

Acoustic evidence for three selected phonological norms of Standard Sri Lankan English

Dr Rohini Chandrica Widyalandara

English Language Teaching Unit, University of Kelaniya

The phonology of Standard Sri Lankan English (SSLE) reflects a strong influence from the vernaculars of Sri Lanka: Sinhala and Tamil. This results in deviations from the donor colonial Standard British English pronunciation. This study provides acoustic evidence for three selected phonological norms of SSLE: retreat of the diphthongs /ei/ and /əʊ/ to the unmarked /e:/ and /o:/ respectively; the absence of /v/; presence and the differentiation of the back vowels /ɔ/, /o/; the retreat of the vowels central mid /ʌ/ and back /ɑ:/ to central open position as /ɑ/ /ɑ:/. Evidence is compiled through Rate of Change in the diphthongs and F1 and F2 formant readings of acoustic documentation from elicitations of two bilingual case study subjects are compared to data in literature. Of the two bilingual case study subjects one has Sinhala and the other Tamil as the first language while SSLE is their second language. Theoretical underpinning invokes language specific markedness constraint ranking and retreat to the unmarked.

Key words: Standard Sri Lankan English, Sinhala and Tamil, acoustic documentation