involving 31 students in an online communication group (a QQ group with technology supported by qq.com). Data were collected from Questionnaires with students before and after the study and archives of online communication activities. It was found that most of the students were willing to communicate with their teacher and fellow students online; the online discussions covered a variety of topics, such as learning English, future career, future study, and topics relating to university life. It was also found that time of access online, Internet connection, and the students' need of obtaining prompt solutions of their learning problems are the main factors that hindered their participation in the online CoP.

Keywords: Community of Practice, EFL, online learning

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## **Introduction**

Education reforms and new English Language Teaching (ELT) syllabus in Chinese tertiary education advocates a more communicative way of language teaching which has brought about the need for a shift in ELT pedagogies towards a more student-centred and communicative approach. Teachers need to adopt a more student-centred approach where they take roles as facilitators of student learning (Cleveland-Innes & Emes, 2005; Nunan, 1989). Modern technology has made it possible for teacher-students online communication. In this context, more research is needed to seek how online communication groups may facilitate communication between teachers and students, and communication among students. This study developed and implemented an online learning group using a Community of Practice (CoP) framework for student learning.

The aim of this study was to investigate students' learning English in an online communication group; and to consider how communication online may facilitate student learning and student-teacher relationship.

## **Theoretical framework**

This study adopted the Community of Practice model as the theoretical framework. The idea of Communities of Practice was first promoted in organizational and management contexts (e.g., Fei, 2006; Fitzsimmons, 2008; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). It was defined as groups of professionals who share a repertoire of resources while participating in a process of collaborative learning, which promotes the solution to problems (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, et al., 2002; Wick, 2000). The three main features of CoPs in organizational learning include mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). For example, students who share a concern or a passion for learning meet regularly for communication (mutual engagement) to share their knowledge and experiences (shared repertoire) to improve their learning (a joint enterprise).

With support of modern technology, the CoP model has been extended to online communication. Online CoPs has been proved to be effective in terms of helping students to build their understanding (Goos & Bennison, 2007), work together, and be facilitated by other learners (Bette, 2004; Mohan, 2006; Scott & Robert, 2005).

## **Methods**

This study was conducted in the English department of a Chinese University. Due to ethical considerations, the name of the University is concealed and given the pseudonym of "University L". As a teacher in that university, the researcher had access to the context. Therefore, it was selected because it was perhaps an expected site for the researcher to carry out research (Patton, 2002). Thirty-one students from one class volunteered to participate in the study. Among them there were 28 female students and three male students.

The researcher joined in and interacted with the participants in the online community. For example, she communicated with students online and answered some of their

questions. Yin (2009) suggested that as a participant, a researcher was able to get access to evidence of a phenomenon from an insider's point of view.

During the two months when this study was undertaken, students communicated online in the set-up QQ group (with technology supported by Tencent Company). Their online discussions and postings were downloaded and saved as a Word document for further analysis. The online communication group are easily assessable and replicable. Students could access the group at anytime convenient for them. In this study, one QQ group was set up by one of the volunteered student named "Dream" in March. As the online manager of the group, she authorized the membership of the teacher in the group on April 1. In the current study the students either had their own personal computers or their smart phones, and could easily access the QQ group. They were invited to participate in online discussions. The postings were then archived for the purpose of data analysis.

In this study, data were also collected through questionnaires, which student completed before and after they participated in the study to investigate their use of online communication tools, their expectations, and their experiences when participating in the study.

## **Findings and Discussions**

### **Pre-Questionnaire**

In the preliminary questionnaire, the students were asked questions relating to their daily use Internet communication tools. Among the 31 students who completed the questionnaires, all of them had the experience of communication with others online. Twenty-eight students had set up their online blogs. They mainly write about their study, their personal life experience, and their feelings.

As for the reasons that students did not blog, one student mentioned that they regarded blogging as keeping diaries. Since she had no interest in keeping a diary, she did not blog. Another student thought her writing was not good. So she could not blog online.

Their former schoolmates in high school, their friends, and their former teachers are those they often communicate online. They communicated with their contacts on a regular basis.

When students were asked whether they would like to communicate with their current teachers online, all of them gave positive answers. They not only expected to discuss with their teachers about study, but also problems in their daily life.

### **Online CoP Activities**

In this study, the postings from April 1 to May 31 of both students and teachers were archived for the purpose of analyzing how students communicated online with their peers and their teacher. Data were transcribed to one Word document and then analyzed through Content Analysis. Data were read and grouped under different themes.

There were 29 students participated in the online CoP and contributed to 37 threads of discussions. Students either used their real names or online nicknames, whichever they felt comfortable with. There were online communication activities on 28 days.

They are summarized in Table 1 and 2.

<b>Participation Frequencies (37 Discussions)</b>	<b>Initiators</b>
Liu19 Celery 11 Lily 9 Zhao 8 Tung 7 Cloud 6 Dawn 6 Cao5 Wong 4 20 students joined the discussions less than 2 times	The teacher 17 Liu 7 Badgirl1 Celery3 Stove 1 Zhao 1 Chen 1 Tung 2 Ice 2 Cao 2

Table 1. General Participation in the Online CoP

Main themes and categories found in the online communication archives are listed in Table 2.

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequencies*</b>
<b>Study/Learning</b>	Announcements (Study related)	7
	Sharing Resources	5
	English Movies	6
	Courses Selection	3
	English Reading	1
	English Listening	1
	Translation	1
<b>University Life</b>	Weekend, Holiday, Skincare	7
<b>General Greetings</b>	Saying "Hi"	6
<b>Inquiry for Teacher's Former Experiences</b>	Teacher's former learning experience, career choice	4
<b>Announcements (other)</b>	University life related	3

Table 2. Main Themes and Categories in the Online Discussions. \*There is not necessarily one category of discussion on each day.

Table 2 shows that the main themes of discussions in the online CoP include topics relating to learning, university life, general greetings, inquiry for the teacher's former experiences as a students, and general announcements related to university life. Under the theme, topics relating to learning, there were seven announcements made regarding coursework and exams, six discussions regarding what English movies they were interested in watching, five discussions on sharing resources of English learning, such as sample exam questions and presentation materials, three discussions regarding courses selection. There was one discussion each relating to English reading, listening, and translation. Furthermore, students also made announcements which were related to their university life, such as health checkup arrangements and student union election. This indicates that students used the online CoP as a platform to share information and discussed topics relating to English learning.

Students also talked about other topics regarding their university life, such as holiday plan, doing part-time jobs, and even skincare and luxury products. As a platform of social network, the online CoP was used by students to share information and problems about their daily life. It solved some of students' problems. Sharing

information and resources and sharing problems in their constructed main activities in the online CoP.

Students were also interested in the teacher's former experiences as a university student when they were asked to make decisions regarding course selection which would affect their future choice of career. According to concepts of CoPs, member brought different expertise to one community. In the case of this study, the teacher brought her former experiences to share with the students on a basis of requirements. Students then learned from those experiences and made their own decisions.

To summarise, students not only discussed topics relating to their English learning online, they were also interested in other topics of their university life and their teachers former experience. They used the online group not only for the purpose of sharing information, but also as a media for solving problems in their study and their university life. This also proved the main characteristics of CoPs as sharing expertise and mutual engagement.

### **Post-Questionnaire**

Students were asked to complete one questionnaire on June 1, when it was two months after they participated in the study and the end of the semester.

Twenty-nine students reported in the questionnaire that they had communicated with their teacher online. This was in consistency with what was found during the two weeks of online communication that 29 students contributed to online discussion activities. As it was not compulsory for students to join the online QQ group, students had the right to choose not to do it. The two students who did not join the group reported why they did not participated in the discussions. One reported that he/she had negative ideas towards online communication, such as it was not real and others could cause misunderstandings, the other reported that he/she joined the group at the end of May, therefore, he/she did not participated in the online communication activities.

Twenty-eight students participated in the online CoP, found it helpful to communicate with their classmates and their teacher online. The main benefit they reported was to solve their learning problems and improve their learning. For instance:

When I couldn't understand a question regarding learning and I put the question online, someone will give me an answer  
By communicating with others I can find out some problems I have.  
And I can try to take their advice.

Students also reported that online communication could help them to encourage one another and be relaxed to take to their teacher:

Talking with classmates is useful. Because we have the same feeling and sometimes we encourage each other to go on working hard.  
Ms. Wang is of unique charisma. I will feel relaxed to talk with her online. But I will feel nervous, if I talk with her face-to-face.

As for the factors that hindered their participation online, 23 students gave out reasons (the remaining 8 students reported that they did not have any difficulties). The main factors that hindered students participation in the online CoP included: time of get access to the Internet was not the same, typing slowly, the prompt need of solving problems.

To summarize, students confirmed the positive effects of participating in the online CoP, such as helping them to solve learning problems so as to improve their learning. It was found that after participated in the study, students were more willing to communicate with their teacher and fellow students online than before. The factors that could hinder their participation online included the access time, Internet connections, typing speed, and the need of prompt answers to their questions.

### **Significance of the study**

In light of Chinese tertiary education reforms towards students learning autonomy in tertiary ELT, this study was timely in investigating an online learning community for facilitate students communication with their peers and their teacher. Students were provided with opportunities to discuss their English learning online. This study may contribute a deeper understanding of developing online communities for students learning. While the CoP model has become a popular model for learning in the West, there was little evidence of the exploration of the effectiveness of this model in the Chinese context. Therefore, consideration of building an online CoP in this study built on knowledge of how online learning communities might work to address the needs of Chinese college English learners.

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***A Sociolinguistic Study on Tamil English Code-Mixing among Urban Bilingual  
- A Study on Pedagogical Perspective***

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**Abstract**

This paper analyses the various reasons for code-mixing, and the domains where a mixed code is preferred by Tamil speakers. Sri Lanka is a multilingual country where code mixing is a communication strategy used by speakers of different indigenous languages. Mixing of Tamil and English is common speech behaviour that occurs in the discourse of educated bilinguals. There are various factors that influence the use of English in a mother tongue discourse. The research design involves qualitative approaches. The data for this study was collected by means of a questionnaire. The participants were educated urban bilinguals in the Jaffna district. The data collected from the subjects' responses were analyzed and the findings were derived. The bilinguals were required to self-report their awareness of the frequency and purposes of using code mixing in different situations in their day to day conversation. The results showed that the degree of code mixing depends on various factors such as amount of exposure to English, the medium of instruction in school and the frequency of language used in different domains, contexts and topics of discussion. This paper throws light on the fact that mixing Tamil and English facilitates communication and is performed for certain practical reasons.

Keywords: code-mixing, urban bilinguals, indigenous languages, discourse, communication strategy

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## Code Mixing as a Popular Study

Code mixing has been one of the popular studies in sociolinguistics since the mid-1970s, with numerous studies on bilingual Spanish-English communities in the United States and a few studies on other bilingual and multilingual communities around the world.

In a bilingual speech community, there is a natural tendency among speakers to mix lexical items, phrases, clauses, and sentences during verbal interaction. This is an essential part of their communicative competence, the "ability to switch linguistically and appropriately according to the situational changes" (Verma 1975:35). The elements mixed belong to the "host"<sup>1</sup> language which, for historical and socio-economic reasons, has acquired more prestige than the "guest"<sup>2</sup> language which receives them. "Code-mixing", "code-switching", and "borrowing" are some of the labels used in linguistic literature (e.g., Bloomfield 1933, Haugen 1956, Kachru 1978, Sridhar 1978, Poplack 1980, among others) to describe various kinds of mixtures resulting from language contact.

## Background of the Study

Jaffna where the present study is undertaken is a cultural and linguistic melting pot. The majority of the population is Tamils and the great majority speaks Tamil as a first language. However, a lot of local Tamils are proficient in both Tamil and English. The socio, political and economic situations form the basis for the context of code-mixing. All their formal learning takes place in Tamil. Tamil is often influenced by the super ordinate language, English.

This group of Tamil - English bilinguals often resorts to a mixed code when interacting among them, their absorbing code being Tamil and the absorbed code English. The use of the elements of English in speech is sometimes so unconscious that it seems to fit perfectly in speech. Code-mixing is usually condemned by monolinguals but users think that the employment of a word or a phrase from the other language in their speech may carry a stronger power of expression or render precision.

This research study on "A Sociolinguistic Study on Tamil English Code-Mixing among Urban Bilinguals - A Study on Pedagogical Perspective" is an exploration of code-mixing of Tamil and English in Jaffna.

## Historical Background

Several languages are spoken in Sri Lanka within the Indo-Aryan, Dravidian and Austronesian families. Sri Lanka accords official status to Sinhalese and Tamil. The languages spoken on the island nation are deeply influenced by the languages of neighbouring India, the Maldives and Malaysia. Arab settlers and the colonial powers

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<sup>1</sup>. L1 is the host language.

<sup>2</sup>. L2 is the guest language.

of Portugal, the Netherlands and Britain have also influenced the development of modern languages in Sri Lanka.

The Sinhala language is spoken by the Sinhalese, who constitute approximately 75% of the national population and total about 13 million. The Tamil language is spoken by Sri Lankan Tamils, as well as by Tamil migrants from the neighboring Indian state of Tamil Nadu and by most Sri Lankan Moors. Tamil speakers number around 4.7 million. There are more than 50,000 speakers of the Sri Lankan Creole Malay language, which is strongly influenced by the Malay language. There is also a large Maldivian population and they speak Dhivehi as their primary language.

English in Sri Lanka is fluently spoken by approximately 10%<sup>3</sup> of the population, and widely used for official and commercial purposes, it is the native language of approximately 74,000 people, mainly in urban areas. A handful of the 3,400 people of Portuguese descent speak Sri Lankan Portuguese creole.<sup>4</sup> The Muslim community in Sri Lanka widely uses Arabic for religious purposes. Seldom used nowadays is Arwi, a written register of Tamil that uses the Arabic script and has extensive lexical influences from Arabic.

In order to provide a comprehensive sociolinguistic and linguistic analysis of CM in a multilingual society such as Sri Lanka<sup>5</sup>, it is important that the reader should be informed not only about the sociofunctional status of the languages involved in the study of CM, but also about how those languages came into being in contact. So it is worth discussing the sociolinguistic profile of Sri Lanka at this juncture.

### **A Sociolinguistic Profile of Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka is a multilingual and multicultural nation like some other countries in the world. There are mainly four languages spoken in Sri Lanka. They are Sinhala, Tamil, Malay and English. The Department of Census and Statistics (2001) lists the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka as Sinhalese, Sri Lanka Tamil, Indian Tamil, Sri Lanka Moor, Europeans, Burgher and Eurasian, Malay, Veddhhas and others respectively. Of these four languages mentioned above, two have been recognized legally as national languages:

1. Sinhala, one of the legislated official national languages, is spoken by majority of the population in Sri Lanka. It is the medium of instruction in education and the language of the administration of the government.
2. Tamil, one of the legislated official national languages, is spoken by minority of Sri Lanka living mostly in the Northern, Eastern, up countries and some

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<sup>3</sup> "Sri Lanka - language". Retrieved 20 June 2014.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages\\_of\\_Sri\\_Lanka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Sri_Lanka)

<sup>4</sup> Indo-Portuguese (Sri Lanka) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages\\_of\\_Sri\\_Lanka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Sri_Lanka)

<sup>5</sup> It was called Ceylon formerly and it became the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka in 1972, marking the end of British rule.

other parts of the country. It is also the medium of instruction in education and the language of the administration of the government.

3. English legislated as a link language which has coexisted with the national languages of the country. It holds the key to upward social mobility and is a symbol of power and prestige.

Sociolinguistically, the two national languages are mainly used for communication within the ethnic groups. They also serve each in the regions in which they are spoken, as the medium of instruction. Sociofunctionally, English serves as the link language spoken between the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. It is used as the medium of instruction in the universities. It is also used as the language of administration, media, diplomacy, social mobility, interethnic communication and international business transactions.

### **Tamil in the Sri Lankan Setting**

The word “Tamil” refers both to the language and its speakers, and when it refers to the speakers, it does not denote them as speakers of a language, but refers to them as also an “ethnic” group, with an identifiable culture, and a consciousness among them that they belong to one group. In Sri Lanka, Sinhala, Tamil and English are the major languages. Of these, Sinhala is the language of the majority, Tamil the language of the largest minority, while English is the language used by the English educated among all Communities in Sri Lanka, in addition to its being the mother tongue of the Burger community.

The Tamil speaking population in Sri Lanka consists of the Sri Lanka moors and the Indian moors. They thus constitute more than a quarter of the total population of the Republic of Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka Tamils though found all over the island in scattered settlements; predominate in the Northern and Eastern Provinces that have been considered their traditional homelands from olden times. There is also a bulk of the Tamil population in the greater Colombo areas. Jaffna, Vavuniya and Mannar are the major towns in the Northern Province and Batticaloa and Trincomalee in the Eastern Province. The Indian Tamils are mostly employed in the plantations in and around the hilly districts in the central part of the island.

On the social scale, it is possible to speak of Sri Lankans' Tamil dialect (Non-Muslim), Sri Lanka Muslim dialect, and Indian Tamil dialect in Sri Lanka. There are Indian Muslims in Sri Lanka whose differs from the Sri Lanka Muslim Tamil. It is interesting to note that in Sri Lanka there are no caste dialects with marked differences like the caste dialects in India such as the Brahmin dialect and Non-Brahmin dialect. The Muslims are from the second minority in Sri Lanka. One third of the total Muslim population is in the Northern and Eastern provinces and they are mostly monolinguals speaking Tamil only. The rest of the Muslims are found scattered in the other seven provinces where they are mostly bilinguals speaking Tamil and Sinhala. English educated Muslims in the island are not many.

## Factors Contributing to Status of Tamil Language

When Sri Lanka gained its independence from British colonial rule in 1948, the momentum against the inherited place of English as the medium of public administration and government also grew. Following that, there were several factors which influenced in the status and functions of Tamil Language<sup>6</sup>.

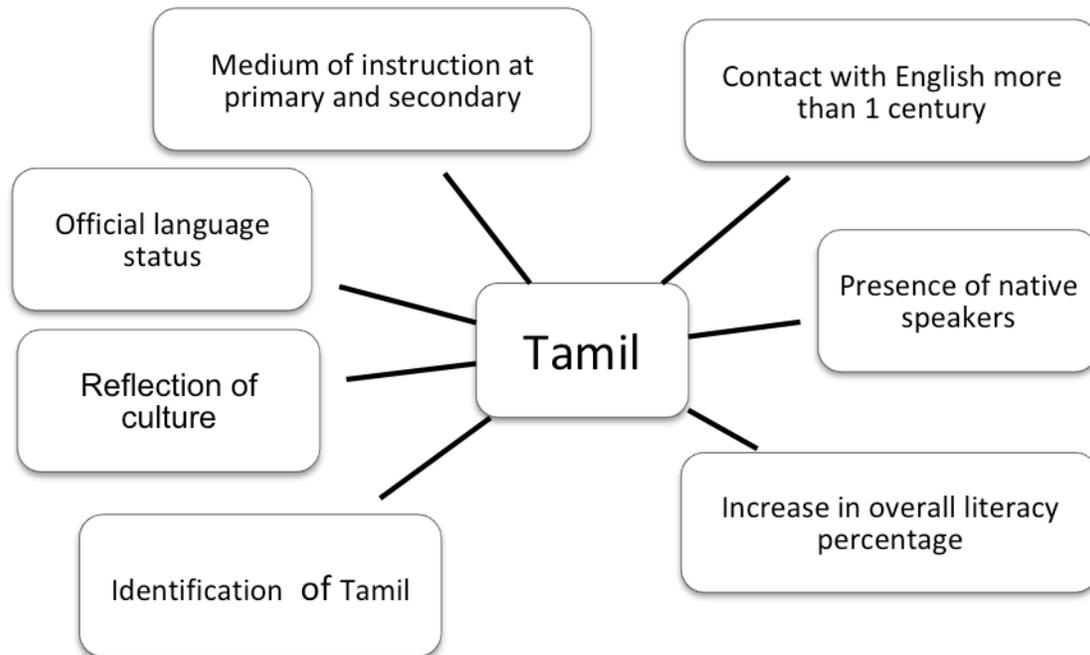


Figure.1. Status of Tamil language

## English in Sri Lanka

Colonialism played a pivotal role in the development and promotion of English in South Asia, and Sri Lanka is no exception in this regard. The British Empire ruled the Indian Subcontinent for almost 200 years from 1757 to 1947. The origin of the impact of English on Sri Lankan languages can be traced back to the advent of British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent that brought English with it. With the passage of time, and as a result of their prolonged stay in the subcontinent, gradually the use of English extended in public domains and in a short time influenced the other languages in use in those domains.

The impact of English on Sinhala and Tamil started during the colonial period and this hegemony of English over these languages became evident in all the spheres of social life. The other impact of English was the result of its contact with these languages. As a result, the use of two languages almost inevitably affects the forms of

<sup>6</sup>Article 22 (1), Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka as amended by section 3, Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution 1988

the languages so used. The use of English by Sinhala/Tamil speakers has led to the functional elaboration of both English and Sinhala/Tamil. In turn; bilinguals show varying degrees of proficiency in the languages they use. Such disparities in performance have led to differing patterns of bilingualism manifested in different phonological, grammatical and lexical features.

### **Factors Contributing to Status of English Language**

English was introduced to the island with the arrival of the British in 1796. In the course of time, the English language was firmly planted in Sri Lanka in a systematic manner. The use of English became supreme and pervasive in several domains of language use. Under British rule, English was the language of administration. It was the language of higher education and the most popular language of school education. The social value placed on the English language in contemporary Sri Lanka is largely related to the British education system which for the first time introduced a European language to a minority of Sri Lankans.

Post-independent politicians of Sri Lanka introduced several changes to the British education system which had class and linguistic discrepancies. Their intention was to create an equitable system of education which would cater to all segments of society. After independence from the British in the year 1948, English was given the status of secondary official language in the Sri Lankan constitution and it has since become the major language of administration, law and education. English spoken among Sri Lankan upper and middle class were primarily for social and economic purposes, but over time it has become associated with a certain prestige.

English is taught as a complementary language to ensure Sri Lankans benefit from globalization and other 21<sup>st</sup> century issues. The government hopes to make up for the drawbacks of general education that is provided in the mother tongue, through English, an additional language. English is meant to compensate for the limited background provided by the indigenous languages.

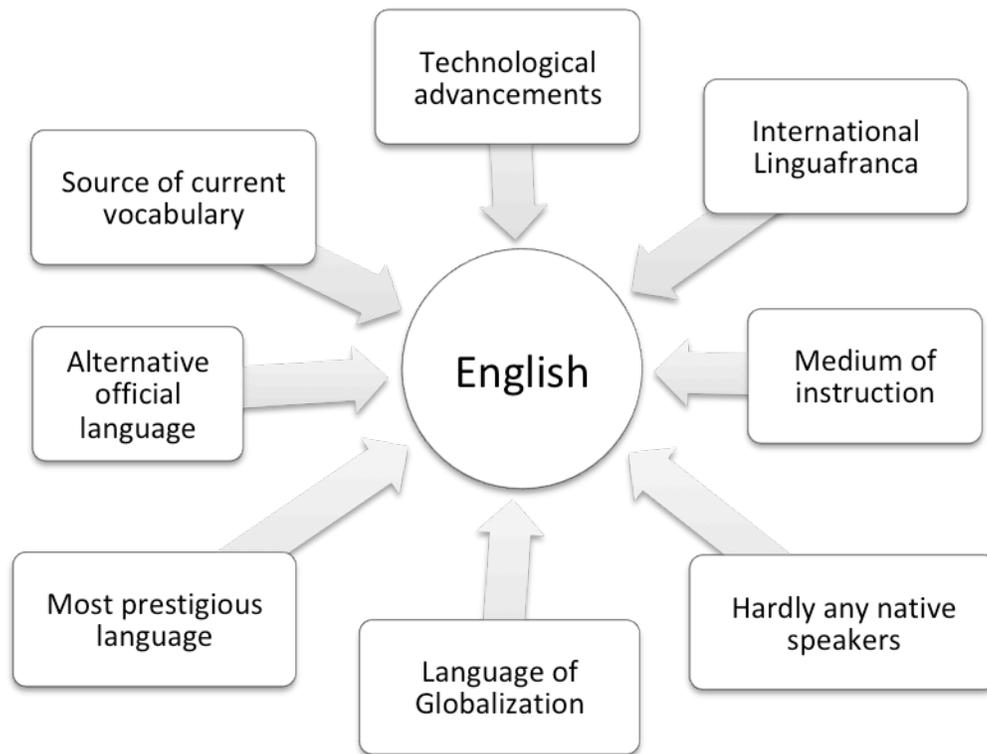


Figure. 2. Status of English language

### **Bilingualism in Jaffna Tamil Society**

The Jaffna Tamil society in Sri Lanka comprises both bilinguals in Tamil and English and Tamil monolinguals. It is a common feature that these bilinguals and monolinguals in Jaffna use a number of English words in their day- to -day speech and writing in Tamil at home, in social interaction, in education, for religious purpose etc. In case of the bilinguals the use of English words may be through language contact situations like code switching, code mixing, borrowing etc.

The initial development of bilingualism in Tamil and English in Jaffna is the outcome of English education and civil administrative activities through the English medium during the British colonial rule in Sri Lanka. English is still taught as a second language in educational institutions and a considerable part of the administration is carried out in English in Sri Lanka. As a result English still continues to be in contact with Tamil and this language contact situation has an impact on learning English as a second language.

### **Literature Review**

Canagarajah (1995) comments on code alternation activity among the Jaffna Tamils. There are now almost no L2-dominant or balanced bilinguals; grammatical competence per se in English is declining. Tamil has taken over domains previously

belonging to English; extensive use of unmixed English in conversations is reduced to a few formal contexts. However code alternation activity enables English to continue in a more widely distributed and pervasive form than ever before, with both monolinguals and bilinguals using English in conventional and unconventional contexts with complex communicative competence.

So code alternation behaviour will continue in Jaffna, gradually making Englishized Tamil a separate, independent code in its own right. This will exist parallel to unmixed Tamil and English, with sociolinguistic rules and communicative functions of its own. Although unmixed Tamil and English are becoming highly restricted in use, Englishized Tamil is widely used. It is becoming the unmarked every day code in the Jaffna Tamil society.

Grosjean (1982) states that code switching and code mixing are often used as a communicative strategy to convey linguistic and social information. He further states that code switching and codes mixing not only fill a momentary linguistic need, they are also a very useful communication resource. In addition, Greene and Walker (2004) state that code mixing is not random or meaningless. It has a role, a function, facets and characteristics. It is a linguistic tool and a sign of the participants' awareness of alternative communicative conventions. That is, in terms of the researchers who have positive points of view about code switching and code mixing, the fundamental reason why bilinguals switch or mix their languages is not because they lack language skills but because they try to make their utterance more easily understandable and meaningful.

Gunsekara (2005) provides an overview of the phonological, morphosyntactic and semantic characteristics of SLE. She focuses on the structural properties of the varieties of English spoken in the post-colonial Sri Lankan setting and reports CM as a discourse strategy among Sinhala-English bilinguals.

Kanthimathi (2007) states that code mixing is a kind of spontaneous behavior of bilinguals and used as a linguistic device in informal styles of speaking. Most of the time, the bilingual is not conscious of the way he/she mixes the two languages. The mixed code is a natural consequence of languages in contact. In her study of the Tamil English mixed language used by people in Tamilnadu, people who live in a bilingual or multilingual communication environment usually have the tendency to use two or more codes as a strategy to facilitate communication while communicating with each other. The alternate use of Tamil and English within the same discourse has a pattern.

Wettewe (2009) focuses on the sociolinguistic aspects of code-mixing in the post-colonial Sri Lankan setting and presents a comprehensive analysis of the structural properties of the mixed language that has become a linguistic reality. She concludes that a mixed variety has evolved as a result of the language contact between Sinhala and English and this variety is mostly influenced by the first language.

She also reveals the structural properties of CM from the study of Sinhala-English code-mixing. She says that the analyses propose not only account for the structural properties of Sinhala-English code-mixing, but also explain the functions of language mixing in Sri Lanka. The structural analysis provides insight into the co-existence of English with Sinhala in Sri Lanka. The analysis shows the dominant influence of Sinhala on Sinhala-English code-mixing. Most of the Sinhala elements such as nouns, complementizers, verbs, numerals, particles and plural markers facilitate the inclusion of English elements in the discourse of the Sinhala speaker.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is noticed that there are many English words and the grammatical features used in the day to day speech patterns of the Jaffna Tamils. English is increasingly used in spoken Tamil discourse nowadays. Through this study, it is intended to analyze that if code mixing is practiced as a strategy for effective discourse, the different language variables such as linguistic, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic variables play a role to facilitate communication among the bilinguals of Jaffna Tamils.

### **Sociolinguistic Analysis**

The study mainly focuses on the sociolinguistic context of Tamil English code-mixing. Of course, language mixing originates in response to social motivations, and social factors cannot be ignored in any analysis; however, the realization of mixes is subject to attitudinal and functional aspects which reflect semantic and communicational properties of discourse and is therefore the focus of the present study of Tamil/English mixture in the speech of Jaffna Tamils.

So this section focuses on the sociolinguistic context of the research done by the researcher. A well-organized sociolinguistic questionnaire was prepared by the researcher and distributed to 50 respondents for the purpose of collecting sociolinguistic data for the analysis. The data provided the information about the sociolinguistic context of Jaffna district and about the sociolinguistic characteristics of urban Tamil English bilinguals. Consequently, how the use of Tamil and English sociolinguistically embedded. Accordingly, data collected from the questionnaire are classified in terms of different variables and the data were fed in the excel sheet and analyzed using the SPSS software.

### **Subjects for the Study**

For the purpose of this study, 50 respondents were selected as subjects from the urban areas where the researcher identified the Tamil English bilinguals rather than the rural areas where most of the people were monolinguals in the Jaffna district. The data for this study was collected by means of a questionnaire, follow up interviews and observation. An equal number of males and females contributed to the study. The main variable for stratifying the sample was the employment sector, because of the different position and the use of languages in their day to day interaction and differences in the educational level of the bilingual speakers. The subjects were

required to self-report their awareness of the frequency and purposes of using mixed code in their daily life.

### Data Analysis and Discussion

Data were collected by means of distributing a sociolinguistic questionnaire. Respondents were given a questionnaire comprising questions asking about personal information such as age, education and language use in the last few years in different domains, and attitudes towards maintaining Tamil and English over the years. The questionnaire also consisted of questions where they had to tick the reasons for which they code mixed.

There are several reasons for which respondents resort to code-mixing. Code-mixing with English words is due to the fact that English has more prestige as it is said in literature. The study reveals that other than the prestige or status of English, there are other reasons stated below by the respondents for which they code-mix.

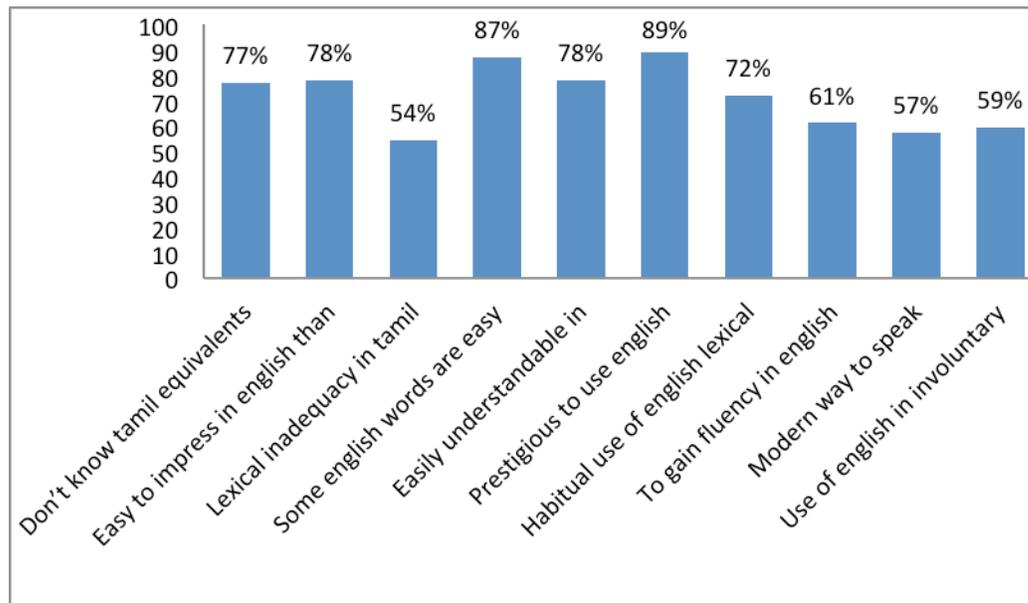


Figure 3. Reasons for code-mixing

The above chart shows that the prestigious to use English is the highest ranked. This could be because of the attitudinal functions which English has. Similarly the responses show that English is preferred because of the ease of articulation. Some Tamil words are long and cumbersome to pronounce when comparing with English words. In such contexts, respondents feel that the English equivalent of the Tamil word is mostly preferred. For example, one would prefer to say 'cycle repair panna venum' instead of saying 'mithvandi paluthupaarkka venum' (I have to repair the cycle). The responses also show that English is preferred to explain some feelings and expressions as they find easy to express in English and they are best understood in English than in Tamil.

The fifth highest ranked reason for code-mixing is that they do not find Tamil equivalents for certain words especially in modern scientific and technological terms. 72% of the responses involve in code-mixing because of the habitual use of English in their day to day conversation. Though they know the equivalents for certain words, they tend to mix English words. It is also found in the study that students use mixing as a strategy to learn English. This process evolves from code-mixing to code-switching to gain fluency in English. Respondents also feel that code-mixing is involuntarily done that is without being aware of mixing English words. There are other reasons for code-mixing. They say that it is trendy and stylish to speak a mixed language. It symbolizes group solidarity. Lack of terms in Tamil for some words is also one reason to involve in code-mixing. Tamil language will have to update its vocabulary to avoid the infiltration of English words in order to maintain its purity. So the lexicon of the Tamil language is updated with the use of loan words or loan translations which are difficult to pronounce and remember. For example, one would like to say train rather than saying 'pukaivanTi' in Tamil which is long and laborious to pronounce and difficult to remember.

#### **4.14. Conclusion**

It is obvious that the sociolinguistic questionnaire data comprising different variables corroborates the findings of the interviews and participant observations. It reveals that the number of respondents speaking Tamil dominates while comparing with other speakers of Language. In addition, Tamil is mostly used in both formal and informal domains, however it is prominently used in informal domains. This is due to the growing ethnic consciousness which has caused a 'prominent' language by its users in relation to identity and cultural values. However, it should be mentioned that its low status is associated with the low social mobility it offers to speakers and class distinctions associated with it. The high and low status of languages corroborates with the findings of this study. As Tamil acquires high status in most of the formal and informal contexts, it not only reveals the changing roles languages gain based on different socio-cultural contexts but also depict the diversity as found in inherent in language varieties. The diversity is exemplified in the attitudes of speakers, which assign different social statuses to languages depending on different socio-cultural contexts. It can be mentioned that Tamil is most often provides cultural identity to the speakers and is being the 'free access code' termed as one of the national language and as one of the languages of instruction based on the educational policy of the country.

According to the data in relation to interlocutors and language use, the findings reveal that the roles and functions of Tamil are mostly determined by interlocutors. As reported by respondents, Tamil dominates and assumes superiority in almost all settings. At the same time, the use of both Tamil and English in discourse too assumes similar functions and roles as it is found in Tamil. However, in most cases, the use of both Tamil and English appears to replace the use of Tamil in certain contexts. So the mix code-Tamil and English emerge as an alternate code in place of Tamil and it integrates English with Tamil successfully. This is greatly due to the positive attitudes towards English based on the higher social mobility in all settings of their career.

The sociolinguistic analyses of data in this study confirm that the use of both Tamil and English in discourse is a widespread phenomenon with urban bilinguals. It is obvious that mixing of both Tamil and English is the alternate code for Tamil and it often overlaps with the use of Tamil in certain contexts. So English is the least used code due to the integration with Tamil-English mixed code. Urban Tamils have chosen to be bilinguals in most domains with most interlocutors. The rationales for the widespread use of both Tamil and English in the media like newspaper, TV, Radio and books especially in urban areas can be categorized as both functional and symbolic in motivating the speakers to engage in mixed discourse.

Finally, The results of the study seem to reveal these facts about code-mixing among Tamil and English bilinguals: code-mixing makes for easy communication because it is speech accommodating and used as a strategy for communication among different degree of bilinguals. Code-mixing is sometimes done for the prestige associated with it. Mixing of Tamil and English in discourse is happening because of the high level exposure to English through various sources. This study has also thrown light on the functions and the various reasons for mixing Tamil and English in discourse. The study also confirms that mixing of both Tamil and English in the discourse is an inevitable phenomenon and an unconscious process without being aware of it. At the same time, it has different functions for the upward social mobility and desire for social, educational, and occupational progress in all settings of their life.

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