

# Language Death: The Life Cycle of Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole

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## Abstract

The case of Portuguese-based Creole speeches in Sri Lanka is unique in that it presents important questions relevant to both the genesis and the demise of a language whose life-span is estimated to be at about 500 years. This paper provides historical and sociolinguistic information regarding the origin and development of Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole. In analyzing this information, I have maintained that the trajectory of grammatical processes goes parallel with the social processes involved and that linguistic variations find expression through variations in society. It is shown that the decline or extinction of a language is influenced and even accelerated by a range of complexly intertwined political, economic, demographic and socio-psychological factors.

While presenting a specific situation of language contact and language endangerment, this paper also attempts to discuss some issues universally relevant to the topics of contact languages and endangered languages. Some fundamental questions to be addressed are: What is the process involved in language development and language endangerment and how can the facts about the process, such as mixing with genetically unrelated languages, diversification, and devitalization contribute to linguistic theory? What kinds of typological and historical insights are to be gained by studying this process? Finally, I demonstrate that language contact can bring fundamental changes to a language, interrupting the genetic path of evolution of some speech forms. The paper supports the claim that the origin and existence of a contact language poses a serious problem to the “family tree” model.

Keywords : language contact, bilingualism, lingua franca, lexifier, substratum, folklorization

## 1. Historical background

The first Portuguese contact with Sri Lanka is recorded to have taken place in 1505, when the island was first visited by Don Lourenço de Almeida, who set up the usual *padrão* at Colombo.<sup>1</sup> The image and impression created by the Portuguese, when they landed on this island, in the eyes of the inhabitants who lived in the vicinity has been depicted in the *Rajavaliya* in the following way. “There is in our harbour of Colombo a race of people fair of skin and comely withal. They don jackets of iron and hats of iron;

they rest not a minute in one place; they walk here and there; they eat hunks of stone and drink blood; they give two or three pieces of gold and silver for one fish or one lime. The report of their cannon is louder than thunder when it bursts upon the rock Yugandhara. Their cannon balls fly many a *gawwa* and shatter fortresses of granite.”

The Portuguese government of Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, was subject to the Viceroy at Goa. The Captain General functioned as the head of the government, of whom the native people used to speak as the King of Malwāne (*Malwāne Rajjuruwo*), referring to the name of the area where his residence was located. After a decade, the Portuguese were able to establish a trading settlement in Sri Lanka and sought to take over the control of the island's cinnamon trade. Portuguese involvement in the political and administrative affairs of the island began from the south-west coastal region belonging to the southern kingdom (Kotte), stretched to the Jaffna Tamil kingdom in the north and penetrated to Kandyan (central) kingdom. While the kingdom of Jaffna, as the weakest of the three major units into which Sri Lanka was divided in the sixteenth century, acknowledged the authority of the Portuguese, both the Kandyan and Kotte rulers, depending on times, showed their subservience to the Portuguese for the sake of their survival. Prominent in subservience was King Buvanekabahu (1521-51), who allowed Franciscan missionaries to build churches in Kotte. The Portuguese consolidated control over the Kotte and Jaffna kingdoms in the first half of the seventeenth century. Meanwhile, the Kandyan ruler, showing dependence on the Portuguese, agreed to allow them to rule over the south-western maritime districts. Exploiting the opportunities, the Portuguese further expanded their power by gaining control of the two major ports, Batticaloa and Trincomalee, on the east coast belonging to the Kandyan kingdom.

Though the Portuguese rule in Sri Lanka was limited to some regions, they were tactful in using the native administrative hierarchy, for instance the high-ranking feudal officials like the *mudaliyars*, for their own purposes (de Silva, 1981). Following the native Sinhala tradition, they paid such officials with land grants rather than with salaries. They also used the traditional Sinhala labor machinery based on the caste system for maintaining cinnamon plantations. They expedited control over the cinnamon trade and made it their monopoly, making the power and wealth accrue to them economically, politically and socially as well. The production of cinnamon, areca-nut and pepper, precious stones, the pearl fishery and elephant trade were retained as royal monopolies.

Another force that triggered vast changes in the village life was the policy to allow Portuguese settlers to become village landholders. At stake of financial loss, they granted traditional royal villages called *gabadagam* to Portuguese settlers; *viharagam* and *devalagam*, the lands left in the hands of Buddhist or native temples, were transferred to Roman Catholic missionaries by the General without authority (Pieris, 1908). These measures facilitated Portuguese interaction with the upper and middle strata of the society.

Roman Catholicism introduced and aggressively propagated by the Portuguese brought a vast impact on the island. According to a report by Father J. Cooreman, Sri

Lanka was originally attached to the province of Goa under the ecclesiastical affairs of the Society of Jesus. Later in 1601 the new southern province of Malabar was created, with its headquarters in Cochin, whose Bishop governed through a Vicar-general (Pieris, 1908). The first missionaries were Franciscans, and then came the Jesuits, the Dominicans, and the Augustinians. They were entrusted with the Four Portuguese dissávonies, which were administered from Colombo. There were 'colleges' attached to the monasteries. The Colombo college and the Jaffna college had 8 and 12 residences respectively. Religion, good manners, reading, writing, arithmetic, singing and Latin were taught in these colleges. There were 11,149 and 32,287 Christians under the supervision of the Colombo college and the Jaffna college respectively.

Converts to Roman Catholicism were awarded honor, advantage and privilege, while the Buddhists were looked upon as disloyal subjects. The native Buddhists were not given any employment and rank under the Government, while the native Christians were given preferential treatment and even exempted from certain taxes. This partial act induced the Buddhists and Hindus to embrace the religion of the establishment as a means of gaining status and ranks. The process was sanctioned and urged by a king of Portugal whose wish was revealed in a letter referring to the state of affairs in India, as "...in order that the world may see that our arms in the East brought more sons to the church than vassals to the State" (quoted in Da Cunha, 1891-94).

I have brought forth all these historical facts to show that the workings of this tripartite force, the political power double-combined with trading relations and religious activities, created the physical and experiential grounding for Portuguese to flourish as the *lingua franca* of the maritime Sri Lanka. However, not only polity, economy and religion, but laws, social habits and marital relations worked together with many other factors in moulding the Portuguese-Sri Lanka community. Inter-marriage seemed to be part of Portuguese policy: the Portuguese married Sinhala women, and even the upper caste Sinhala men had Portuguese wives. Some observers consider that Portuguese became a fashionable language to the extent that even the kings of Sri Lanka, for example, King Rajasinghe II, used it in his official correspondence (Pieris, 1908). Portuguese influence on female dress in the maritime regions and on food habits all over the island was very strong.

## 2. Culture contact and borrowings

Because of the widespread influence of Portuguese language and culture on Sri Lanka in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, numerous cultural borrowings including new social concepts, norms and terms entered the Sinhala language and vocabulary.

Many words related to food culture have come from Portuguese:

Sinhala	Portuguese
achcharu	achár 'pickle'
annasi	ananás 'pineapple'
anoda	anóna 'custard apple'
wiskotu	biscouto 'biscuit'

kaju	cajú ‘cashew nut’
kardamungu	cardamômo ‘cardamom’
keju	quéijo ‘cheese’
gowa	côuve ‘cabbage’
tiringu	trigo ‘wheat’
temparadu	temperádo (a process in cooking)
dosi	dôce (a kind of sweetmeat)
pan	pão ‘bread’
pæpol	papôula ‘papaw’
pipinna	pepino ‘cucumber’
batala	batáta ‘sweet-potato’
bonchi	bonje ‘bean’
rabu	rábo ‘radish’
vinakiri	vinágre ‘vinegar’
salada	saláda ‘salad’

There are many terms related to furniture, building construction, parts of a house and implements used in various arts and crafts, etc.

almari	almário ‘almirah, wardrobe’
kalderam	caldeirãõ ‘cauldron’
tachchi	tacho ‘frying pan’
arukku	arco ‘arch’
kamara	câmara ‘room’
burumaya	verumma ‘borer, gimlet’
kumera	cûme ‘top ridge of a roof’
kastura	costúra ‘joint, seam (in flooring)’
kussi	cozínha ‘kitchen’
kunna	cúnha ‘wedge’
garadi	gráde ‘grate, rail’
gudiri	godrím ‘mattress’
janela	janélla ‘window’
tappa	taípa ‘wall, parapet’
parala	paraléllo ‘rafter’
pedareru	pedréro ‘mason’
barada	varânda ‘verandah’
mesa	mêsa ‘table’
rippa	ripa ‘lath’
listara	listra ‘fringe (of wood)’

Among the terms referring to clothes, costumes and fashions are:

kaba	câpa ‘tail-coat’
kamisa	camisa ‘shirt’
kalisam	calçôens ‘trousers’
kastana	castána ‘sword’ (worn by high officials)

ganchu	gâncho 'hook (of a belt)'
bottam	botão 'button'
mes	mêas 'socks'
mostara	amóstra 'sample'
renda	rênda 'lace'
lenseu	lenço 'handkerchief'
sapattu	sapáto 'shoes'
sakku	sacco 'sack, pocket'
saya	sáya 'skirt, petticoat'

The terms related to or things used in school life:

iskole	escóla 'school'
kadadasi	cartáz 'paper'
tinta	tínta 'ink'
pintura	pintúra 'picture, painting'
banku	bânco 'bench'

Many concepts related to administrative, economic and legal affairs were borrowed from Portuguese:

governadoru	governadôr 'governor'
sitasi	citação 'summons'
notisi	notícia 'notice'
askisi	escríto 'writ (in law)'
kappita	capitão 'captain in a ship'
kasada	casádo 'marriage'
kondesi	condição 'conditions'
kontrattu	contráto 'contract'
kontara	côntra 'cross-examination, ill-feeling'
petsam	peticão 'petition'
regulasi	regulação 'regulation'
perekadoru	procuradôr 'proctor'
porma	fórma 'form'
gastu	gásto 'cost, fees'
takseru	taxár 'to rate, appreciate'
tiru	tiro 'customs duty'
regu	régioa 'custom-house'
renda	rênda 'revenue'
tombu	tômbo 'register of lands'
minindoru	medidór 'surveyor'
testamentu	testamento 'last will'
poraka	fórca 'gallows'
alugosu	algóz 'hangman'
bainettu	bayonêta 'bayonet'
soldadu	soldáado 'soldier'

rejimentu	regimento ‘regiment’
empradoru	emperadór ‘emperor’

Basic terms related to Christian religious observances are due to the introduction of the Catholic religion:

kurusi	crúz ‘cross’
nattal	natal ‘Christmas’
padili	pádre ‘priest’
pasku	páscoa ‘Easter’
bautisma	boutismo ‘baptism’

Up to the arrival of the Portuguese in Sri Lanka in the 16th century the Sinhala vocabulary mixed with the *tatsama* ‘loan’ or *tatbhava* ‘semi-loan’ forms of Prakrit, Pali, Sanskrit or Dravidian languages. From the 16th century onwards, both spoken and written Sinhala absorbed Portuguese words, marking the first systematic contact with a European language. This contact undoubtedly provided a refreshing and inspiring experience to the speakers of the vernacular as well as to the students of language. However, we should be careful before reaching any conclusion regarding Portuguese borrowings in Sinhala.

As Hettiaratchi (1965) has correctly pointed out, while there are many cases of resemblance between Portuguese and Sinhala, the borrowing may have occurred from the latter to the former. For example, some of the words we have given in the above list have been recorded in *O Glossario luso-asiatico* compiled by Monsenhor Dalgado, which includes terms mainly borrowed into Portuguese from languages it had contact with in Asian territories. *Achar* ‘pickle’, *ananas* ‘pineapple’, *caju* ‘cashew nut’, *cardamômo* ‘cardamom’ and *papôula* ‘papaw’ are such words. The dictionary further includes a large number of words easily attributable to Sinhala, such as *dágaba*, ‘relic mound *dissáva* (a title of an official), *marala* ‘death duty’ or to Tamil, such as *catamaran* ‘fishing raft’ (Tamil: *kattamaran*) and *tupeti* (a piece of men’s clothing)(Tamil: *tuppotti*). Terms generally considered as Portuguese borrowings in Sinhala such as *achcharu* ‘pickle’ (Port: *achár*), *rambutan* (a kind of fruit) (Port: *rambutáô*) and *tuppahi* - ‘interpreter’ (Port: *topaz*, Hindi: *dubash*) are in fact from languages of Arabic, Malay or Hindi. Portuguese only functioned as an intermediate medium or a conduit letting the words flow into Sinhala (Hettiaratchi 1965).

Some Portuguese borrowings show a greater similarity to their Dutch counterparts rather than to the Portuguese ones (e.g. Sinh: *koppa* ‘cup’, Dutch: *cop*, Port: *copo*), or they may have infiltrated into Sinhala via a derived form of Sri Lanka Portuguese (e.g. Sinh: *oralosu* ‘watch’, Dutch: *horloge*, Port: *O relógio*, SL Port: *orloz*). These examples show that in establishing the identity of borrowed words, we need more sober attitudes to, and knowledge of, the histories of respective languages and vocabularies. At least, to understand the complexity of the situation in context of contact languages, we need to observe how Portuguese developed into a lingua franca across different communities, and survived as a Creole language.

### 3. The genesis of a Creole

Portuguese had been the principal medium of communication between European nations and native communities of some Asian countries in the 16th and 17th centuries. The group of Creoles called Indo-Portuguese emerged around the trading posts, ports, and fortresses established by the Portuguese in the coastal areas of India and Sri Lanka. Hugo Schuchardt, the earliest Creolist, has classified Indo-Portuguese into four types:

1. Gauroportuguese
2. Dravidoportuguese
3. Malayoportuguese
4. Sino-Portuguese

Out of the four, the most relevant to our study are the first two types, namely Gauroportuguese, which refers to those varieties of Portuguese Creole spoken primarily in Indo-Aryan speech areas, and Dravidoportuguese, which denotes the varieties spoken primarily in Dravidian areas, including Sri Lanka.<sup>2</sup> It is not necessarily the case, Schuchardt points out, that different varieties were spoken in different areas. Instead, different varieties were in parallel use in the same locality (Schuchardt 1889). David Lopes identifies three types of Indo-Portuguese speakers and, accordingly, three varieties used by them (Lopes 1936):

1. those who had been born in Portugal, and those who were born of Portuguese parents in India
2. those who descended from Portuguese fathers by Indian mothers, and speaking Portuguese
3. those who were Indian in nationality but were educated in Portuguese or had close contacts with the Portuguese

The first variety of portuguese is no different from a standard Portuguese spoken in Lisbon. The second one spoken largely by people of mix origin may be deviant, to some extent, from the standard language. The third variety used by the indigenous speakers of other languages is not only the most deviant from the standard language but also, naturally, largely influenced by the vernaculars.

Regarding the third variety, the views held by Schuchardt and Lopes seem to be different: Schuchardt's view as summed up by Shapiro and Schiffman(1981), is that "The third variety, however, was also used by other colonials (English, Dutch, Danes, French, etc.) in dealing with local traders, so that it was long the lingua franca used by Europeans in contact with indigenous peoples" (Shapiro and Schiffman 1983: 203). Lopes seems to think that the third variety was inadequate as medium of communication because of its defective or incomplete nature. Therefore, it was largely the second variety of Portuguese that was used by European colonizers when communicating with indigenous peoples. These conflicting views can be taken to shed light on one significant aspect of Creoles. That is, people speak their language, in different forms, mixing with standard, substandard or 'low standard', shifting between their superstrate and substrate.

When there is a bilingual Portuguese/local community with mutual interaction or

borrowing, the relationship between the two ends, the donor language and receiving language, does not remain static. New terms or concepts can pass more freely and dynamically from the lower-status language to the high-status language. However, some forces, social factors and norms work to control the enormous complexity of the situation with some balancing effects. Some members may adhere to the prestigious form of the language, while some others become more tolerant of modifications in the language. It is said that both Protestants and Catholics had their own notions of “good Portuguese” to be used in church and school and considered the Creole as a “lingua corrupta” or “lingua defectiva” (Shapiro and Schiffman, 1981).

Widespread bilingualism and diglossia seem to have worked as a fertile ground for Portuguese Creoles to flourish in the Indian sub-continent. Even colonials needed to know local languages to communicate with indigenous people. However, very few people were capable of using new languages fluently. When there is not a common first language available, people seek new means, a kind of compromise code, to fulfill their communication needs. In a community with a high degree of bilingualism, after a considerable period of time with mutual adaptation and mixing, the languages would change and adjust their structures, forcing themselves to resemble each other. The phenomenon known as convergence may continue beyond the control of individual members of the community. Eventually, when the language is acquired by new speakers as a native speech, it will become established as a Creole variety and pass on to future generations, even when the mixing of ethnically diverse groups no longer prevails. Thus, language mixing, large-scale ‘borrowing’, mutual adaptation and adoption between languages were part of inevitable processes that led to the emergence of Creole varieties.

#### 4. Contributors to the cultural production

Several scholars in the nineteenth-century attempted to explain the development of Sri Lanka Portuguese (SLP). Hugo Schuchardt, the earliest Creolist to deal with SLP, collected songs popular among the SLP speakers.<sup>3</sup> Mainly working on Portuguese-based Creoles, he has immensely contributed to widening the contemporary knowledge of the Pidgin-Creole life circle. The Hugh Nevill Collection in the British Museum, which represents a largest number of Asian Portuguese folk verse forms based on an oral tradition, includes a number of SLP songs.<sup>4</sup> Dalgado (1900) observes the widespread bilingualism present among the Burghers in Sri Lanka and recognizes the resemblance between SLP Creole and other Portuguese Creoles in India.

More recently, Smith (1979) has suggested that before it was brought to Sri Lanka, the Indo-Portuguese may have already had Indo-Aryan traits and Dravidian traits received in India, through languages like Marathi and Malayalam, respectively. He seems to be interested in proving that most of the convergence traits in SLP developed in South Asia during the Early formative period of Indo Portuguese (IP). The SLP speaking population in Sri Lanka consists of Sinhala, Tamils, Moors (descendants of Arab traders), Burgers (descendants of the Portuguese and the Dutch), Malays and other ethnic



groups. All these bilingual speakers have contributed to the development of SLP. It is assumed that Sinhala and Tamil have been the continuing influence on SLP, especially after Portuguese ceased to be the lingua franca of the island towards the end of the 19th century.<sup>5</sup>

At this stage it is worthy to be noted that there are mainly two groups of Creole speakers in Sri Lanka: the Burghers (those of Portuguese and Dutch descent) and Kaffirs (those of African descent). Regarding the identity and the appellation of the Burghers, Brohier (1984) says, "Burgher is not an ethnographic name, and has nothing to do with race. The term is of historic origin and refers to a political community, which had a distinctive character when it entered under the sway of the British Government." According to Brohier, after the capture of Colombo and Jaffna from the Portuguese in 1656/58, about 200 Dutchmen married some of the Indo-Portuguese women who stayed back, in the island, voluntarily or otherwise. It seems that the contemporary Dutch governor did not hesitate to encourage intermarriage with Sinhala, Tamil or Eurasian women (Brohier, 1984). It is said that many Dutchmen married *mesticas* (offspring of a Portuguese father and a Sri Lanka mother) and that the *mestiças* and *castiças* (offspring of a Portuguese father and a mestica mother) were bilingual in Portuguese Creole and Sinhala or Tamil (de Silva Jayasuriya, 1999a). Another observer makes a somewhat hasty conclusion, which needs to be corroborated with linguistic evidence and objective observation. "The liquid sound of this jargon and its freedom from grammatical restraint helped new-comers drawn from many nations who arrived under the aegis of the Dutch, but did not know the Dutch language, to pick up easily" (Brohier 1985/86). This seems to be a strong claim which needs much more work to substantiate it.

As for the origin of the Kaffirs, Sinhala Encyclopedia (1978) says that the first batch of Africans, who were Mozambicans, were brought to Sri Lanka from Goa as indentured laborers by the Portuguese around 1630. Later some Africans came from South Africa and Madagascar. Some of them began their travel directly from Africa while others came from Madagascar or India. The point directly relevant to us is that the Kaffirs were of diverse African origins and linguistic backgrounds and therefore were unable to communicate in a uniform African language. They were naturally constrained to use the lingua franca of the host country at the time.

With the advent of the Dutch, the English and the Danish in the 17th and 18th centuries, the language situation became more complicated and there were even conflicts between interest forces. For example, the Dutch made an attempt, though in vain, to suppress the power of Portuguese in Sri Lanka and Java (Lopes, 1936). However, even after the Portuguese colonization era (1505-1658) ended, Sri Lanka Portuguese stayed in use until the mid 19th century. Although the Dutch language was the medium for official correspondence during the Dutch era (1658-1796), Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole functioned as the domestic language even for the Dutch (Hesseling, 1979). Then, the early British officials were forced to learn the Creole variety, which became the medium of communication between them and the people of the island (Perera, 1922).

Thus, Portuguese seemed to have enjoyed prestige, exerting an enormous influence on the different communities and their diverse activities of politics, commerce and religion, etc. depending on the relative proportion and degree of their contacts.

According to Jackson (1990), the largest groups of identifiable SLP Creole speakers live in Batticaloa and Trincomalee on the eastern coast and in Puttalam on the western coast of the island. Smith (1978) conducted fieldwork on SLP with particular emphasis on phonology, morphology and syntax, and demonstrated the similarity between the Batticaloa dialects of SLP and Tamil. His documentation is also important since it has focused on a colloquial variety, which could not have captured in other surveys done hitherto on Indo-Portuguese Creoles. Thananjayarajasingham and Goonatileka (1976) have documented the findings of their fieldwork on the Batticaloa Portuguese Creole community. They have reported that there were 250 Burgher families at that time and 179 Burgher children were acquiring primary and secondary education in Sinhala. The largest Kaffir group is reported to be in Sirambiyadiya in the Puttalam District where only the older generation can speak Portuguese Creole (Edirisinghe 1996). Many divisions of the District were multi-ethnic with communities consisting of Sinhalese, Tamils, Kaffirs, Malabars, Nurghers, Javanese and Moors (Modder 1908).

## 5. Grammatical development

Creole Linguistics maintains that a Creole language typically acquires the structure of one language while adhering to the vocabulary of another. Portuguese is the lexifier, lexical source language of SLP. By accepting it as an obviously Portuguese-based language, one can take the 'monogenesis' position concerning the origin of SLP. Any serious student of the language, however, cannot ignore the local influences it has gained from Sinhala, Tamil and other regional languages. We can show ample evidence to prove that SLP is not simply Portuguese in lexicon as well as in structure. Smith (1977, 1978 and 1979) seems to be most authoritative in the field. Based on Smith's analysis, I will provide below a summary of the differential features between Sri Lanka Portuguese (SLP) and Standard Portuguese (SP).

SP typologically remains a SVO language whereas SLP is typologically SOV, resembling the indigenous languages of the island, like Sinhala and Tamil. SP maintains a system of prepositions; SLP, Sinhala and Tamil have nominals marked with postpositions or case suffixes. In SP, auxiliaries precede the main verb but in Sinhala, Tamil and generally in SLP, they follow the verb. See the example (1) for these features. Subordinate-clause markers are clause initial in SP but clause-final in SLP, Sinhala and Tamil, as shown in (2).

- (1) 'I had given the money to John.'
- (a) Eu tinha dado o dinheiro a/para Joao (SP)  
I had given the money to John
- (b) ew dineru Jon-pe ja-da tina (SLP)  
I money-ACC -DAT give-PP had

- (c) mama salli Jon-Ta di-la tibuna (Sinhala)  
I money-ACC -DAT give-PP had
- (d) nan calli-yay Jon-ukku kuTu-tt iruntan (Tamil)  
I money-ACC -DAT give-PP had
- (2) 'If you give the money to John ...'
- (a) Se o Sr. de o dinheiro a/para Joao (SP)  
If you give the money to John
- (b) bitus dineru Jon-pe ja-da se (SLP)  
you money-ACC -DAT give if
- (c) oyaa salli Jon-Ta denawa nan (Sinhala)  
you money-ACC -DAT give if
- (d) ninka calli-yay Jon-ukku kuTutt -al (Tamil)  
you money-ACC -DAT give if

As the examples show, the Creole word order seems to depend mostly on that of the substrate languages. However, we get a slightly different picture by looking at some historical documents. The Sri Lanka Portuguese folk verses found among the Creole community and recorded by the British colonial officer between 1869 and 1886 show some intermediate features or variations between the two grammatical systems. For example,<sup>6</sup>

- (3) (a) Genitive relationship with the possessed preceding the possessor:  
Kerca da bottan 'button-holes' (Group 2, Verse 20)
- (b) Modifier following the modified:  
Menje sinhoe gardie 'my noble lady' (Group 2, Verse 108)
- (c) Modifier preceding the modified:  
Meu virsin sinhere 'my virgin lady' (Group 3, Verse 179)
- (d) Prepositional phrase:  
Anter de chingalatie 'among the Sinhalese' (Group 1, Verse 70)
- (e) Postpositional phrase:  
Minhe frontie 'before me' (Group 1, Verse 57)
- (f) Subordinate marker preceding the clause:  
Jada per kumma 'was given to eat' (Group 1, Verse 77)

The examples illustrate that SLP Creole was born by combining grammatical systems of both SP as a preposing language and local postposing languages of Tamil and Sinhala. This kind of grammatical variation occurs when bilinguals shift between two or more typologically different linguistic systems. As we have already mentioned, Smith (1979) suggests that the structural similarities between SLP and indigenous languages and the origins of the convergence traits are not recent and may in some cases stem from the earliest period of Portuguese contacts with the region.

Another piece of evidence to claim that the local structures have been the grammatical source of the Creole is non-nominative subject construction widely known in literature as “dative subject”, “experiencer subject” or “inversion” construction. Some expressions used with a nominative subject in SP appear with a dative subject in SLP. Observe the examples in (4) and (5).

- (4) ‘He has four children.’
- (a) Ele tem quatro crianças (SP)  
He has four children
  - (b) eli pa ka:tru poDiyas te:m (SLP)  
he -DAT four children be
  - (c) eya-Ta lamai hatara denek innawa (Sinhala)  
he-DAT children four people be-PRESENT
  - (d) avan-ukku na:lu piLLay-kal iru-kku (Tamil)  
he-DAT four child-PL be-PRESENT
- (5) ‘I am sweating.’
- (a) Eu estou suando (SP)  
I sweating
  - (b) parim ta suwa (SLP)  
I-DAT sweating
  - (c) ma-Ta da:Diya da:nawa (Sinhala)  
I-DAT sweating
  - (d) en-akku verkkutu (Tamil)  
I-DAT sweating

In SLP the nominal constituent in the sentence-initial position is marked with the dative, conforming to the pattern of local languages. There are many other expressions, for example, clauses with the verbs *acâ* ‘get’, *nistai* ‘want/need’, *kera* ‘want’ and *intinda* ‘understand’, that appear with dative subjects in SLP. Some verbs like *sabe* ‘know’ can optionally take a nominative subject patterning with SP, or a dative subject as in Tamil. The dative subject construction widely discussed with reference to the South Asian linguistic area may become a case of strong evidence for substrate influence in Portuguese Creole because of its *markedness*, as Sebba (1997) suggests.<sup>7</sup>

Not only in syntax, but even in phonology, the explicit patterns become closer to the indigenous languages. Dalgado (1900) recognizes the kinds of phonological changes that the SP words generally undergo in being adapted into SLP as arising from four causes, namely indistinct pronunciation, difficulty of articulation, speed of enunciation and influence of foreign languages. Dalgado also notes that these principles do not apply in an identical manner in all dialects.

We can also show that the lexicon of SLP is not solely Portuguese, but heterogeneous, as a result of convergence of miscellaneous lexical systems over the

centuries. We have already seen that mutual adaptations and borrowings were not rare between Portuguese, Dutch, Sinhala, Tamil, Malayalam and Sinhala. Lexical items were borrowed directly from one language to another, or through intermediaries, e.g. Malay through Portuguese to Sinhala.

All these facts can be taken to indicate that common syntactic and semantic properties found in Creole speeches can be attributed to certain linguistic universals arising from contact situations. They can be considered as emerging from contexts where different systems are put into contact, rather than being derived from a proto language. This is also evident from the fact that the grammatical variations we discussed cannot be explained by reference to the lexifier, Portuguese. Rather, they represent structural simplifications away from a standard language achieved through the interference from other grammatical systems of local languages. Cases of convergence, realignment and numerous modifications between diverse codes bring out an intercode system effective for intergroup communication.

## 6. Decline of the Creole

Today, the Creole speaking population of Sri Lanka has been reduced to about 2000, and possibly less than 100 native speakers left. It is technically impossible to quantify the rate of decline without obtaining reliable statistics about the number of speakers of different ages in the language.<sup>8</sup> Though we are not in a position to evaluate the full range of factors involved, it is worth considering what forces have been operative in causing this decline,

The application of the Roman-Dutch Law in Sri Lanka, the establishment of Calvinism vis-á-vis Roman Catholicism previously introduced under the Portuguese regime and the subsequent Protestantization of the Catholics in the Dutch era worked to devalue Portuguese in social scale. The Portuguese Creole never gained acceptance as the medium of instruction in school. There were no literary activities to reinforce the spoken language. When a printing press was established in 1737 for the first time in Sri Lanka, making Christian literature available in the vernacular languages, the status of the Portuguese Creole further declined. Portuguese did not exist any longer as a model for the Creole speakers in Sri Lanka. The situation got worse in the British colonial period when the Portuguese Creole lost its status as the *lingua franca* and became confined to the Creole communities of the Burghers and the Kaffirs. A language would die or at least enter the path of extinction when it is no longer used in government offices, churches and schools.

When a language loses its value as an international or intercultural *lingua franca*, it no longer remains attractive to the speakers because it cannot facilitate international/intercultural communication or upward/outward movement (Crystal 2000). Particularly in such a case, language attitudes play a role. Originally, the Portuguese lexicon in the Creole speech community remained, not in a standard form, but more or less in a 'broken' or 'non-prestige' form. After being officially marginalized, its place in society became confined to domains of popular entertainment and folklore.

Then it functioned merely as the medium of expression for these folk traditions which were not highly valued in general.<sup>9</sup> With this 'folklorization' of the language (Fishman 1987), the Creole speakers increasingly showed a willingness to turn to a more 'prestigious' language, a 'proper' language, socially accepted, which enabled them to make improvements in social standing. Because of this absolute or perceived lack of prestige of the language, the Creole speakers had to merge with English-speaking or other indigenous ethnic groups. Many Burghers opted for English, which replaced Portuguese as the new prestige language. Many Kaffirs chose to assimilate into other indigenous groups, like Sinhala, Tamil and Moor. Smith's documentation reveals that some speakers of Portuguese Creole tried to conceal the existence of their minority language for some conceivable socio-linguistic reasons (Smith 1977). Perhaps, they viewed their language as a sign of backwardness. More objectively, the fact that the members of the younger generation cannot speak the Creole but are merely able to sing Creole songs has been attested. These situations underlie attitudes toward the language including a growing sense of inferiority or shame about one's own language.

#### 7. 'Folklorization of Portuguese in Sri Lanka

The 'folklorization' process of Portuguese deserves more attention since it influenced the evolution the language in different ways. In a way, it accelerated the gradual decline of the language by changing the users' attitude towards it. On the other hand, we cannot deny the fact that the process helped the language to survive, even in a rudimental form, in different communities and among several generations. For instance, the lyrics of Baila or Kaffirinohoe, a special kind of music and songs, believed to be brought to the island by the Portuguese, which retains its popularity among all generations of Sri Lankans, contains the most robust form of Portuguese preserved in the Creole communities in Sri Lanka.

The nineteenth-century Hugo Schuchardt Manuscript, 'Zum Indoportugiesischen von Ceylon' includes some songs that belonged to the contemporary Creole community. The following verses are part of a love song with a tune called *Margaritta Maria Margaritta*.

Rosto color de rosa	(Face color of pink
Conde chero ambri	Hair with smell of ambrosia
Ai, minha amor	Ah, my love
Sem sabe vingara	A gallant girl)

Ai, minha amor	(Ah, my love
Como agoa cristallino	Like clear water
Beiço de coral	Lips of coral
Dente risca fino	Trace delicate teeth!)

Vos tem ne castella	(You are in the castle,
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Eu tem ne cidade;	I am in the city
Quelei pode tem	How is it possible
Amor firmidade?	To secure love?) <sup>10</sup>

In these verses, the whole lexicon and grammatical structure represents the Portuguese origin. The only indigenous feature we can identify is the word *konde* 'hair or a knot of hair tied at the back of the head', which can be easily traced to *konde* with the same meaning in Sinhala/Tamil.

Another nineteenth-century manuscript presumed as part of the Hugh Nevill collection in the British Library includes Portuguese songs sung by the Batticaloa Burgher community and another group of songs called 'Cantiga De Purtiegese-Kaffrein-Negar Portuguese'. While the former type of songs represents the rhythms from which Sri Lanka Baila songs evolved, the latter group has rhythms, which were the base for the development of Kaffirinhoe songs. A short song belonging to this group is given below:

Vos de minhe frontie	(You in front of me
Loomie Kilai praata	That silver glare
Niccara candiya	I do not want a lamp
Vossa lomie basta	Your glare is enough) <sup>11</sup>

The lyricist has rhymed the words 'praata' and 'basta' to provide aural delight to listeners.

Ariyaratna (1999) has recorded a number of Baila/ Kaffirinhoe songs practiced by Portuguese Creole communities both in Batticaloa and Puttalam. Most of these songs divulge romantic feelings as expressed by a man towards a beautiful lady, or rather based on situations and episodes of mundane life. One such song, titled "Galloos the Cantha", addresses a honeymoon couple to remind them that it is time to go to sleep as cocks have already started crowing. All these songs, necessarily in a poetic form, though not in a sophisticated style, have been a powerful medium to preserve Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole dialects in an oral tradition.

Later, when the Portuguese Creole speakers were in danger of extinction or were treated as *persona non grata*, the Portuguese words were substituted with vernacular Sinhala/Tamil lexicon and local themes were adopted. The following verses form part of a song extolling the wonders of a local religious festival called "Perahera".

Asanuwe piruvata ada rosa denti  
Susii juntufula watti gene enu disanti

Marakonde pooku mamma pentiya kachelu  
Rosafula cheeru sonda atalami walalu

Mamma gradi patanne bunittu upadinda  
 Asinukubol kusal karami nivan dekadanda

While the Portuguese lexicon still dominates the lyrical words, the underlined parts obviously represent Sinhala vocabulary and phraseology. In later periods, when new Sinhala lyrics were composed to the tune of Baila songs, lyricists didn't hesitate to retain a couple of Portuguese or expressions for the sake of rhythmic effects. Look at the following song.

Yon hambiliya aragene Mariwallata gos  
 Api aduwediyat patawala oruwa tallu karagene  
**Aaju tapara laahilaa piiji tapara laaahilaa**  
**Aaju tapara piiju tapara busku busku laahilaa**

In this quatrain, the first two lines are in Sinhala while the last two lines seem to be Portuguese. The full song consisting of five quatrains has the lyrics in Sinhala, except these two lines used as a repeat. As these examples show, using the Portuguese dialect in Baila/ Kaffirinhoe songs has been an exception rather than a norm. It would be safe to say that the contribution of the folklorization process to the preservation of the endangered language only lasted for a short period.

## 8. Conclusion

To sum up, we have seen that language contact can bring fundamental changes to a language; it would be powerful enough to interrupt the genetic path of evolution of some speech forms, disrupting historical sound changes. Obviously, the changes were so fundamental and rapid that a completely new language would be born from the contact between genetically and typologically unrelated languages. A historical function fulfilled by the Portuguese Creole was to bridge between European and Asian languages, between Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages, and the "high" speech and the "low" speech. The origin and existence of such a go-between language poses a serious problem to the "family tree" model, as pointed out by Schuchardt a century ago. The basic assumption that the genetic path of evolution cannot be interrupted by language contact on which the "family tree" model was established and the notion of absolute regularity in sound change proposed by Neogrammarians were simultaneously challenged by the Creole studies. A Creole language cannot be ascertained to be derived from a common reconstructed source; Creole forms and their sound changes do not conform to the internally motivated sound laws.

Mainly, I have provided historical sociolinguistic information regarding the origin and development of Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole. In a wider sense, I have maintained that the trajectory of grammatical processes goes parallel with the social processes involved and that linguistic variations find expression through variations in society. Following Schuchardt, I have taken into consideration the role of institutions as well as individuals in the social processes leading to convergence and other language changes.



The plethora of positive and negative attitudes regarding Portuguese Creole reflects changes in social conditions. Though all social variables are unlikely to have categorical effects in all contexts, at least some of them, i.e. ethnic background, religion, type of employment and economic status, etc., have worked as important barometers of linguistic variation. Through this study, we have understood that there is a range of sociocultural factors behind the vitality of a language and that there is social motivation for the speakers of a Creole to evade it.

It was not my intention to provide a comprehensive account of recurrent linguistic patterns found in the Creole communities. We could not find substantial internal evidence for the kind of continuum of speech levels, as proposed by DeCamp (1961). However, there seems to be some evidence for a kind of continuum between maintaining the purity of a ritual language used in church and enjoying a more relaxed attitude with a “folklorized” language of popular, worldly discourse, which might be a fertile area to investigate in future.

#### Notes

- 1 This is a rock carved with Portuguese Coat-of-arms at the entrance of the Colombo harbor, later removed to the Gordon Gardens at the side of Queens' House. See SGP 1924.
- 2 The term Dravidianportuguese is generally used to indicate the varieties spoken both Tamil speaking and Sinhala speaking areas in Sri Lanka.
- 3 The nineteenth-century Hugo Schuchardt manuscript with two SLP songs has been translated into Standard Portuguese and English by Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya.
- 4 The Nevill manuscript also has been translated by de Silva Jayasuriya.
- 5 Smith (1979) proposed that Batticaloa Tamil has been the major influence on Batticaloa Portuguese, a variety of SLP, whereas de Silva Jayasuriya (1999a) has advanced the hypothesis that Batticaloa Portuguese could have evolved into its current form in contact with Sinhala rather than with Tamil.
- 6 This part of data is based on the Nevill Manuscript translated by de Silva Jayasuriya.
- 7 “To make a convincing argument about substrate influence, it is necessary to show that structure shared by the Creole and substrate language is a marked one, so that the likelihood of the similarity being due to chance is small.” (Sebba 1997:p.185).
- 8 It is extremely difficult to carry out fieldwork on the Creole communities, the largest of whom is confined to the Eastern Province, because of the bad security situation prevailing in the area due to the ongoing ethnic conflict.
- 9 Until recently, this folk music tradition associated with the Creole community had not attracted attention of the Sri Lanka intelligentsia. Ariyaratna (1985) is the first kind of academic treatment of the field in a vernacular language.
- 10 For the full translation of the manuscript, see de Silva Jayasuriya (1999b).
- 11 Again, English translation is from de Silva Jayasuriya (1996).

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## 言語の起源と消滅、スリランカ・ポルトガルクレオール語を例にして

ディリープ・チャンドララール

### 要 約

本研究は、スリランカで使用されてきたポルトガル語を元にしたクレオール語の例を通して、言語の起源と消滅という両現象に関係するいくつかの重要な問題を提供する試みである。スリランカ・ポルトガル系のクレオール語に関する歴史的、言語社会学的情報を掘り出し、収集資料を言語接触の観点から解釈・分析・記述を行なうことに務める。言語資料の分析においては、言語的变化の過程が社会的変化の過程と平行して進むという前提を活用する。そして、言語の消滅が複雑に絡み合った政治経済的・社会心理的要素に影響を受けることを指摘する。

言語接触と言語消滅の一つの特例にとどまらず、言語の普遍的な問題についても検討を加える。例えば、言語变化の過程とはどのようなものか、その過程に関する接触、多様性や非活性化などの事実が言語理論にどのように貢献するのか、その過程を探ることによってどのような類型的、歴史的洞察が得られるのか、などの問題を考察する。最後に、言語接触が、ある言語形式の進化的発生を道に中断させながら、ことばの中に根本的な変化を持たせることを証明する。そうすることによって、接触言語の起源と存在が語族と祖語の仮説に対して大きな問題を提起することを主張する。

キーワード：言語接触、二言語使用、リンガ・フランカ、上層、基層、民間伝承化