

The Struggle for a Multilingual Future

Transcript Exercise # 2: Tamil/English Codeswitching

Read the following transcript from Chapters 4 and 5 and answer the following questions:

1. What patterns can you see in the way the Girls' College students are mixing English in their Tamil sentences?
2. Can you find examples of words that could be both English and Tamil?
3. Do you think the girls are used English to associate themselves with a particular social identity? How and why?

Excerpt 1: A Tamil Hindu girl at Girls' College spoke to Geetha (The Up-country Tamil Hindu Tamil literature and history teacher about when they would have a double class period (the girl's and Geetha's English words are in italics):

1 Student: *Double period* maDam.

Double period Madam.

2 Geetha: innikki oru *period*.

Today [we have] a *period*.

3 Student: naaLaikki daa(n) *double period*.

Tomorrow (Friday) only [is a] *double period*.

4 Geetha: naaLaikki tamizh illa ungaLukku.

Tomorrow there is no Tamil for you.

neettu daa(n) *double* irundurukku.

Yesterday only there was a *double*.

cevvaay daa(n) *double period*.

Tuesday only [is] a *double period*.

5 Student: *Monday* daanee?

Monday, isn't it?

Monday daanee *double period*?

Monday, [there is a] *double period*, isn't it?

Excerpt 2: In the following classroom interaction at Girls' College, two Muslim girls spoke to me about Peradeniya University in the earshot of their classmates (the girls' English words are in italics):

1 Student A: *Kitana maDam, husband, husband lecturer.* *Kitana madam's husband, husband [is a] lecturer. (in the Agriculture Department)*

2 Student B: *ee Geography Department um pooRiinga?* *Why do you also go [to the] Geography Department?*

Geography Department um pooRiinga daanee? *You also go [to the] Geography? Department, right?*

3 Christie: *Philosophy.* *Philosophy.*

Excerpt 3: In the following conversation at Hindu College, Sanji, an Up-country Hindu girl, answered the science teacher's question, but as soon as the teacher started lecturing again, she turned to Kannan to ask for money for test papers (the students had to pay for their own school supplies). Kannan, whose mother sold newspaper near the school, was frequently absent because he had to care for his ill younger brother.

[The English is in italics.]

1 Science teacher: *samandirama eDuttaa enna ceyyu?* *When it becomes parallel, what will happen?*

2 Sanji (to teacher): *kuDum Tiichar.* *A lot [of power] teacher.*

3 Sanji (to Kannan): *kaNNan, kaNNan pattu ruva kaasu enga?* *Kannan, Kannan, where's the ten rupees?*

test paper kaasu. *Test paper money.*

tumbukaTTa kaasu daa(n) kuDuttiinga, *You gave money for the broomstick, 10*

pattu ruvaa.

rupees.

4 **Kannan:** poy. (He turns away)

False.

5 **Sanji:** *Test paper kaasu, science paper*

Test paper cash, for the science paper.

kku. (Kannan doesn't respond)

6 **Sanji (to Vanisri):** kuppuDungale.

Just call him.

7 **Vanisri:** *How?*

How?

8 **Sanji (to Vanisri):** Aa, niinga appaDi

Ah, if you come to school only once a

aaDikkorukka, aamaavasakki orukka

month, how can we ask money from

vandiinganaa naanga eppaDi kaasu

you?

keekkuRadu?