

## **Status, features and functions of English in Sri Lanka, Jaffna Tamil Society : A Historical and descriptive study**

**Saravanapava Iyer, M.**

### **Abstract**

In Jaffna at present there is a considerable decline in English proficiency among the Tamil community. Even the previous L<sub>2</sub> dominant bilingual section of the Tamil people (most probably English medium educationists) from the government employees and academic groups are presently either totally monolinguals or L<sub>1</sub> dominant bilinguals or passive bilinguals. Doctors, Engineers and even Lawyers are competent enough in English but display only passive bilingualism. On the other hand a small section of elderly people from Tamil society, especially those who have studied in the English medium or gone abroad for training reveal a better proficiency in English. Granted these general trends in bilinguals and decline in proficiency of English, it will be a wrong approach to consider that English declined in Jaffna. This research consists of two indirect projects. The first project focuses on the functions and unique features of English at present in Jaffna and the second project focuses on the development of Jaffna English as a separate variety. With globalization many new domains appear in Jaffna and they accommodate English to continue in a more widely distributed and pervasive form than ever before among Tamil society with both monolinguals and bilinguals using English in conventional and unconventional contexts. In Jaffna in a different pattern and slightly altered forms, English plays a vital communicative function at present. Further it confirms that the English in Jaffna is a distinct variety of English with its own unique pattern and it vastly differs from other varieties.