

Phonological Changes in Standard Sri Lankan English Across Generations with Special Reference to Past and Present Students of Ladies' College, Colombo 07

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to confirm that there is a difference between the phonological features of two different generations of speakers of Standard Sri Lankan English (SSLE) due to the exposure to other varieties of English through the internet and mainstream media. Many younger speakers of SSLE are habitual viewers of American and British television and movies. These speakers have been exposed to these varieties of English from a very young age and still continue to be exposed to these varieties, even more so than their counterparts in the older generations who mostly acquired English from their parents and teachers. This study was conducted with a sample population of 40 SSLE speakers who are past or present pupils of Ladies' College, Colombo 07. The sample population was divided into two categories, namely speakers between the ages of 18 and 25 and speakers between the ages of 40 and 70. The participants were given a questionnaire to identify their socio-economic backgrounds and their exposure to English. The participants were then subjected to a short interview and requested to read a short excerpt from a young adult novel. These recordings were analysed using the phonetic software PRAAT with special attention given to words containing diphthongs. The recordings were also compared to Standard British English (SBE) and American English (AE) pronunciation. The recordings and pronunciation of each generation was also compared with each other in order to identify the phonological differences. The data obtained from the questionnaires and interviews were analysed in order to identify the factors that affected the changes in phonology from one generation to another. This study showed that there was a difference in the pronunciation and speech patterns of the younger generation in comparison to the older generation who showed features of SSLE and the phonology of the younger generation was affected by continuous exposure to SBE and AE.

Keywords: Phonology, changes, generations, Standard Sri Lankan English

INTRODUCTION

Language is not what it was before. Language is in a constant state of evolution. This also stands true with the English language. Over the span of centuries, the English language evolved so much that the English of days gone by, or more academically referred to as Old English or Middle English, is practically unintelligible for current speakers of the language. One does not need to look too far too see how much English has evolved. Take the works of Shakespeare for example. Every child or university student studying English Literature has faced the daunting task of reading at least one play by the Bard himself. Yet, not many understand Shakespeare with all its era specific language and nuances. In fact, many simply forego reading the actual plays and opt for reading the SparkNotes version instead.

Background to the Study

As stated by Fernando (1985), Sri Lankan English (SLE) is also in a constant state of change and is forming itself afresh in response to changed sociolinguistic conditions. In the heyday of colonization, the educated Sri Lankan may have spoken the language of the British. Yet, much like any other language, the English introduced by the British has now evolved due its contact with Sinhala and Tamil. You can almost be certain that the English spoken by your great-grandfather is not the English that you speak today. Therefore, it is

important to document the phonological changes that have occurred in SLE from the time it was introduced by the British to the present. While Professor Manique Gunasekara's book *The Post-colonial Identity of Sri Lankan English* written in 2005, and Dr Siromi Fernando's article titled *When is a "hall" a "hole"?: Issues and guidelines in Sri Lankan English pronunciation* published in 2006 does identify the general phonological aspects of SLE, to the knowledge of the author, there has been no studies conducted on the phonological changes that have occurred in the younger SSLE speakers from that time period to the present. While there have been previous studies conducted on the phonology of SLE, the most recent study solely dedicated to the changes in SLE phonology that this author was able to find was conducted in 1985 by Dr Siromi Fernando.

Purpose of the Study

Present day Sri Lankans, the younger generation in particular, are in constant contact with other varieties of English due to globalization and the advancement of technology. Documentation of the process of phonological change, and the identification of the factors that may have affected such change may be of great importance in this current era of rapid globalization. The purpose of this study is to identify the phonological features of Standard SLE (SSLE) speakers in different generations of a particular language community and detect how the phonology of SSLE has changed with time. This study will further analyse the factors that may have affected such phonological changes in SSLE.

This study will answer the following research questions;

- a. What are the distinct phonological features of each speaker generation?
- b. What are the phonological changes that have occurred from one generation to another?
- c. What are the factors that may have influenced this change?

Significance of the Study

This study is conducted to fill a lacuna in research conducted in phonological change in SLE in recent times. This study could also help broader research to be conducted to identify how the phonological features of different language communities have evolved over time and could also be used to predict the patterns of future phonological changes in SLE through analysis of influencing factors and action research or controlled experimental studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been many phonological changes in the English language documented by various historical linguists over the years. In fact, the subject of historical linguistics is devoted to studying how language has evolved over the years and what factors could have caused such an evolution. Most people who are well-versed in the history of the English language is aware of it has evolved over the years and the great differences between the English spoken a few hundred years ago and the language that is spoken in this day and age. A great method of seeing the difference between of the evolution of the English language over years would be to simply read the works of Beowulf, Chaucer, Shakespeare or even different versions of the Bible. Not only were the words and spelling used completely different and hard to understand, even the pronunciation of the words differed vastly from the Standard English pronunciation used today. The documented changes in the English language is not only limited to the lexical changes but includes phonological changes as well.

Change in Phonology

Hans (1991) defines phonological change as any sound change that alters the distribution of phonemes in a language. He further states that old contrasts may disappear, new ones may emerge, or they may simply be rearranged. There have been many theories formed and studies conducted on phonological changes conducted since the early 1900's. Guy (2003) states that the social spread of language change has been a matter of keen interest in dialectological studies, and early attempts to study sound change in progress can be found in works such as Gauchat (1905) and Hermann (1929). According to Janda (2003) a sound change may arise at any

given time, but it typically runs its course within a relatively short temporal span. He further states that this fact is recognized in one of the key questions raised by Weinreich et al. (1968) as part of their ground-breaking manifesto on the role of social factors in language change.

Murray (1996) states that the inevitability of language change is guaranteed by the way in which language is passed on from one generation to the next. He further states that children do not begin with an intact grammar of the language being acquired but rather must construct a grammar on the basis of the available data and in such a situation it is hardly surprising that differences will arise, even if only subtle ones, from one generation to the next. Murray (1996) also states that sound change can lead to changes in a language's phonological system by adding, eliminating, or rearranging phonemes. Such phonological change can involve splits, mergers, or shifts. In a phonological split, allophones of the same phoneme come to contrast with each other due to the loss of the conditioning environment, and as a result one or more new phonemes are created. Phonological change can also occur in an individual speaker. According to Hamann (2015) several studies have shown that even adults keep updating their phonetic realizations. The study by Harrington, Palethorpe & Watson (2000) of the Christmas broadcasts of the Queen of England and the subtle change in her acoustic vowel space over the years is a prime example of this. Hickey (2012) states that speakers change language and that the term 'language' is an abstraction over the collective behaviour of a speech community. Hickey (2012) further states that change begins with variation in the speech of speakers, ultimately of individual speakers but continuously occurring variation in speech only leads to established instances of change in some cases and it is communities (or subcommunities) who carry it forward. Robinson (2019) says that in some instances the pronunciation of a particular vowel sound or consonant sound changes gradually across successive generations and thus has an impact on a large group of words.

Changes in English Phonology

Hickey (2014) states that the sound system of English has undergone considerable change in the 1,500 years or so for which documents of the language exist. He further states that English has experienced great phonological change over the centuries, for example, it has lost consonantal length, has acquired phonemic voiced fricatives, and has developed contrastive word stress under Romance influence. Hickey (2014) also says that some of the changes were motivated by reanalysis by language learners and some by gradual shifts in pronunciation by adult speakers. According to Hickey (2014) contact with other languages was one factor that influenced language change until the Middle Age. The Great English Vowel Shift which took place between 1400 and 1700 is a prime example of change in English Phonology and according to Stockwell (2002) through this vowel shift the pronunciation of all Middle English long vowels was changed while some consonant sounds changed as well, particularly those that became silent. As mentioned by Murray (1996) the English phoneme /ŋ/ was the result of a phonological split since originally, /ŋ/ was simply the allophone of /n/ that appeared before a velar consonant. However, during Middle English, consonant deletion resulted in the loss of /g/ in word-final position after a nasal consonant, leaving /ŋ/ as the final sound in words such as sing. Hickey (2014) also states that from the eighteenth century onwards a further factor comes to the fore in language change: the prescriptivism which arose surrounding language use and education which concerned the rising middle classes in the late modern period.

Sri Lankan English Phonology

Kirkpatrick (2008) refers to SLE as a South Asian variety of English. According to Gunasekara (2005) SLE is the English used by any Sri Lankan for whatever purpose in their day-to-day life. Gunasekara (2005) states that one variety of English spoken in Sri Lanka is referred to as Standard Sri Lankan English (SSLE) while the other is derogatorily called "not pot English" or Other Varieties of Sri Lankan English (OVSLE). Kandiah (2007) also states that the English that the habitual users of Lankan English 'pick up' in this very natural way as the first language of their thought, action and experience in these spheres would, in its spoken form be Lankan, not 'Standard English'. Passé (1943) once stated that the small percentage of educated Ceylonese are 'English educated'; they know English and they know it well. This supports the statement by Gunasekara (2005) that SSLE is used by westernized, elitist segments of Sri Lankan society and that the majority of these speakers attended prestigious schools in urban areas and have access to the English media. Meyler (2007) also stated the following with regard to SLE;

Even within a small country like Sri Lanka, and even within the relatively tiny English-speaking community, there are several sub-varieties of Sri Lankan English. Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers speak different varieties; Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims have their own vocabularies; the older generation speak a different language from the younger generation; and the wealthy Colombo elite (who tend to speak English as their first language) speak a different variety from the wider community (who are more likely to learn it as a second language).

This statement by Meyler (2007) further corroborates Gunasekara's assessment of speakers of SSLE. Validating both Meyler's and Gunasekara's definition of SLE speakers, Fernando (1985) further adds that socially, the speaker of SLE today is (generally) privileged, affluent, upper or upper middle-class, with a tradition of formal westernised education behind him, usually educated in urban schools, many of them private; also with a tradition of anglicised cultural patterns, in employment generally in the professions, learned occupations and upper rungs of the government or commercial hierarchy. She further states the following about the speakers of SSLE;

In terms of language acquisition; he still acquires English at home. This is reinforced at school only in a few urban private schools where English continues as the official medium of extra-curricular activities. At home, English is still acquired for speech by the age of five at the latest, and what is acquired is the established variety SLE. Socially, the younger generation, but also all speakers of SLE, are more mobile and interactive today. They interact more than earlier with those to whom SLE is not an L1 both in Sinhala and a variety of English that is neither Standard English nor SLE. In the case of interaction in English, he is exposed to the non-Standard English, non-SLE variety mainly in listening, but in some cases, he may use this other variety as well. (p.44)

While Gunasekara (2005) classifies SLE into different varieties, Fernando (2006) suggests that at least 4 different dialects of SLE can be distinguished on the basis of fairly systematic features of pronunciation. Dialect 1 includes speakers of English whose pronunciation is the closest to Standard English. Dialect 2 refers to speakers whose pronunciation differs slightly from Dialect 1. Dialect 3 includes speakers who are fluent in English but show an influence of their native languages in their pronunciation. Dialect 4 is a learner variety which is full of inconsistencies and pronunciation errors. Fernando (2006) further speculates that Dialect 1 and Dialect 2 could be identified as SSLE while Dialect 3 and 4 could be identified as OVSLE. Chitra Fernando (1976) also classifies speakers of SLE into three groups. Fernando (1976) also states that Group One corresponds mainly to those to whom SLE is an L1 and she describes them as follows;

Having a highly Anglicised life style and speaking a virtually uniform variety of English whatever its racial origin... Such bilinguals are typically members of the legal, medical, and educational professions, civil servants, commercial executives etc. at the top and middle of the social scale; at the lower end are clerks, nurses, stenographers etc, who would shade off to Group Two depending on their pronunciation and the degree to which they use English in-domestic or 'social intercourse.

According to Siromi Fernando (1985), Chitra Fernando (1976) classifies this group further on the basis of the variety of English they use, i.e. on the phonological grammatical, lexical and stylistic, features of their variety of English. Gunasekara (2005) also states that in terms of phonology, the foundation of SLE was presumably the standard variety of British English which has in turn influenced the making of SSLE. When compared to the speakers of OVSLE, speakers of SSLE show the least influence from the phonology of Sinhala and Tamil. Gunasekara (2005) also states that the phonemes of SSLE represent the variety of English used by approximately 2% of those speaking English in Sri Lanka.

Changes in SLE Phonology

Not many studies which document the change in SSLE phonology have been done over the years as most studies and articles focus on documenting the prominent aspects of SSLE phonology instead. However, Fernando (1985) states that linguistic studies of English as it is used in Sri Lanka have over the years distinguished a variety that has been variously labelled "Ceylon English", "Lankan English" and "Sri Lankan English". In her study titled "Changes in Sri Lankan English as reflected in phonology", Fernando (1985) has

outlined the aspects of this change and described the way the SLE used at the time of the study differed from the varieties of English used in Sri Lanka previously. Fernando's study focuses on how Sinhala was rapidly becoming more socially influential at the time and how the SLE user was open to pressure from Sinhala. She states that because of the SLE user's enhanced contact with Sinhala, he has once again become vulnerable to the psychological processes of transference etc. According to Fernando (1985) SLE is currently in a process of change, and it is forming itself afresh in response to changed sociolinguistic conditions. In her study, she discusses the changes in consonants, vowels, stress and intonation of SLE over time.

Changes in Phonology across Generations

Robinson (2019) states that phonological change can come in a variety of forms. He states that some changes merely affect the way a single word is pronounced: older speakers across the UK tend to stress the first syllable in the word controversy, for instance, while younger speakers increasingly place the main stress on the second syllable, controversy. In an article on the changes in the phonological systems across generations of speakers of the same language community, Hamann (2015) stated that the emergence of a new phonemic contrast is mostly a straightforward and easily detectable case of phonological change. The model example for a new contrast is the so-called phonemic split. As mentioned above Murray (1996) a phonological split occurs when allophones of a phoneme come to contrast with each other due to a loss of the conditioning environment which results in the creation of new phonemes. Hamann (2015) adds to this by stating that a split usually occurs when the allophones of a single phoneme produced by speakers of an older generation are re-analysed as separate phonemes by the listeners/speakers of a younger generation. Hamann (2015) also states that such a split has occurred previously in the transition from Old English to Middle English which is further supported by Murray (1996) as seen above. Here, Hamann (2015) focuses on how the change can be detected, how it emerges and ceases to exist, how and why a phonological change should be formalised. He states that formalizing the knowledge we need to have as speakers and listeners to be able to exhibit certain linguistic behaviour is the topic of theoretical linguistics in general. As such, formalization is a way of making our assumptions about linguistic knowledge explicit, and it provides us with testable predictions. Hamann (2015) further states that such formalization has to start with an exact description of the phenomenon under investigation. According to Hamann (2015) with respect to phonological changes, this means a description of what changed across the generations. In his article, Hamann also states that formal statements of change are useful because they enable us to compare the sounds or classes of sounds that have changed and the context of such change.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

As mentioned above this research will attempt to answer the following research questions.

- a. What are the distinct phonological features of each speaker generation?
- b. What are the phonological changes that have occurred from one generation to another?
- c. What are the factors that may have influenced this change?

According to Dörnyei (2007) in the most profound sense 'research' simply means trying to find answers to questions. As such in order answer each of the aforementioned research questions, this study will employ a mixed methodology. A mixed methodology is simply a research methodology which uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. According to Glesen and Peshkin (1991), qualitative research inquires deeply into specific experiences, with the intention of describing and exploring meaning through text, narrative, or visual-based data, by developing themes exclusive to that set of participants. Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) define quantitative research as explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics).

Dörnyei (2007) has described mixed methodology as a new and vigorously growing branch of research methodology, involving the combined use of qualitative and quantitative methods with the hopes of offering the best of both worlds. Hesse-Biber (2010) states that researchers who use mixed methods employs a research design that uses both quantitative and qualitative data to answer a particular question or a set of questions.

Hesse-Biber (2010) further states that qualitatively driven approaches/designs is, at its core, a qualitative study with quantitative data/method added to supplement and improve the qualitative study by providing an added value and deeper, wider, and fuller or more complex answers to research questions; qualitative quality criteria are emphasized but high quality quantitative data also must be collected and analysed. Here Hesse-Biber (2010) is in fact speaking of a mixed method research approach where the qualitative methods would be focused upon largely. Thus, when considering both these statements, it is clear that the research design that this study is focused on would be a qualitatively driven mixed method research design.

Sampling

According to Dörnyei (2007) a good sample is very similar to the target population in its most important general characteristics (for example, age, gender, ethnicity, educational background, academic capability, social class, or socioeconomic status). Thus, for the purpose of this study in order to obtain clear findings, speakers of SSLE with similar educational and socio-economic backgrounds were used as the sample population. According to Gunasekara (2005), SSLE is used by westernized, elitist segments of Sri Lankan society that attended prestigious schools in urban areas. Therefore, from the total population of SSLE speakers in Sri Lanka, past and present students from Ladies' College, Colombo 07 were used as the sample population. Ladies' College, Colombo 07 was chosen as the criteria for choosing the sample population as it falls well within Gunasekara's (2005) idea of a prestigious school in an urban area, and its students both past and present denote the 'westernised, elitists segments of Sri Lankan society'. Moreover, aside from being of the same gender, these participants had similar socio-economic and educational backgrounds as well as access to the same resources.

A homogenous sampling method was followed in selecting the participants. Dörnyei (2007) states that in homogenous sampling, the researcher selects participants from a particular subgroup who share some important experience relevant to our study, and this strategy allows us to conduct an in-depth analysis to identify common patterns in a group with similar characteristics. For the purpose of this study, two generations of speakers were identified; one category of speakers being between the ages of 18 and 25 years, and the other category of speakers being between the age of 40 and 70 years. Each age category consisted of 20 participants with a total number of 40 participants. The participants for both age categories were chosen based on the following criteria; past or present student of Ladies' College, Colombo 07 who have studied there for more than 8 years and who have not lived abroad for more than 5 years for any purpose other than higher education. Past students of Ladies' College, Colombo 07 who had migrated previously and were in Sri Lanka at the time the research was being conducted and those who are currently residing abroad were excluded from the sample population. No exclusion criterion was given with regard to race, religion, or ethnicity.

Data Collection Tools

Dörnyei (2007) states that in applied linguistic research 3 types of data, namely qualitative data, quantitative data, and linguistic data, can be found. With regard to qualitative data Dörnyei (2007) very simply states that it usually involves recorded spoken data (for example, interview data) that is transcribed to textual form as well as written (field) notes and documents of various sorts. He describes quantitative data as being most commonly expressed in numbers (for example, the score of a language aptitude test or the number of times a student volunteers in class), and language data as data which involves language samples of various length, elicited from the respondent primarily for the purpose of language analysis (for example, a recorded language task or a solicited student essay that is to be submitted to discourse analysis). Being a study focusing on the phonological aspect of linguistics, this study also dealt with the 3 types of data identified by Dörnyei (2007).

In order to obtain language data, and as a means of ensuring that similar words and phrases are used by all the speakers, each participant was asked to read a short excerpt from the young adult novel *Finding Audrey* by Sophie Kinsella. [Please refer to Appendix A for the excerpt from the novel.] Qualitative data was obtained when the participants were subjected to a short interview where the questions ranged from mundane day-to-day questions to in-depth questions about their perception of the language spoken by the two generations of speakers. The interviews followed a semi-structured interview type where the interviewer follows a pre-determined set of questions but also keeps the questions open-ended so as to build a rapport with the

participant, follow interesting developments and encourage the participant to speak freely. According to Dörnyei (2007) the semi-structured interview is suitable for cases when the researcher has a good enough overview of the phenomenon or domain in question and is able to develop broad questions about the topic in advance but does not want to use ready-made response categories that would limit the depth and breadth of the respondent's story.

A questionnaire was administered to each of the participants as a means of obtaining information about their linguistic backgrounds, socio-economic background, and exposure to speakers of other languages. According to Dörnyei (2007) questionnaire items do not have good or bad answers; they elicit information about the respondents in a non-evaluative manner, without gauging their performance against a set of criteria. The questionnaire used in this study consisted of factual questions about their demographic characteristics, behavioural questions about their habits and how they are exposed to speakers of other varieties of English, as well as attitudinal questions on their opinion about whether they see a difference in pronunciation among the two generations. Most factual questions and behavioural questions were formulated as close-ended questions with multiple choice answers while the attitudinal questions were formulated as open-ended questions. This questionnaire was administered as an online questionnaire using the *Google Forms* tool rather than a written questionnaire due to its user-friendly interface and ready availability. Dörnyei (2007) has stated that given the increasingly available and continuously improving computer hardware and software, it is becoming relatively easy to set up an Internet survey or experiment, and a web-based study offers some tempting benefits. Even Kumar and Naik (2016) states that Google forms survey provides both a new way to perform Internet surveys and a new method for data collection.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research methods were used in order to analyse the speech of SSLE speakers from each generation, whereas quantitative research methods were used to analyse the factors that may have affected phonological changes. The recordings of the text obtained from each participant were analysed with special reference to the list of words given in Table 4.1 as well as pace, intonation and stress. Spectrograms of these recordings obtained using the phonetic software PRAAT was thereafter analysed and annotated. According to Boersma (2001) PRAAT is used by many linguists (phoneticians, phonologists, syntacticians) to label and segment their speech recordings. Heuven (2001) further says that PRAAT is probably the most comprehensive toolbox for phonetic research available worldwide, and it is certainly the most affordable; it actually costs no money at all. For the purposes of this study, PRAAT version 6.1.08 was run on a Windows 10 64-bit computer with the CharisSIL font used for phonetic symbols. The data obtained from both the questionnaire and interviews with the participants were studied to identify what factors many have caused phonological changes across these two generations.

Ethical Considerations

Given that this study is focused around past and present students of Ladies' College, Colombo 07, permission to conduct the research and permission to publish the name of the school in the research was obtained by both the Principal and the Vice-Principal of the school prior to the commencement of the study in order to curtail any concerns (ethical or otherwise) that may arise when using the school's name for the purposes of this research. Similarly, permission of the Principal and Vice-Principal was also obtained when conducting the research within school premises. Dörnyei (2007) states that it is a basic ethical principle that the respondent's right to privacy should always be respected and that respondents are within their rights to refuse to answer questions or to withdraw from the study completely without offering any explanation. Each participant was informed of the nature and purpose of the study. A participant information sheet was provided to the participants and explicit written consent was obtained from each participant by way of a consent form prior to the commencement of the interview. The online questionnaire even included a provision stating that by answering the questionnaire participants were agreeing to participate in the research. Both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form included a clause stating that the interviews would be recorded for analysis purposes. Participants who were not comfortable with having their voices recorded were allowed to opt out of the research at any given time.

Data Analysis

Demography of the Sample Population

Demography of the '40 to 70' Generation

With regard to the questionnaire administered to the participants of the '40 to 70' generation, the participants were of different age groups with the most common age group being 50 years and the oldest participant being 67 years.

Out of the 20 participants in this age category, 19 were married and one was widowed. The questionnaire results also showed that 95% of the participants had children while one did not. The results also showed that the daughters of these participants were currently attending or had previously attended Ladies' College.

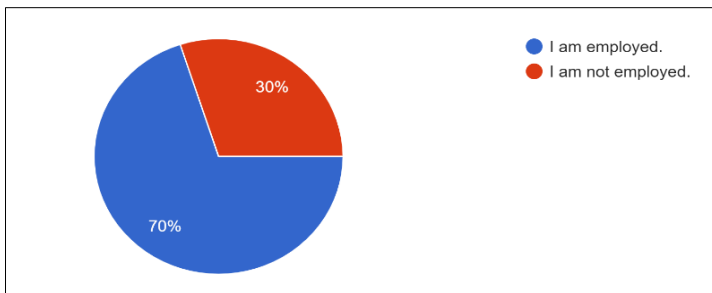


Figure 4.1. Percentage of Employed and Unemployed participants

As seen in Figure 4.1, 70% of the participants were employed while 30% of the population were not employed. Figure 4.2 shows the fields in which these participants are employed.

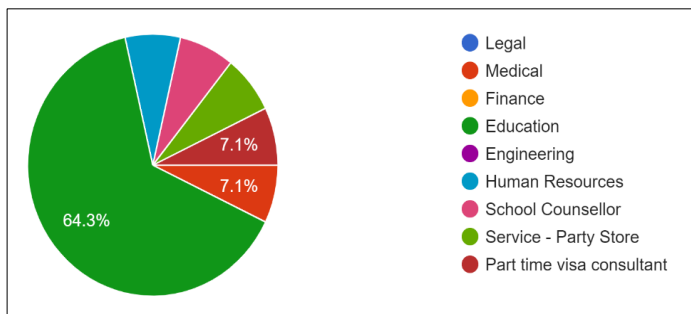


Figure 4.2. Sectors in which the participants are employed

Over 80% of the participants stated that they have studied at Ladies' College from nursery up to A/Ls for a time period of over 14 years while a few stated that they started studying at Ladies' College in Grade 1. Of the 20 participants 10 had mothers, sisters and aunts who were old girls of Ladies' College. 90% of the participants stated that both their parents are Sri Lankan while one participant stated that both her parents were Chinese and another stated that her mother was Japanese while her father was Sri Lankan. Figure 4.3 shows the first language or the L₁ of the participants in this age category.

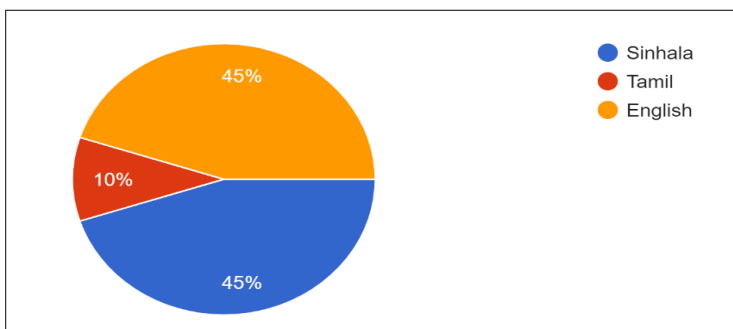


Figure 4.3. First language of the participants

Most participants stated that in addition to their first language they speak either English, Sinhala, or Tamil while 2 participants stated that they speak Japanese. However, 90% of the participants stated that they feel more comfortable using English when compared to other languages.

Demography of the ‘18 to 25’ Generation

The questionnaire administered to the 18 to 25 generation showed that the majority of the participants were aged 24 while 5 were aged 20 and the rest of the participants were aged 18, 19, 21, 22 and 23 while no participants were aged 25. The majority of these participants too stated that they had studied at Ladies’ College from Nursery to A/Ls while one participant stated that she had only studied at Ladies’ College for 10 years. Unlike the participants in the previous generation., the participants in the 18 to 25 generation stated that both their parents are Sri Lankan. Figure 4.4 shows the L1 of these participants.

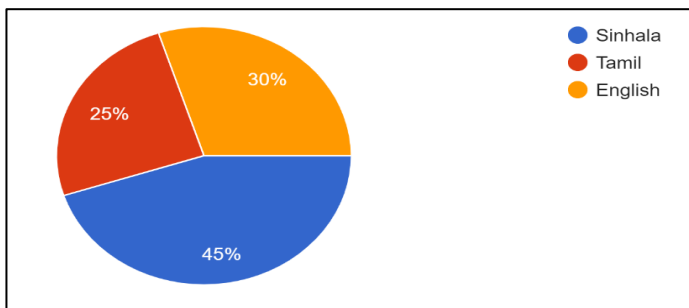


Figure 4.4. First language of the participants.

The participants further stated that in addition to their L1 they also speak English, Sinhala or Tamil. The 95% of the participants also stated that they feel more comfortable using English when compared to other languages. 80% of the participants stated that they use English at home while three participants stated that they use a mix of English and Sinhala and two participants stated that they also speak Tamil at home. The majority of the participants also stated that their mother and aunts were past pupils of Ladies’ College. When asked if they speak English with their friends, all the participants answered in the affirmative.

Common phonological aspects of each generation

As a means of answering the research related to the above, the pronunciation of each participant in each age category was analysed and the phonological features common to each generation were identified. Special attention was given to pronunciation, stress, and intonation. The features of SSLE phonology as identified by Gunasekara (2005) was also referenced when analysing these common features. In order to analyse the pronunciation, several words where typical SSLE pronunciation can be seen were identified in the text in Appendix A that the participants were required to read. The identified words and phrases with their typical SBE and AE phonetic transcription¹ is given below in Table 4.1. Special attention has been given to the vowel sounds in the selected words during the analysis.

Table 4.1. Words selected for analysis

	SBE	AE
A.M.	/eɪ.ɛm. /	/eɪ.ɛm. /
Road	/rd./	/roud/
Alert	/ə'ɪ:t/	/ə'ɪrt/
Gone	/gɒn/	/gɔn/
Okay	/'əʊ'keɪ/	/'oʊ'keɪ/
Hall	/hɔ:l/	/hɒl/

¹ IPA transcription was obtained from www.tophonetics.com

Video	/'vidiəʊ/	/'vidiʊʊ/
Sorry	/'sɒri/	/'sari/
Great	/greɪt/	/greɪt/
Saunters	/'sɔ:ntəz/	/'sɔntərz/
Same	/seɪm/	/'sɔntərz/
Take	/teɪk/	/teɪk/
Hello	/he'ləʊ/	/hə'ləʊ/
Shiver	/'ʃɪvə/	/'ʃɪvər/
Tones	/təʊnz/	/təʊnz/
Shoulder	/'ʃəʊldə/	/'ʃəʊldər/
Rolling	/'rəʊlɪŋ/	/'rəʊlɪŋ/
What	/wɒt/	/wʌt/
Aim	/eɪm/	/eɪm/
Fear	/fiə/	/fɪr/
Worked	/wɜ:kt/	/wɜrkt/
Activity	/æk'tɪvɪti/	/æk'tɪvəti/
Waiting	/'weɪtɪŋ/	/'weɪtɪŋ/
Lasers	/'leɪzəz/	/'leɪzərz/
Yes	/jɛs/	/jɛs/

Common phonological features of the '40 to 70' generation

The pronunciation of the above words as well as the whole text in general was consistent with Fernando's (1985) and Gunasekara's (2005) features of SSLE. According to Fernando (1985) and Gunasekara (2005) in SSLE the diphthongs /eɪ/ and /oʊ/ are realized as long monophthongs /e:/ and /o:/. The participants in this generation showed similar characteristics in their speech. For example, the word 'great' which is /greɪt / in SBE was pronounced as /gre:t/, while /'weɪtɪŋ/ was pronounced as /we: tɪŋ/. According to Fernando (1985) speakers of SLE have a slight tendency to replace the middle element of triphthongs /aue/ and /aiə/ with bilabial or palatal frictionless continuants in casual colloquial styles; e.g., power /pave/ as in casual "He's got a lot of power", fire /fajə/ as in casual "There was a big fire." However, as we can see through the pronunciation of the word "fear", some of the speakers of SSLE tend to add palatal approximants such as /j/ even between diphthongs such as /ɪə/. While the SBE of "fear" is /fiə/, the participants of this age category pronounced it as /fɪjə/ instead with a noticeable addition of /j/. This was also seen in words such as "video" where it was pronounced as /vidiʊ:/ instead of the SBE /'vidiəʊ/ or the AE /'vidiʊʊ/.

It is also interesting to note that the speakers of this generation also showed features of epenthesis. For example, many speakers in this sample pronounced "yes" as /ɪjəs/ instead of the SBE /jɛs/. Here, the speakers had inserted the vowel sound /ɪ/ before the palatal approximant consonant /j/.

However, no participants of this age group showed severe deviations from SSLE pronunciation. According to Fernando (1985) speakers of SLE in general tend to stress the first syllable of a multisyllabic word. The stress patterns of all the speakers in this generation was also compatible with that of SSLE. Gunasekara (2005) states that in terms of intonation patterns, SSLE is considered 'more lilting' than SBE. This proved true when analysing the speech of the participants in this generation as they too had a particularly rhythmic way of talking that was seen in almost all participants. This was clearly seen the manner in which they said the phrase "Here we come. Here we go" from the excerpt of the novel.

Common phonological features of the '18 to 25' generation

While the participants in this age category do show the common features of SSLE they also show phonological features that cannot be seen in the '40 to 70' age category and are common to only this age category. For example, out of the 20 participants 18 participants pronounced "what" as /wʌt/. However, there were some major deviations from SSLE in their pronunciation that will be discussed later on. Most speakers showed similar characteristics in the pronunciation of the monophthongs and diphthongs that are seen in SSLE. In

terms of intonation patterns, the speakers of this generation showed similar intonation patterns. For example, almost all speakers emphasised the words “really” and “totally” during the recording of the text in a manner that can only be described as American.

Phonological changes between each generation

Pronunciation of vowel sounds

One major pronunciation difference that was seen among the speakers of these two generations was in the pronunciation of the word “what”. While approximately 16 of the 20 speakers of the ‘40 to 70’ generation pronounced it as /wɒt/ whereas the ‘18 to 25’ generation pronounces it as /vʌt/. Shown below is a comparison of the annotated spectrograms of the two speaker generations.

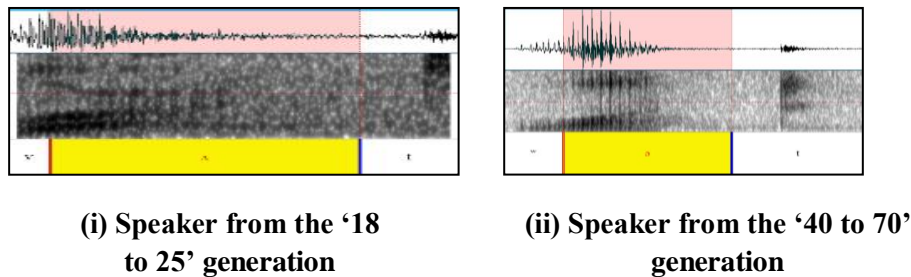


Figure 4.5. Annotated spectrogram of “what”

According to Gunasekara (2005) most speakers of SSLE have a tendency to use the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ for both /w/ and /v/ like in “water” and “van” respectively. However, as seen above, the pronunciation differs as the ‘40 to 70’ speaker generation tend to lean more towards a SBE /w/ rather than a /v/ in the pronunciation of the word “what” whereas the ‘18 to 25’ generation tend to use /v/ for both /w/ and /v/.

Another difference that was seen between the two speaker generations was in the pronunciation of the word “yes”. As stated above, the ‘40 to 70’ generations had a tendency to insert the vowel sound /ɪ/ before /jes/, thereby pronouncing it as /ɪjes/. However, the ‘18 to 25’ generation showed an inclination to use the SBE/ AE pronunciation of /jes/. Here not only does the speaker from the ‘40 to 70’ generation insert the vowel /ɪ/ before the consonant /j/, she also replaces /ɛ/ with the vowel /ə/ instead. The annotated spectrograms of the sound differences are shown in Figure 4.6.

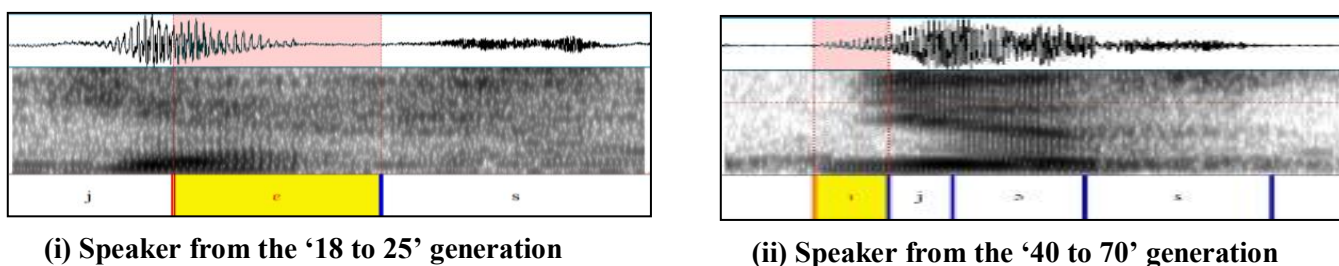
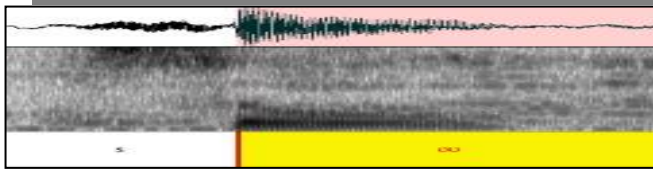
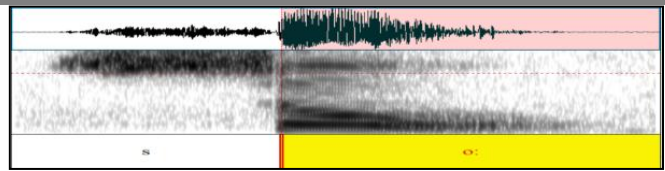


Figure 4.6 Annotated spectrogram of “yes”

The two speaker generations also showed differences in the pronunciation of the diphthong /oʊ/ in words such as “road” and “so”. As mentioned earlier according to Gunasekara (2005), speakers of SSLE recognize the diphthongs /oʊ/ as a long monophthong /o:/. While the speakers of the ‘40 to 70’ adhered to this pronunciation, many speakers from the ‘18 to 25’ generation showed deviations from SSLE pronunciation. For example, when saying the word “so”, the ‘18 to 25’ generation used the SBE pronunciation /soʊ/ whereas the ‘40 to 70’ generation used the SSLE pronunciation /so:/. Given below is the annotated spectrogram of this pronunciation difference.



(i) Speaker from the '18 to 25' generation33



(ii) Speaker from the '40 to 70' generation

Figure 4.7 Annotated spectrogram of “so”

In addition to the words shown above, other major pronunciation differences were seen in the words shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Pronunciation differences

	40 to 70	18 to 25
Road	/Ro: d/	/roud/
So	/so:/	/sou/
Tone	/ton/	/təʊn/
Okay	/okɛ/	/ 'əʊ 'keɪ/
What	/wət/	/vʌt/
Alert	/ə'lɜ:t/	/ə' lɜ:t/ or / ə' lɜrt/
Impatient	/ɪmpe: fənt/	/ɪm' peɪfənt/
Lasers	/Le:səs/	/' leɪzəz/
Waiting	/We: tɪŋ/	/ 'weɪtɪŋ/ or / we: tɪn/
Getting	/gɛtɪŋ/	/gɛtɪn/
Yes	/ɪjəs/	/jɛs/
Shiver	/ʃɪvə/	/ʃɪvər/
Saunters	/sɔ: ntəs/	/səntərz/

Differences in phonological processes

In addition to the pronunciation differences in vowel sounds, the participants also showed differences in the use of phonological processes. The '40 to 70' generation for example, was very clear in their pronunciation and enunciated each word or syllable clearly. The phrase “what do you mean” was very clearly broken down into the four separate words when speaking. However, the '18 to 25' generation showed signs of assimilation when pronouncing certain words and phrases. Most speakers in this generation assimilated the words in phrases such as “what do you mean” or “out of”. Eg: “what do you mean” became “whadoyoumean” while “out of” became “outtaf”. Another example of assimilation that was seen in the speech of the '18 to 25' generation was in phrases such as “would you”, where it would be pronounced as one word “wouldju” rather than two separate words.

The speakers of the '18 to 25' generation also showed features of elision whereas the '40 to 70' generation did not. For example, in words such as “waiting” or “dying”, the /ŋ/ sound was replaced with the consonant /n/. Here, /'weɪtɪŋ/ would become /'weɪtɪn/. This was seen in most words ending with /ŋ/ such as “squinting”, “striding”, “getting”, “coming” etc. Several speakers from the '18 to 25' generation also showed signs of elision where instead of enunciating all the consonants in words such as “didn't” or “don't”, they instead said “din” and “don” respectively.

Another general difference that was seen was in the pace of speaking of the two generations. While the '40 to 70' generation spoke at a slow pace, taking time to pause at the appropriate times and distinguish between words, the '18 to 25' generations spoke at a relatively fast pace without appropriate pauses or stops. As such

the speech of the '18 to 25' generation was fast and relatively unclear in comparison to that of the '40 to 70' generation of speakers.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

While many participants of both generations stated that English was their first language, a few other participants also identified Sinhala or Tamil as their first language. Yet, the almost all the speakers have stated that they feel more comfortable using English when compared to other languages. One participant from the '40 to 70' generation stated that although both her parents are Chinese, she has lived in Sri Lanka her whole life and does not speak Mandarin or Cantonese. She identified English as her first language and stated that she also spoke Sinhala. This shows that although they have identified Sinhala or Tamil as their first language, their primary language of use is in fact English. While they may be bilingual, their language of thought and language of use is English. One speaker from the 18 to 25 generation stated that she switches between Sinhala and English depending on where she is and whom she is associating with. She stated that while she uses English at home and with close friends, she speaks a mix of Sinhala and English at University because the majority of the students do not speak fluent English. Therefore, it is apparent that English is the dominant language of both these generations of speakers and that they therefore fall into the category of SSLE as defined by Chitra Fernando (1976), Siromi Fernando (1985 and 2006) and Gunasekara (2005).

Major phonological differences between generations

As seen from Chapter 4, the '40 to 70' generation of speakers exhibit features that are consistent with the features of SSLE phonology as described by Gunasekara (2005) and Fernando (1985 and 2006), and do not show any major deviations from SSLE. On the other hand, the '18 to 25' generation of speakers while exhibiting certain characteristics from SSLE show certain deviations as well. For example, as seen in *Figure 4.5* there is a distinct difference in the way the word "what" is pronounced. While most speakers in the '40 to 70' generation clearly pronounce the voiced labiovelar approximant /w/ in the word "what", the majority of the speakers in the '18 to 25' generation replace the /w/ with the voiced labiodental fricative /v/. While Gunasekara (2005) states that many speakers of SLE tend to use /v/ for both /w/ and /v/, this shows most members of the older generation of SSLE speakers do actually use /w/ where necessary while the younger speakers do not. This characteristic in the '40 to 70' generation maybe due to language acquisition from grandparents or parents who spoke a variety of SLE that was similar to SBE or may even be due to elocution lessons as children. While many of the speakers of the '18 to 25' generation were also given elocution lessons as children, they do not seem to have acquired this characteristic. However, it must be noted that two speakers of the '18 to 25' generation were siblings and showed similar characteristics in pronunciation. These two speakers in particular pronounced "what" as /wɒt/. It is also interesting to note that their mother being a past pupil of Ladies' College was also a participant in this research and was a member of the '40 to 70' sample population. The mother's pronunciation was also similar to that of her daughters. She too pronounced "what" as /wɒt/. It is quite apparent that these two speakers of the '18 to 25' generation had acquired their pronunciation from their mother, who in turn may have acquired her pronunciation from her own mother.

While some speakers of the '18 to 25' generation did exhibit characteristics of SSLE phonology, many also showed characteristics of speech that is consistent with that SBE or AE phonology. One other major difference that was also discussed in the previous chapter was the clear difference in the pronunciation of the word "yes". While some of the speakers of the '18 to 25' generation also pronounced it as /jɛs/ like their counterparts from the '40 to 70' generation, many speakers from the '18 to 25' generation actually used the SBE or AE pronunciation /jes/.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one other deviation from SSLE that was seen in the pronunciation of the '18 to 25' generation was in the words ending with the voiced nasal velar consonant /ŋ/ where the speakers replaced it with the nasal alveolar constant /n/ while omitting the /g/ sound in words such as "squinting" and "getting". The speakers of the '40 to 70' generation however make sure to enunciate every consonant in the word. This process of elision seen in the speech of the '18 to 25' generation can commonly be seen in African American English (AAE). According to Green (2002), in AAE, the sound /ŋ/ in the suffix -ing is often realized as /n/ but is only restricted to words with more than more than one syllable such as "walking", "running",

“singing” etc. She further states that this is not restricted to AAE but can also be seen in other non-standard varieties of English as well as in general AE in unstressed syllables and that when the final syllables of “nothing” and “something” are unstressed, the words become ‘nothin’ and ‘something’. This is also consistent with the pronunciation of most speakers of the ‘18 to 25’ generation, where they pronounced “squinting” as “squintin” and “getting” as “gettin”. This is not a common phonological feature of SSLE and was not seen in the speakers of the ‘40 to 70’ generation. This phonological change could be due to the influence of American speech patterns through movies and television at a younger age or could simply be an omission due to the fast pace at which they speak.

Another difference that was seen between the speech of the two generations was the use of diphthongs by the ‘18 to 25’ instead of monophthongs that are typically seen in SSLE pronunciation. One prominent feature of SSLE phonology is the use of long monophthongs instead of diphthongs. As stated in the previous chapter, several speakers of the ‘18 to 25’ generation used diphthongs instead of monophthongs for words containing the diphthong /ou/ unlike speakers of the ‘40 to 70’ generation who used the long monophthong /o:/ as is typical in SSLE pronunciation. As shown in Table 4.2 in the previous chapter, this difference in the use of diphthongs found in SBE or AE instead of the typical SSLE monophthongs was also seen in the use of the diphthong /ei/ instead of the long monophthong /e:/ in words such as “impatient”, “lasers”, “waiting” etc.

Some speakers of the ‘18 to 25’ generation even showed signs of rhoticity, a phonological feature that is commonly found in general AE² and is not a feature found in SSLE. For example, when pronouncing words such as “hear”, “saunters” and “shiver”, these few participants pronounced them as /hir/, /'sɒntərz/, and /ʃɪvər/ respectively.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the speakers of both generations showed vast differences when it came to the pace of speech, pauses, and intonation. While the speakers of the ‘40 to 70’ generation clearly enunciated each syllable in the word and paused in appropriate places, the speakers of the ‘18 to 25’ generation showed signs of assimilation and elision in their speech. This difference was not only seen in the recordings of the text but also in their normal conversations with the interviewer as well. Given below are several examples of assimilation in the speech of the speakers of the ‘18 to 25’ generation.

1. But if = but if

Here there is no pause between the two words and the two words are linked.

2. What do you mean = what do you mean

Here while all four words are linked, in most cases the /t/ sound is also omitted from the word “what” or is substituted with the /d/ sound instead.

3. Out of = outdo

Here too there is no pause between the words and the words are linked. In some the /t/ is doubled and the word is pronounced /aʊttəf/ instead.

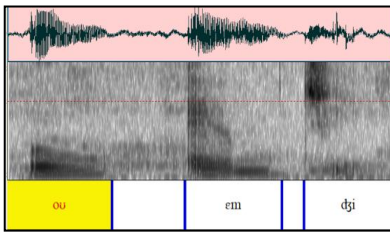
4. Would you = would you

Here while in some instances the speaker simply links the two words, in other instances the speakers substitute the /d/ and /j/ with the consonant /dʒ/. The resulting word is then pronounced as /wɒdʒu:/ instead.

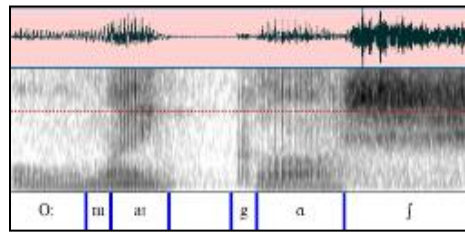
It is also interesting to note that while some speakers in the ‘18 to 25’ generation distinguished between the words “want to”, several speakers used the contracted informal colloquial form of “wanna” even while reading the text. Almost all speakers of this particular generation however, used the colloquial form “wanna” when speaking with the interviewer.

The ‘18 to 25’ generation also exhibited features of colloquial AE when pronouncing words such as “totally”, “really” and “OMG”. While speakers of the ‘18 to 25’ generation simply pronounced “OMG” as /ou-ɛm-dʒi/, most speakers of the ‘40 to 70’ generation used the word in both its forms, first in its abbreviated form and then in its unabbreviated form “Oh My Gosh”. The annotated spectrogram of the two speaker generations pronouncing “OMG” is shown in Figure 5.1 below;

² See Labov (2012)



(i) Speaker from the '18 to 25' generation



(ii) Speaker from the '40 to 70' generation

Figure 5.1 Annotated spectrogram of ' ...

What factors could have caused this phonological change?

When both generations were asked which variety English they speak, the responses were as follows.

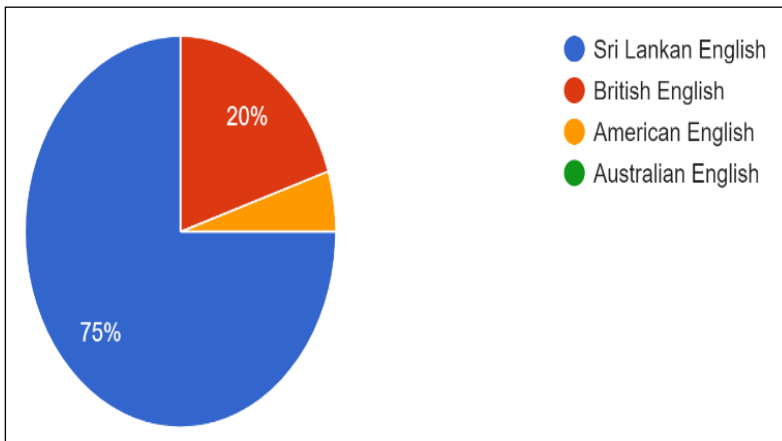


Figure 5.2 Variety of English spoken by the 18 to 25 generation

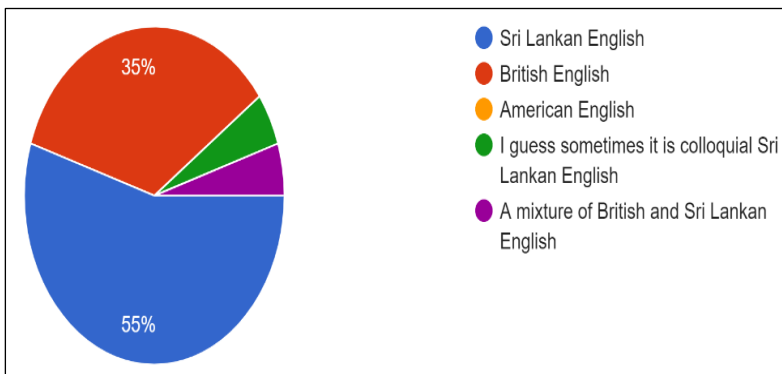


Figure 5.3 Variety of English spoken by the 40 to 70 generation

According to Gunasekara (2005) Sri Lankan people have come to accept the existence of their own variety of English and no longer look up to the British variety as the standard to which educated English speakers aspire. This statement is proven to be true when considering the figures given above. Yet while the majority of the participants are aware of the variety of English they speak, some speakers particularly in the '40 to 70' generation are still feeling the effects of the colonial hangover. However, can you fault the younger generation of speakers for stating that they speak a variety of English other than SLE when their speech does in fact show influence from SBE and AE? We will now discuss how the phonology of these younger speakers may have changed.

When the '40 to 70' generation was asked the question "do you think there is a difference between your pronunciation and that of the younger generation?", they all had the same answer to give. Yes. There was a difference. Many stated that it was because of all the slang that they used. Most stated that it was the exposure to American TV and movies from a very young age that could be the reason for this difference. The speakers of the '40 to 70' generation also stated that they did not have the same exposure to TV and movies that children these days have. Since the speakers of this generation did not have much exposure to foreign TV and films as children, they had acquired the English that they speak from their parents, relatives, and teachers. On the other hand, young children in the current day and age, and even the speakers of the 18 to 25 generation were brought up watching American movies and films. With the development of technology, and easy access to the internet it is of no surprise that the younger generation is more exposed to other varieties of English. One participant of the '40 to 70' generation in particular said the following, "Now OMG and all we wouldn't have known but we know it because of the children around and text messages and all these things otherwise it's not so bad. It's just the generation gap that's coming in here." When asked further about what may have affected their pronunciation, she stated the following, "because they're watching TV all the time, and their style of talking and all is more television type of talking. Americanised." This participant was further asked about whether there was a difference between the style of talking in her parents' generation and her generation. She stated that their pronunciation was more or less similar because they had the same things and they did not have televisions and computers unlike the children these days. One participant who works in early childhood education said the following statement. "The language of the children is changing and we need to understand their language. We need to face it and just go with the flow."

When the '40 to 70' was asked if the English that their parents spoke differed from the English that they speak, the results were as follows.

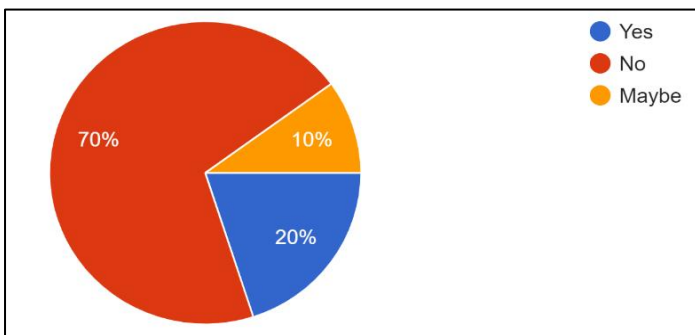


Figure 5.4. 40 to 70 generation on language differences with their parents' generation

Those who answered no, stated that the reason there was no change was because they learnt to speak English from their parents and that they mostly interacted within the family. Those who said yes stated that this change was because English was replaced as the official language of Sri Lanka and the introduction of the "Sinhala Only Act".

When the '40 to 70' generation was asked if the English they speak differs from that of the younger generation, 70% of the participants stated that there was a difference.

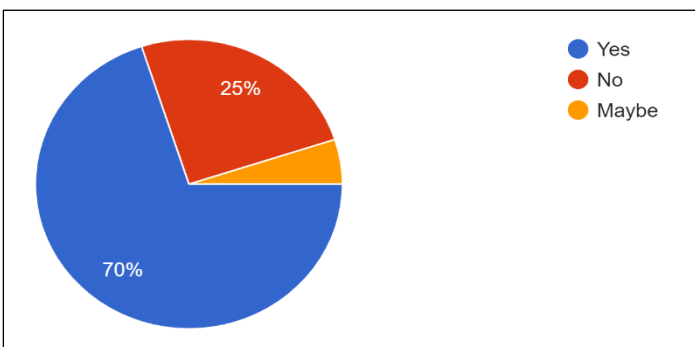


Figure 5.5. 40 to 70 generation on pronunciation differences with the younger generation

It is clear that even to the untrained ears of older speakers of SSLE, the pronunciation of the younger generation of speakers is not the same as their own, be it the slang terms the use, the pronunciation they have acquired or the style of speaking they have adopted. In order to answer the third research question of what factors could have affected this change, the participants in the ‘18 to 25’ generation were asked a series of questions relating to their past times and exposure to other varieties of English.

Do you watch English movies and TV shows or listen to English music?

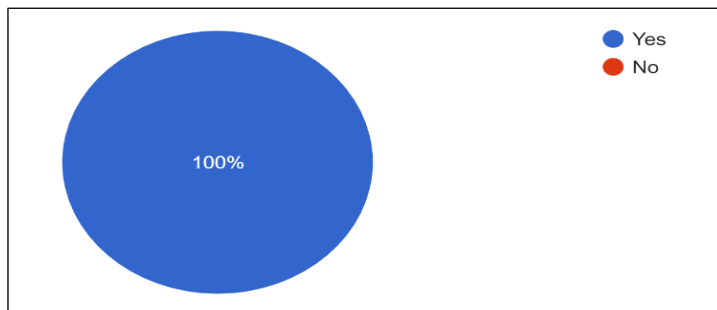


Figure 5.6 Participants who watch English content

Here, all 20 participants stated that they watch and listen to English music and TV shows. When asked how often they watch these, the majority of the participants responded saying that they watch it daily and that the content they watch is mostly produced in USA or the UK, while a few stated that they watch this content on Netflix. When asked what content they watch in addition to the above, 6 participants stated that they listen to K-pop and watch K-dramas and anime.

Do you spend a lot of time on the internet and social media?

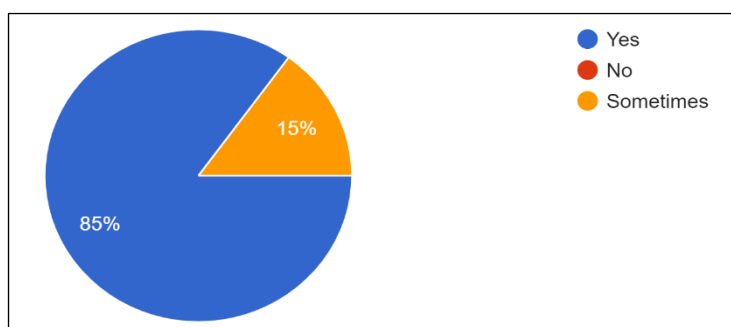


Figure 5.7 Time spent on the internet and social media

Many participants stated that they use the internet and social media for recreational and entertainment purposes, ‘fandom stuff³’, academic and research purposes as well as to communicate and interact with friends.

Do you feel that the English you speak differs from that of your parents’ generation?

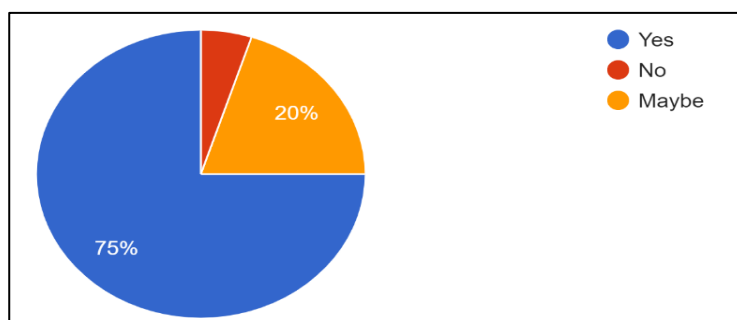


Figure 5.8. 18 to 25 generation on language differences with their parents’ generation

³ a group of fans of someone or something, especially very enthusiastic ones. (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2020)

What do you think the reason for this change is?

In response to this question, many participants stated that it was due to the exposure to the language at an early age and access to the internet. One participant, in true millennial fashion jokingly responded saying “white girls on social media - it's lit, fam.”

If one analyses the pronunciation of the ‘18 to 25’ generation, it is clear that they show signs of influence from other varieties of English, mainly SBE and AE. On the other hand, the ‘40 to 70’ show characteristics that are consistent with that of SSLE as identified by many academics. It is apparent that the phonology of these young speakers of SSLE have been influenced by their frequent contact with other varieties of English. Not only do these speakers spend the majority of their free time on the internet, browsing social media or binge-watching TV shows, they have also been exposed to these AE and SBE from a very young age. From the time the speakers of the ‘18 to 25’ generation begun acquiring English as either a first or second language, they have been exposed to AE and SBE. Given that these are speakers from good socio-economic backgrounds and have English-speaking parents, many of whom are past pupils of Ladies’ College, themselves, it is of no surprise that they were brought up speaking and listening to English. Not only were these speakers exposed to SSLE through their parents and grandparents, they were also exposed to AE and SBE through the cartoons and movies that they grew up watching. Most speakers in this age category were exposed to Disney movies and Nickelodeon cartoons as children. As young adults, they are still continuously exposed to AE and SBE through the movies and television shows they watch as well the content they see on Social Media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. Given their school background and easy access to the internet and latest technology, these speakers are not typically fans of Sri Lankan pop culture. As such, outside of their home or work environment, they are typically only exposed to AE or SBE speakers in movies or TV shows. In fact, the friend circles that they keep also typically share the same interests and would therefore show similar phonological characteristics. It should therefore come of no surprise that these speakers have been influenced by SBE or AE, be it small differences in speaking style and slang or in a very prominent manner through their pronunciation as well.

CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of the speech of the participants, it is apparent that there is indeed a difference between the pronunciation of the older generation and the younger generation of SSLE speakers. The speakers of the older ‘40 to 70’ generation show similar phonological characteristics that are also consistent with the phonological features of SSLE as identified by Fernando (1985 and 2006) and Gunasekara (2005) as well as other academics who are well-versed in the subject of SLE. The younger ‘18 to 25’ generation of speakers also show similar characteristics but show some differences in aspects of pronunciation of diphthongs and monophthongs. While they mainly adhere to the SSLE pronunciation, there are certain speakers who deviate from this pronunciation and venture into the territory of SBE and/or AE pronunciation. While this may not be true for all speakers, this feature was mostly seen in speakers who are between the ages of 18 and 20. It was also apparent that some speakers of the ‘18 to 25’ generation had a tendency to follow the pronunciation of their parents as was seen through the pronunciation of the word “what” in a similar manner by a mother (a participant in the ‘40 to 70’ generation) and her two daughters (participants in the ‘18 to 25’ generation) whereas no other speaker from the ‘18 to 25’ generation pronounced it as such. While there were also other participants with relatives within the sample population, they did not show extreme similarities in speech patterns. In fact, one such participant from the ‘18 to 25’ generation showed the most deviations from SSLE phonology whereas her mother did not. Even though some speakers of the ‘18 to 25’ generation adhered to SSLE pronunciation in certain instances, they too showed influence from AE in particular in terms of style of speech and the manner of emphasis on certain words. However, their pace of speech and phonological processes such as assimilation, linking, and elision were common to the speakers of the ‘18 to 25’ generation. Given the above, it is quite apparent that the ‘18 to 25’ generation has been influenced by SBE and AE. A quick glance at their socio-economic backgrounds, exposure to other varieties of English as children, and their current habits tell us that they have been influenced by both SBE and AE as children through children’s shows and cartoons and still continue to be exposed through the internet, social media, movies and TV. In fact, one could quite correctly say that the reason for this phonological change among the speakers of these two

generations is globalization and the advancement of technology. Unlike speakers of OVSLE who show the influence of Sinhala or Tamil, these speakers of SSLE who were once identified as such due to the lack of influence from Sinhala or Tamil, now show the influence of other varieties of English.

It must be noted however that this study is limited only to SSLE speakers who are past and present pupils of Ladies' College, Colombo 07. This study does not generalize all speakers of SSLE in Sri Lanka. However, it does give way for more research to be conducted on this particular topic with a wider range of SSLE speakers. With the conclusion of this study, there are several questions that now arise. What variety of English are these speakers of the younger generation speaking? Are they still speaking SSLE or are they speaking a new variety of SLE altogether? How then does this affect the definition of SSLE by academics such as Fernando and Gunasekara? Is the current definition of SSLE outdated? Should SSLE now be redefined to include these changes? Should these phonological changes be encouraged in the younger speakers or should they be discouraged from this style of speech? These questions then give rise to the question of whether or not these changes have affected speakers of OVSLE as well.

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