

THE STRUGGLE FOR A MULTILINGUAL FUTURE

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THE STRUGGLE FOR A MULTILINGUAL FUTURE

Youth and Education in Sri Lanka

Christina P. Davis

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To the Kandy students and teachers

To my parents

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NOTE ON transliteration

A member of the Dravidian language family, Tamil is spoken by approximately seventy million people worldwide, primarily in South India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Singapore. Widely described as a diglossic language, Tamil has significant lexical and grammatical differences between its literary and colloquial varieties. Since I analyze Tamil spoken interactions in significant detail, I have chosen to use a modified version of the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon scheme. Although there is not a single standardized transliteration system for Tamil, the Madras Tamil Lexicon scheme is widely used to represent literary Tamil in roman script. However, it is insufficient for representing sounds unique to colloquial Tamil. I developed this modified transliteration system at the University of Michigan with L. Ramamoorthy. It is influenced by E. Annamalai's (1980) transliteration system for spoken Tamil. The absence of diacritics makes this system accessible to nonlinguists. I illustrate how Tamil vowels and consonants are represented in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and my transliteration system in the following tables:

Vowels

Tamil	IPA	Transliteration
அ	a	a
ஆ	a:	aa
இ	i	i
ஈ	i:	ii
உ	u	u
ஊ	u:	uu
எ	e	e
ஏ	e:	ee
ஐ	ai	ai

ஓ	o	o
ஔ	o:	oo
ஔள	au	au

Consonants

Tamil	IPA	Transliteration
க்	k, g, h	k, g, h
த்	t̪, d̪, ð	t, d, d
ங்	ŋ	n
ச்	tʃ, s, dʒ, ʃ	ch, s, j, sh
ஞ்	ɲ	n
ட்	[, d]	T, D
ண்	ɳ	N
ப்	p, b	p, b
ம்	m	m
ந், ன்	n	n
ய்	j	y
ர்	r	r
ல்	l	l
வ்	v	v
ழ்	ʒ, ɭ, l	zh, L, l
ள்	ɻ	L
ற்	r, ɾ	R, r
ஜ்	dʒ	j
ஷ்	ʃ	S

This transliteration system represents the distinction between voiceless and voiced stops (e.g., *t* and *d*). I represent retroflex consonants with capital letters (e.g., *T*). Long vowels are indicated with double letters (e.g., *aa*), which gives vowel-length distinctions an immediate visual impact (Annamalai 1980). Tamil script includes six nasal consonants, but there are only three phonemically distinct nasal sounds in colloquial Tamil: [m], [n], and [ŋ]. I thus do not distinguish the velar nasal ங் ([ŋ]), which usually only occurs before velars (i.e., க்), and the palatal nasal ஞ் ([ɲ]), which generally only occurs before a palatal ச் ([dʒ]). I also

do not differentiate the dental nasal ன ([n]) and the alveolar nasal ண ([ɲ]) because Tamil speakers do not distinguish between these sounds (Schiffman 1999). In colloquial Tamil the final ஐ ([ai]) is pronounced close to [æ]. I represent this sound with *a* (e.g., *illa* [no]). I denote nasalized vowels—a common feature in many varieties of colloquial Tamil—using parenthesis (e.g., *naa[n]*) (1999). I attempt to represent features of colloquial Tamil, such as omissions of sounds, as closely as possible.

For consistency, I use the same transliteration system for literary Tamil words. I also employ this system to transliterate English words as they are pronounced. For example, I represent “wedding” as “veDDing.” This system is also sufficient for the small number of Sinhala words and phrases included in this book. My two Up-country Tamil research assistants, whom I refer to as Kausalya and Uma, initially transcribed my recorded interactions in Tamil script. They used roman script to clarify some Tamil pronunciations, as well as for English and Sinhala. L. Ramamoorthy and Sasikumar Balasundaram verified the accuracy of the Tamil transliterations and English translations.

Sri Lanka, formerly known as Ceylon, is a tear-shaped island off the coast of India that was under British colonial rule from 1815 to 1948 (see Figure 1.1). The transition to independence was relatively peaceful, but ethnic conflict soon developed. The nation was ravaged by a civil war from 1983 to 2009 between the Sri Lankan government and a northern Tamil insurgency group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The war is over now, but the position of the nation's Tamil-speaking minorities remains precarious because a political solution to the ethnic conflict is yet to be reached. Postindependence language and education policies were part of the complex and multifaceted causes of the ethnic conflict and the subsequent war. However, in the last two decades, the Sri Lankan government has sought to promote interethnic integration and national cohesion by instituting trilingual language policies in the nation's co-official languages, Sinhala and Tamil, as well as English, in state schools. But there is a significant gap between the aims of the programs and their implementation in the classroom.

This book is about the tension between the ethnic conflict and multilingual education policy in the linguistic and social practices of Tamil and Muslim girls in Kandy, a multiethnic city in central Sri Lanka. I integrate ethnographic and linguistic research among youth inside and outside government schools in Kandy during the last phase of the civil war (2007–2008) and afterward (2011). By focusing on students, teachers, and principals affiliated with two schools, a small mixed-gender Tamil-medium school and a large girls' multilingual school, I ask: To what extent can trilingual education policies mitigate ethnic conflict, and how do the experiences of Tamil-speaking girls in Kandy demonstrate the limits of this vision? This book argues that the efficacy of the trilingual reforms is imperiled by the reinforcing of language-based models of ethnicity in everyday interactions in classrooms, homes, buses, and streets. Contrary to the ideas underlying the national policies, minority girls do not view themselves as integrated

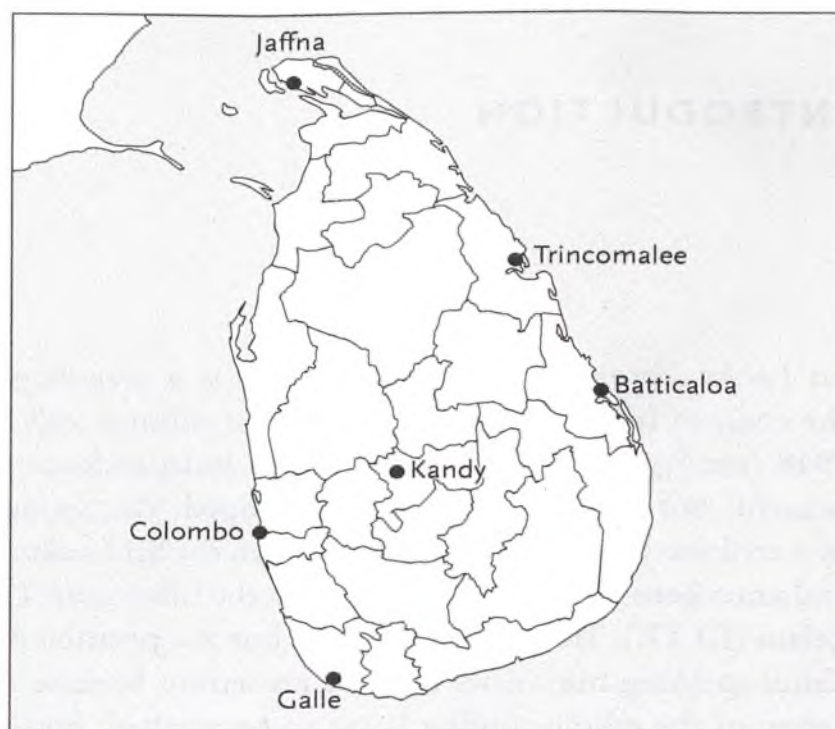


FIGURE 1.1 Map of Sri Lanka

into a united Kandy or wider Sri Lanka but associate the city with the potential for upward social mobility. My analysis of the role of civic education strategies in conflict amelioration is timely given the high incidence of ethnic and religious violence in South Asia and elsewhere.

Categories of identity were fluid in the precolonial period (Wickramasinghe 2006), but in the nineteenth century ethnicity—which is alternatively described as race, community, or nationality—emerged as a primary category of difference.¹ It subsumes other categories, including language, religion, region, and caste (Rogers 1994). Divisions within and between ethnic groups have been differently defined at different historical moments and for different social and political purposes (Daniel 1996; Thiranagama 2011). Throughout this book, I refer to local categories of difference to discuss ongoing processes of social, linguistic, and political differentiation.

Sinhalas (Buddhist or Christian) make up the majority of Sri Lanka's population (74.9 percent) (see Table 1.1). They speak Sinhala, an Indo-Aryan language related to the languages of North India.² There are several Tamil-speaking minority groups. North and East Tamils (11.2 percent), alternately referred to as Sri Lankan Tamils, have lived on the island for centuries, primarily in the North and East, but also in urban areas like Colombo and Kandy.³ Up-country Tamils (4.2 percent), who are also referred to as *malaiyaha* (hill region/area), *malainaaTTu* (hill country), or Indian Tamils, are descendants of migrants who arrived from South India during

Table 1.1 Sri Lankan Ethnic Groups

Ethnicity	Religion	Predominant language
Sinhala	Buddhism or Christianity	Sinhala
North and East Tamil	Hinduism or Christianity	Tamil
Up-country Tamil	Hinduism or Christianity	Tamil
Muslim	Islam	Tamil

the British period to work as plantation laborers in the central highlands (Daniel 1996).⁴ Members of both Tamil groups are predominantly Hindu, with a significant Christian minority. Muslims (or Moors) make up 9.2 percent of the population.⁵ They can be traced back to pre-Islamic seafaring trade between South and Southeast Asia and the Middle East, as well as Arab Muslim mercantile trade in the first part of the seventh century. Muslims live in the North and East and in scattered pockets throughout the South. The majority of Sri Lankan Muslims speak Tamil as a first language, but the government classifies them as an ethnic minority group on the basis of their religion (McGilvray and Raheem 2007; Thiranagama 2011).

Language and education policies in Sri Lanka are widely blamed for increasing tensions around ethnic relations. Following independence, the Sinhala-Buddhist-majority Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) government instituted discriminatory policies against Tamils and Muslims, who they believed had received preferential treatment under British colonial rule (Thiranagama 2011). One of the most significant of these policies was the Sinhala-Only Act of 1956, which declared Sinhala to be a sole official language of the nation (Tamil was declared a co-official language in 1987). This act negatively impacted all Tamil-speaking groups, but it was particularly detrimental to English-educated Jaffna (North) Tamils who relied on professional employment in the South (Tambiah 1986). In 1971, the SLFP government passed new policies regulating university admissions on the basis of language. This meant Tamil students had to acquire higher marks to obtain admission. A year later, a district quota system was adopted to compensate for children in rural areas who did not have access to high-quality schools. These policies hurt Jaffna Tamils' status and prospects, although they benefited other Tamil-speaking groups (Sørensen 2008). Postindependence education policies contributed to the creation of a mass education system where all school-aged children were guaranteed a free education in their first language, Sinhala or Tamil (Little 2003). The segregation of students by language of instruction and religion (Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, or Islam), however, heightened feelings of interethnic difference and mistrust (Tambiah 1986).

National education reforms were introduced in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In addition to curriculum changes designed to promote peace and unity, the National Education Commission passed a language policy that required secondary-level students (grades 6–10) to study the other official language (whether Sinhala or Tamil). The study of English was also re-emphasized. The government believed that ethnic integration would increase if Sri Lankan youth could learn to communicate in all three languages. Echoing the intent of the education programs, in 2005 the Official Language Commission and other government bodies started Sinhala-as-a-second-language (SSL) and Tamil-as-a-second-language (TSL) training programs for state employees (administrators and police officers) throughout the island (Government of Sri Lanka 2012).

A city with a population of 98,828, Kandy sits in a mountainous region of the Central Province, one of nine provinces in Sri Lanka.⁶ The former capital of the last independent Sinhala-Buddhist kingdom, which the British took over in 1815, the city has complex associations. It is a symbolic center for Sinhala Buddhism and the Buddhist state, but it is also a commercial and administrative center, where Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims live “cheek by jowl” in the same residential neighborhoods (Tambiah 1986, 11) (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3). The Kandyan Kingdom from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries is described as cosmopolitan by



FIGURE 1.2 Dalida Maligawa and Kandy Lake



FIGURE 1.3 Sinhala, Tamil, and English signs in Kandy
Canaan Albright

virtue of its incorporation of various religious groups (Obeyesekere 2013). A bustling, diverse urban center that is home to a multiethnic middle class and bilingual educational institutions, colonial and postcolonial Kandy has continued to invite cosmopolitan imaginings (Roberts 1979).⁷ Today, historically influenced conceptions of the city are in dialogue with notions of the multiethnic Sri Lanka promoted in the national-level education initiatives.

Schools have long been identified as important locations for the reproduction and transformation of social identities, structures, beliefs, and practices. State education systems and their curricula, as key sites for the promotion of standardized

languages (Bourdieu 1991), play a prominent role in nation-building and conflict amelioration processes. In my study of the enactment of language and education policies in Sri Lanka, I treat schools as dynamic landscapes where multiple norms for the use of language are reinforced and their implicit hierarchies are contested. Central to my inquiry is the concept of “language ideologies”—beliefs and ideas about language that participants employ to rationalize their understandings of linguistic variation and its role in relation to the social world (see Irvine 1989; Silverstein 1979). Plural in any society, language ideologies are not limited to misconceptions about language because they may be consistent with scholars’ views on language (e.g., “Tamil grammar is very different from English grammar”). Language ideologies are both incomplete (there are always other perspectives) and interested, as they privilege certain social positions and groups. They can be explicit (e.g., “You need to learn English to get a good job” and “Jaffna Tamil is the best Tamil”), or they can include more tacit assumptions about language structure and use (Irvine 2011, 2018). Schools, as places where people are evaluated for their ability to produce standard or legitimate linguistic varieties, are crucial sites for the production of language ideologies (LaDousa 2014; Wortham 2003, 2008).

This study stands out from work on bilingual education and peacebuilding initiatives in that I show how youth and adults interpret and realign national and local education policies and practice in their talk inside and outside schools (also see Hornberger and Johnson 2007; Jaffe 1999; McCarty 2011). My approach builds on seminal studies in the ethnography of education that explore educational inequalities in relation to children’s lives beyond the classroom (Goodwin 1990; Heath 1977, 1983; Philips 1972), as well as more recent work on youth culture and racial, ethnic, and class identities in North America and Europe.⁸ Current literature in the anthropology of youth no longer frames young people as unfinished human beings but looks at the social and cultural practices by which they shape their social worlds (Bucholtz 2002; Eckert 2000; Garrett and Lopez 2002). Attention to young people’s everyday linguistic practices is crucial to understanding the processes by which ethnic, racial, religious, gender, and class differences are reproduced and contested (Fader 2009). The students in my study were not geographically mobile, but they were influenced by processes of migration and globalization (via education, mass media, consumerism, etc.), as well as their own metropolitan aspirations.⁹ Most viewed migration (whether for education or employment) as a tenable option. I consider how ethnic minority girls drew on local and global ideologies in their interactions inside and outside school to challenge ethnicity-based models of identity and to imagine their futures.¹⁰

The chapters of this book progressively move from the schools into the larger public sphere. First, I discuss the segregation of Sri Lankan students in

the national education system and the reinforcing of linguistic, ethnic, and religious differences in education policies and practices. I analyze whether the trilingual language programs at Hindu College, a Tamil-medium Hindu school, and Girls' College, a multilingual Buddhist school, bolstered interethnic integration or simply instantiated ethnic divisions as mobilized around language.¹¹ Second, I demonstrate how teachers and students at Girls' College drew on Tamil, Sinhala, and English to challenge sociolinguistic inequalities in their talk in school and at home, as well as to situate themselves in relation to a multilingual and multiethnic Kandy and Sri Lanka. I consider relations among different Tamil-speaking groups and between these groups and the Sinhala majority. Third, I investigate how Hindu College students managed different forms of monitoring and the reproducing of ethnicity in their linguistic practices in school, on buses, in shops, and on the street. I also look at the significance of speaking Tamil (by Tamils, Muslims, and Sinhalas) in various public spaces in Kandy and the nearby capital city of Colombo in relation to power inequalities in society at large.

My central argument is that, despite the national trilingual reforms, language and education policies and practices at Hindu College and Girls' College reproduced language-based models of ethnic difference. In reaction, the Girls' College Tamil and Muslim girls aspired to fit into a cosmopolitan notion of Kandy. However, they did not see themselves as incorporated into a larger society, but rather associated the city with the possibility for economic or spatial mobility, whether in Sri Lanka or abroad. The lower-class Hindu College girls and boys, as they faced difficulties just to get through their education, find jobs, and live their everyday lives, did not see the multilingual and multiethnic city as a source of inspiration, but something they had to adapt to if they hoped to survive. The effectiveness of the language policies is further hindered by linguistic practices in Sinhala-majority public spaces that reinforce ethnic divisions and power inequalities. Sinhala schoolchildren and state employees spoke some Tamil in the TSL classroom, but they refrained from speaking it elsewhere because of the negative ideological association of the Tamil language with the Tamil people and the LTTE. Additionally, Sinhalas often viewed the use of Tamil in public spaces in Kandy and Colombo as a threat to the dominance of Sinhala. This book thus demonstrates the difficulties of using language policy to ameliorate conflict if it does not also address how that conflict is produced and reproduced in everyday interactions.

Ethnic Minority Girls and the Experience of Conflict

Following the outbreak of the civil war, ethnicity became a gatekeeping concept in Sri Lankan studies (Appadurai 1986). However, Jonathan Spencer observed

that for all the mention of ethnicity and ethnic conflict, there has been little focus on the “everyday work of ethnicity: the working through of issues of similarity and difference in work on economy, kinship, or religious practices” (2007, 163). Recent studies have enriched ethnographic understandings of Sri Lanka by looking at how various social groups constructed their identities during the war (Bass 2013; McGilvray 2008; Thiranagama 2011). This book offers something new in its focus on ethnic conflict and education policy in relation to the lived experiences of minority youth. While many studies of Sri Lanka focus on a single ethnic group, this is one of the few ethnographies to look at the intricate relations among different ethnic, religious, and sociolinguistic groups in an urban center (also see Thiranagama 2011).

In contrast to certain prominent anthropological works on violence, this book is not an account of the ways people cope with direct incidents of violence.¹² Rather, I look at how minority youth deal with more nuanced manifestations of ethnic conflict and the “enshrouding fears” that war produces (Obeyesekere 2011, xii). The Tamil and Muslim youth in my study lived alongside the war their entire lives. To illustrate this mentality, in the early months of my fieldwork, I heard about a bombing in a Colombo suburb. I immediately called an Up-country Tamil Hindu university student who had recently traveled to that city. When I asked if she was okay, she laughed and said in English, “We are used to these things, dear.” But while war was a normal part of their everyday lives, Sri Lankans readily contrasted the period from 2006 to 2009 with the ceasefire period that preceded it (Thiranagama 2011). During my fieldwork, school programs and events were canceled when they had rarely been before, and youth and adults discussed Tamil people they knew who had been arrested. The near complete silence on public buses in Colombo and Kandy was an indication of the overall tension and fear (see chapters 5 and 6).

Most of the book focuses on girls, but in chapter 5 I also look at the experiences of boys. Instead of considering gender alone, I explore it in relation to ethnicity, religion, and class.¹³ All ethnic minority youth faced challenges during this tense moment in the conflict, but the experience of girls was unique. While Tamil-medium teachers often spoke about the importance of learning Sinhala and English to “manage” in Kandy and advance their careers, these attitudes did not transfer to their teaching practices, in that they prescribed students’ speech to be mostly Tamil only. When Tamil students left school, their Tamil speech, which indexed or “pointed to” a Tamil ethnic identity, put them at potential risk in Sinhala-dominant public spaces. In addition to closely monitoring their behavior in relation to possible security threats, girls also had to be careful about their conduct because it was considered inappropriate for them to spend time

around the city. Girls with fewer financial resources, who could not, for example, afford to take autorickshaws to school, often faced a precarious commute by bus or on foot.

It was common for families to invest more money in the education of their sons. However, as single-income households were becoming rarer (Watt et al. 2014), the girls in my study (ages fourteen to seventeen) were expected to pursue jobs or careers after they finished their schooling. They did not talk as much about marriage as girls in their late teens and early twenties, but they knew that they would face difficulties balancing their careers with their family lives. Some had quite ambitious career goals (to be doctors, lawyers, or bankers), but they were nevertheless aware that their ethnicity, gender, class, and other factors could limit what would be possible for them.

The Sri Lankan Civil War

The civil war—in which the LTTE fought the Sri Lankan government to establish a separate state (Eelam) in the North and East of the island—has been thoroughly studied.¹⁴ I conducted the primary research for this project in January 2007 and from June 2007 to August 2008, during the last phase of the war. After a period of relative calm resulting from the 2002 Norwegian-brokered ceasefire, hostilities broke out following Mahinda Rajapaksa's presidential election victory in 2005 (Wickramasinghe 2009).¹⁵ The Eastern Province was declared a liberated zone in July 2007. Following this, the army made an aggressive push to gain control of the last LTTE-held territories in the northern Vanni region (Spencer et al. 2015). Though people living in the South were far from the battle zones, they lived in anticipation of suicide, bus, and roadside bombings. Large numbers of Sinhala men were employed in the army, causing hardship for families throughout the island. In President Rajapaksa's majoritarian regime, citizens—journalists in particular—were regularly arrested or disappeared for criticizing the government (Devotta 2009).

From January to May 2009, the Sri Lankan army heavily bombed the LTTE leaders, its cadres, and more than 330,000 civilians in a narrowing coastal strip in the northeast Vanni region. As the Sri Lankan soldiers advanced toward them, the LTTE retreated to bunkers, taking civilians with them, which they used as human shields (Spencer et al. 2015; Thiranagama 2011). On May 19, 2009, the army, after killing the leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, declared an end to the war. The United Nations conservatively estimated that seven thousand civilians were killed in this final period of fighting (Polgreen 2010). The government held approximately 265,000 Tamil inhabitants of the area in internment

camps, which they argued was necessary to separate the rebels from the civilians (Thiranagama 2011).

The years following the end of the war saw the continued militarization of public life and the proliferation of Sinhala Buddhist nationalist rhetoric. In addition, the government turned its attention to the development of the North and East rather than the effort to find a political solution to the conflict (see Figure 1.4) (Goodhand 2012). President Maithripala Sirisena's surprise win over Mahinda Rajapaksa in January 2015 brought a stop to some of the postwar abuses, but reconciliation will be a long and complicated process (Amarasingam



FIGURE 1.4 Dambakola Patuna Sri Sangamitta Viharaya Temple in Jaffna
Canaan Albright

and Bass 2016). In the next section, I frame my treatment of contemporary Sri Lanka by examining shifting identities among Sri Lankan social groups from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. I then look at the history of Kandy in the precolonial and colonial periods and how it came to be considered both a place of retreat and a cosmopolitan center.

Shifting Identities from the Colonial Period to the Present

Historians and anthropologists have taken “primordialist” and “modernist” approaches to understanding the origin of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict (see Rogers 1994). Today, scholars agree that the conflict was not the result of an ancient rivalry between Sinhala and Tamils. Rather, it grew out of the decidedly modern attaching of ethnic categories to more fluid identities (Rogers 1994, 2004; Sivasundaram 2013; Thiranagama 2011). The British themselves did not “imagine identities or construct them” (Wickramasinghe 2006, 44); rather, race/ethnicity was solidified as a social category when it was connected to political structures in the early decades of British rule (Thiranagama 2011).

Racial categories were first used as a basis for political representation in the Legislative Council (a governing body comprised of nonofficial members who represented distinct “racial” groups) in 1833 and 1888. The religious and cultural revivals among Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims in the middle and late nineteenth century were also critical in the consolidation of racial/ethnic and political identities (Nissan and Stirrat 1990).¹⁶ While the British did not initially emphasize language, it became an important category in colonial discourse after the development of the field of comparative linguistics (Trautmann 1997). The discovery that Sinhala was an Indo-Aryan language related to Sanskrit and that Tamil was a Dravidian language “was used to confirm and accentuate ethnic differences” (Rogers 1994, 16). In the first half of the twentieth century, increasingly consolidated Sinhala and Tamil identities interacted with political and economic processes to bring about ethnonationalism and Sinhala/Tamil polarization (Nissan and Stirrat 1990; Rogers 1994). From this process ethnic conflict emerged in the mid-1950s (Spencer 1990).

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Sinhala defined themselves as Kandyan, who came under British rule relatively late, or Low-country, who lived in the southwest coastal region and had more sustained contact with colonial rulers. In the 1930s Sinhala de-emphasized these regional differences in favor of the language-based Sinhala ethnic identity, although sociocultural, linguistic, caste, and class differences among these groups remained relevant.

Differences among the various Tamil-speaking groups have been much more openly articulated. Tamils recognize significant regional and ethnic differences between people in the North, East, and Up-country regions, related to caste, class, religion, and language. Throughout the twentieth century, the Sri Lankan government wavered in the way it represented Tamils. When the government was faced with the Tamil separatist threat in the early 1970s, it emphasized differences between geographically defined Tamil groups to demonstrate that there was no common Tamil interest (Daniel 1996). However, the state has also sought to sustain the widely held view that Tamils “constitute the monolithic Other against whom the Sinhala people, along with the Sinhala state, can define its identity” (1996, 17).

While it is argued that caste is less significant and visible in Sri Lanka than in India, an overwhelming majority of Sinhalas and Tamils recognize caste for some social and political purposes (Silva et al. 2009). Caste, however, functions very differently across these principal groups (McGilvray 2008). The Sinhala caste structure does not include the top and bottom rungs of the Hindu caste system. Most Sinhalas are members of the *Goyigama* caste (a dominant landowning caste), who have maintained a rivalry with the *Karaava* fishing caste. In Jaffna, where there are very few Brahmins, a parallel rivalry exists between the upper-caste non-Brahmin *VeLLaaLar* caste and the *Karaiyaar* (also a fishing group) caste (Pfaffenberger 1982). The overwhelming majority of Up-country Tamils belong to low castes, though there are some upper-caste families (Daniel 1996).

There are significant sociocultural, linguistic, political, and economic differences between Muslims in the war-ravaged North and East and the South.¹⁷ In the late nineteenth century, southern Muslim leaders situated themselves as a racial group distinct from Tamils in order to obtain separate political representation in the Legislative Council.¹⁸ In the twentieth century, southern Muslim leaders gradually constructed a pan-Islamic identity, which allowed them to distance themselves from the Sinhala-Tamil conflict (McGilvray and Raheem 2007). Although most Sri Lankan Muslims speak Tamil and attend Tamil-medium schools, they ethnically distinguish themselves from Tamils on religious grounds.¹⁹ This sharply contrasts with Muslims in Tamil Nadu, India, who accept both linguistic (Tamil) and religious (Muslim) identities (McGilvray 2008; Ramaswamy 1997).

Southern Muslims' vulnerability vis-à-vis Sinhalas and Tamils largely shaped their participation in Sri Lankan politics. The Sinhala-Muslim riots of 1915, which started in Kandy and spread to Colombo, caused Muslims to seek the protection of the British government (Thiranagama 2011). Political issues related to the riots turned Muslims against Tamil leaders and the possibility of “Tamil-speaking” ethnic solidarity (McGilvray and Raheem 2007).²⁰ After Muslim candidates were defeated in elections in 1948, southern Muslims switched to a policy of

accommodation with the Sinhala-majority government, a strategy that brought them valuable economic and educational concessions. This policy was solidified when Muslims grew fearful for their safety in the aftermath of the 1983 riots (Thiranagama 2011). Eastern Muslims' ethnic and political interests merged with the formation of the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress in 1981, but southern Muslims have continued to support mainstream political parties (McGilvray 2008).

Kandy: A Brief History

During the Anuradhapura period (third century BC to tenth century AC), a significant Sinhala Buddhist civilization took shape in Sri Lanka. But pressure from Tamil-speaking Hindus moving in from South India eventually forced the kingdom to retreat southward, first to Polonnaruwa, then to various other capitals, until the last phase of Sinhala independence, which centered on Kandy. Before the Kandyan kingdom, the central mountainous region of Sri Lanka had not been much developed, highly populated, or considered a civilizational center (de Silva 2008). As K. M. de Silva states, "The region, known as Malayarata, was important only as an occasional centre of resistance against foreign invasions and as a haven for insurrectionists and outlaws" (2008, 134). Initially a client region to the Kingdom of Kotte, Kandy established itself as an independent entity only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (2008).

From the seventeenth century onward, the Kandyan kingdom was the only region able to fully escape Portuguese (1505–1658) and Dutch colonial rule (1658–1796) (Rogers 2004). The Dutch were highly intolerant of Buddhism, and from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries, Kandy became the most important seat of Buddhism on the island (Duncan 1990). Kandy's Dalida Maligawa (Temple of the Tooth), which was erected to house a precious tooth relic of the Buddha, was the most famous Buddhist institution on the island (Arasaratnam 1964).²¹ Muslims living on the coast faced persecution from the Dutch and the Portuguese because of their religion and because they threatened the European monopoly on coastal trade (Dewaraja 1986; McGilvray and Raheem 2007). Kandy also became a place of retreat for Muslims. Those who fled the coast advised the kingdom on issues of trade and found work in the king's bullock carriage department, among other occupations (Sivasundaram 2013).

In a recent lecture, Gananath Obeyesekere (2013) contrasted the long period of Catholic proselytizing and religious intolerance in Ceylon's maritime regions with the "open cosmopolitanism" of the Kandyan Kingdom from 1580 to 1731. He suggested that although it is not apparent in Buddhist texts of the period, the kings during this time frame maintained a generous

outlook evident in their acceptance of people of all religious backgrounds, as well as their welcoming of Dutch, Portuguese, and Muslim immigrants. King Vimaladharmasuriya, who ruled from 1590 to 1604, adopted Portuguese fashion and architectural styles, and shook the hands of European visitors in the Western style (2013).

The Nayakkar dynasty (1739 to 1815) provides another window onto the plurality and fluidity of identity in this Kandyan period. When King Narendrasimha died without an heir in 1739, the throne passed to his adopted son who was the brother of one of his queens (Rogers 2004). The next five kings were all members of the Nayakkar community in Kandy. They were Tamil speakers who traced their family's origin to Telugu-speaking areas of South India (Arasaratnam 1964). The fact that Nayakkars could hold the Kandyan throne does not necessarily present a contradiction. Kandyan monarchs were expected to uphold the Buddhist order, but it was more important that they be of royal lineage than be Sinhala (Rogers 1994).

By the end of the eighteenth century, the strain of fighting off both the Portuguese and the Dutch had taken its toll. Tensions between the Dravidian court and the Sinhala nobility led to such serious disputes that the British were able to take over the kingdom in 1815 (Arasaratnam 1964). Though multifaceted and open in the precolonial era, Kandy took on the important features of its contemporary character as a multiethnic and multilingual urban center only with the arrival of the plantation economy during the British period (Roberts 1979). British rule also brought significant changes in technology and transportation: the first road from Colombo to Kandy was built in 1831, and the first railway in 1867 (Wickramasinghe 2006). In addition, in the late nineteenth century Western-style educational institutions proliferated in Kandy, Colombo, Galle, and Jaffna (Roberts 1997).

The changes brought about by British rule made the Kandyan Sinhalas look inward. The substitution of British for Nayakkar rule "had the effect of reinforcing and deepening the commitment to the old society, and to institutions, secular and religious, associated with it" (de Silva 2008, 231–232). The plantation economy (coffee and later tea) in the mid-nineteenth century brought an influx of new social groups—British planters and missionaries; Muslim and Chetty traders; Low-country Sinhala traders, laborers, settlers, clerks; and Indian plantation laborers. The arrival of these groups created resentment among the local Sinhalas, who, by the early twentieth century, had a "firm conviction that they were the survivors, so to speak, of a patrimony lost—a perception that had considerable foundation in fact" (Roberts 1979, 44). Kandyan Sinhalas not only resented the British, but also the Low-country Sinhalas. They feared that this population would dominate the new electoral constituencies in their district

(1979). However, Kandyan nationalism gradually dwindled with the rise of pan-Sinhala nationalism in the early to mid-twentieth century (Daniel 1996; Tambiah 1986).²²

Postcolonial Kandy has been associated with the potential for conflict. Stanley Tambiah (1986), in his well-known treatise on the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict, notes that nearly half of Sri Lanka's Tamil population lives in areas of Sinhala dominance (in the South). He correlates the copresence of Sinhalas and Tamils in certain geographic areas with the potential for violence. He designates these sensitive areas as Colombo and its suburbs, the Central Province (including Kandy), and the eastern districts. In the 2012 census the Kandy District (total population of 1,375,382) was 74.4 percent Sinhala, 5.2 percent North and East Tamil, 6.1 percent Up-country Tamil, and 13.9 percent Muslim (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka 2012).²³ Some of my research participants in Kandy discussed the possibility of a riot, but I do not primarily equate the city's ethnically mixed population with the potential for bloodshed. Rather, the presence of a significant population of Tamils and Muslims in a Sinhala-dominant social milieu makes the city a crucial location to study ethnic relations (see Figures 1.5 and 1.6). Kandy is part of the Sinhala



FIGURE 1.5 King Street Jumma Mosque in Kandy
Canaan Albright



FIGURE 1.6 Lord Kataragama Temple in Kandy

Buddhist nation-state, but it also has a unique historical identity as the former Kandyan Kingdom and a bustling urban center that has long incorporated distinct social groups.

Language Ideologies

Language ideologies are a central theoretical framework in the field of linguistic anthropology. Scholars of language ideologies analyze how linguistic varieties are conceptualized and mapped onto individuals, groups, activities, physical settings,

and institutions (Irvine and Gal 2000).²⁴ These processes are infused with political and moral interests.²⁵

Linguistic anthropologists have studied the role of language in ethnic, religious, and national group formation and identification.²⁶ Language is conceived as a “cultural site through which ‘communities’ are conceived and membership in them is assigned or denied” (Eisenlohr 2004, 63). The language ideological framework has exposed the dynamics of locally situated processes of identity formation and differentiation. Studies in this field focus not only on the structure of language ideologies, but also on their effects on people’s ways of thinking, feeling, and acting (Duranti 2011). Language ideologies impact sociolinguistic practices and are involved in processes of linguistic, social, and political change.

The concept of language ideologies has been particularly useful for my project since it provides a way to explore the meanings of linguistic signs (languages or features of speech) in use in relation to widely circulating ways of making sense of ethnic, religious, and class differences. Moving beyond a simple “micro-macro” approach in relating local linguistic events to larger-scale processes, Stanton Wortham (2012) argues that emergent patterns are generally not reducible to individual events but are impacted by processes at longer and broader temporal and spatial scales. Throughout this book I look at discrete ethnographic moments—in which configurations of difference are often subtly realigned—in relation to more established interactional norms and patterns.

There is a significant body of literature on language ideologies in relation to schools and other institutions (see Kroskrity 2000; Wortham 2008). Many of these studies focus only on the content of explicit language ideologies or discourses and their relevance for power hierarchies and political processes (Philips 1998). Recently there has been a push to connect language ideologies to individuals, groups, institutions, and practices, in time and space.²⁷ I seek to ground language ideologies in specific institutions and discourses, which allows me to chart how ideologies move from one setting to another and are possibly changed in the process (1998).

This book points to the role of education policies and practices and everyday interactions in the processes by which language is attached to ethnic, religious, regional, and class identities. To do so, I investigate the enactment of language ideologies across different spheres of practice. I define “spheres of practice” as social spaces characterized by physical setting, activity, participants, and other factors. For example, different ideologies that connect linguistic varieties with ethnic differences may come to the fore in an exchange between a teacher and student in the classroom (sphere of practice) as opposed to a conversation among students after the teacher leaves. In addition, the implications of a Sinhala person speaking Tamil in a TSL class are quite different from those of a conversation on a Kandy

street. Using the sphere-of-practice concept and other related terms allows me to integrate the study of talk in institutional and noninstitutional settings, which enables a more nuanced and precise account of language ideological processes.

Consistent with my focus on the more or less overt aspects of language ideological processes, I attend to people's explicit talk *about* language (metadiscourse) and language use.²⁸ For example, I look at how teachers evaluate different varieties of Tamil and employ those varieties. I avoid sharply differentiating talk about language from language use but explore the complexities within and across these aspects of communication (see Jaffe 1999). By focusing on the enactment of ideologies across different spheres of practice and which ideologies are involved in talk about language and language use, I examine the processes by which language-based models of ethnicity are instantiated and perpetuated. I particularly focus on how linguistic varieties or features of speech index speakers, groups (defined by ethnicity, religion, region, class, etc.), and social spheres (Agha 2007; Irvine and Gal 2000; Silverstein 1976).²⁹

Hindu College and Girls' College

Before discussing Hindu College and Girls' College in more detail, it is necessary to situate them with respect to the Sri Lankan national education system. There are private schools in Sri Lanka, including a category of English-medium schools called international schools, but the overwhelming majority of children attend government schools, which are controlled by the central government and the provincial councils. The education system is organized into five levels: primary (grades 1–5), junior secondary (grades 6–9), senior secondary (grades 10–11), collegiate (grades 12–13), and tertiary (university). Students take three national exams: the grade 5 scholarship exam; the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary-level (O level) exam, which determines their entrance to the collegiate level; and the GCE Advanced-level (A level) exam, which is a university entrance exam.

Schools are organized by their language of instruction and religious affiliations. Sinhalas study in the Sinhala medium and Tamils study in the Tamil medium. Southern Muslims, who claim that Arabic is their mother tongue or that they do not have one, are variously placed into Sinhala- and Tamil-medium programs, but the majority study in the Tamil medium (Nuhman 2007).³⁰ There are some bilingual schools in cities, but throughout the island most Sinhalas, Tamils, and Muslims study in separate schools.

Hindu College is a small Tamil-medium Hindu provincial school administered by the provincial councils. It is attended by both girls and boys. All the

students are ethnically Tamil and include both Hindus and Christians. Girls' College, formerly a Christian missionary school started in the late nineteenth century, is now a national Buddhist school administered by the Ministry of Education. It is one of the leading girls' educational institutions on the island. By offering Sinhala- and Tamil-medium streams and an English bilingual program, it accommodates students from all ethnic and religious backgrounds. While Hindu College students are lower to lower middle class, Girls' College students are lower middle to middle class. These schools do not fully represent Kandy's educational landscape—which would necessarily include a Sinhala-medium provincial school—but a focus on these institutions nonetheless enables me to demonstrate how youths' experiences vary with regard to the type of school (provincial vs. national), the language of instruction, and the ethnicity, religion, gender, and class of the students.

My Place in Kandy

As a foreigner conducting research on politically contentious issues, I was careful to behave in a balanced and sympathetic manner toward Sri Lankans of all social backgrounds. However, my status as a white American and my language skills impacted what I was able to observe. I began fieldwork with a high level of proficiency in Tamil from over a decade of language study in the United States and at different universities and language institutes in Tamil Nadu, India. My proficiency helped me develop an easy rapport with Tamil and Muslim administrators, educators, parents, and students in Kandy and Colombo. My research collaborators were accustomed to seeing and interacting with tourists, NGO workers, journalists, students, and academics, but told me it was rare to meet a foreigner who could speak Tamil well. My skills were particularly appreciated because of Tamil's status as a minority language. Within a day of my arrival in Colombo in January 2007, the Tamil Christian housekeeper at my guest house invited me to visit her son's former Tamil-medium school. Tamil speakers were interested in my research on what I described as *mozhi kalaachchaaram* (language culture). Many of my participants seemed to immediately understand my focus on Tamil sociolinguistic variation and educational inequalities.

I began my research at Hindu College and Girls' College after conducting a preliminary survey of public and private schools in Kandy and Colombo. I observed and recorded students, teachers, and principals at Hindu College from September 2007 to January 2008. I focused on the girls and boys in the grade 11 class (ages fifteen to seventeen), who were preparing to take their O-level exam that January. I also recorded students' speech in nonschool settings such as

homes, shops, in the street, and on the bus. After I started my research at Girls' College, I regularly visited Hindu College and stayed in touch with many of the students from the 2007 grade 11 class.

I conducted research at Girls' College from February to August 2008. The principal and I agreed that to give back to the school I would supplement my research by teaching English to grades 9 and 10 English-medium classes. I focused my research on the grade 10 Tamil-medium class (ages fourteen to sixteen), since the principal did not want me to disturb the grade 11 students' O-level exam preparation. I observed and recorded these students in the classroom and other spaces at the school. My role at Girls' College was slightly different than at Hindu College because I was a teacher in addition to a researcher. However, because I did not teach the students in the grade 10 Tamil-medium class, they treated me more like an older friend than a teacher. I observed other Tamil-, Sinhala-, and English-medium classes (grades 6–13), with a focus on the SSL and TSL subjects. I observed and recorded the teachers in the Tamil-medium staffroom and attended school events and activities. I visited the homes of numerous Girls' College students and teachers after school and on weekends.

The places where I lived gave me a sense of Kandy's sociocultural and linguistic landscape while also exposing me to different ethnic and religious groups. During the first month of my research, I stayed with a Sinhala family in an ethnically mixed upper-middle-class neighborhood near the Dalida Maligawa. For the next seven months, I stayed with a Tamil Hindu family in a predominantly Sinhala and Muslim neighborhood perched on a hillside halfway between the center of Kandy and the University of Peradeniya. Their daughter, Kavitha, was a grade 10 Tamil-medium student at Girls' College. Although I maintained a good relationship with the family, I decided to move out in February 2008 because I felt unsafe when they went out of town on weekends. For the next six months, I lived in an annex on Peradeniya Road, in an ethnically mixed middle-class neighborhood. While living in this annex, I spent almost every evening with a Muslim family across the street whose four daughters all attended Girls' College.

I enhanced my understanding of multilingual language programs and inter-ethnic relations by observing TSL classes taught to Sinhala police officers and administrators in Kandy and Colombo. I also observed TSL practices among youth at a multiethnic international NGO in Kandy (Peace International) and at the University of Peradeniya. When I returned to Sri Lanka from June to August 2011, I met with staff and students at Hindu College and Girls' College and attended additional TSL classes in Kandy and Colombo. I also stayed in touch with principals, teachers, and students through phone, email, and social media.

Consistent with theories of transcription as ethnography (Briggs 1986; Schieffelin 2005; Urban 1996), my analysis of linguistic interactions is informed

not just by the events themselves, but by the subsequent circulation of the recordings and transcripts to my research informants. As a second-language learner of Tamil and Sinhala, my ability to analyze the subtleties of some of the linguistic material is limited. In addition, multiple perspectives are also essential to contextualize and understand complex conversations (Davis 2014). I worked with two paid assistants, Kausalya and Uma, who were both Up-country Tamil Hindus. Partly due to the professional and personal difficulties she faced, Kausalya had a particularly astute awareness of sociolinguistic inequalities. Uma, who had completed her A levels in the Tamil medium at Girls' College, had a strong knowledge of Tamil, Sinhala, and English. I met with Kausalya and Uma once a week to listen to selected recordings I had made that week. When there was a segment that one of us found interesting, we would stop the recorder and discuss it at length. Several other colleagues and friends—including my Sinhala teacher (a Sinhala Buddhist) and a young man living in Kandy (an Up-country Tamil Christian)—also helped me interpret my recordings.

Overview of Chapters

Building on the contextual information provided here, chapter 2 demonstrates the persistent segregation of Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students and how linguistic, ethnic, and religious divisions at different levels are reinforced, from national and local education policies to everyday practices. I investigate the implementation of the recent trilingual policies at Hindu College and Girls' College in relation to the regimenting of language of instruction, ethnicity, and religion in school-based practices. At Hindu College, pedagogical practices and the school's orientation as a Tamil-speaking sphere of practice prevented students from improving their skills in SSL and English. Students gained proficiency in English at Girls' College, but the SSL and TSL programs were unevenly implemented, with Sinhala-medium students writing Tamil but refraining from speaking it. I suggest that while the trilingual policies were enacted to create interethnic harmony, national and local education policies and practices continue to use languages as a basis for ethnic difference, the results of which play out far beyond educational settings.

Chapters 3 and 4 investigate how the Girls' College teachers and students negotiated and contested inequalities among Tamil-speaking groups and between these groups and the Sinhala majority in their interactions in school and at home. Chapter 3 focuses on discussions and debates among the Tamil-medium teachers about which varieties of Tamil are the best in relation to shifting hierarchies between North and East Tamils, Up-country Tamils, and Muslims. I show

how the incongruities within and across the teachers' ideological assertions and evaluative practices reveal subtle shifts in the configuration of social inequalities. Chapter 4 considers the complex role of English in how the Girls' College grade 10 Tamil-medium students navigated inequalities in the school as a whole and the Tamil-medium stream and claimed status as cosmopolitan Kandy or Sri Lankan girls. The use of full English in the classroom risked making them seem snobbish, but the girls skillfully used English-inflected Tamil to articulate desired identities and stake claims in the future. Despite their multilingualism, the girls' identities as predominantly Tamil speakers shaped how they interacted in school and in their home and neighborhood settings. I argue that while their representation of themselves as Kandy girls avoided ethnicity-based models of identity, inconsistent with ideologies present in the national language and education reforms, they did not see Kandy as ethnically integrated so much as associate the city with their potential for upward mobility.

In chapter 5 I examine how the Hindu College girls and boys—Tamils, both Hindu and Christian—managed different forms of monitoring and the reproducing of ethnicity inside and outside school. In school their ethnic identities were continually reproduced in relation to language of instruction and linguistic practices. Outside school they navigated a Sinhala-majority urban setting, where the very act of speaking Tamil could be considered inappropriate or offensive, or might even be seen as a security threat. Drawing on literature on participant roles, I show how the youth moved through and created different kinds of interactional spaces to which others were not privy—in classrooms, outside school, in groups, and traveling alone. I suggest that studies of youth interactions look beyond more obvious school/nonschool comparisons to investigate how participant frameworks dynamically mediate linguistic and social behavior. I also discuss how the Hindu College youth managed their status as lower-class ethnic minorities by building Tamil cocoons around themselves to insulate them in Sinhala-majority public spaces.

Chapter 6 integrates diverse data from Kandy and the nearby capital city of Colombo to investigate the performative force of speaking Tamil in public spaces. I look at the centrality of language—namely the use of Sinhala and the avoidance of Tamil—in the strategies Tamils employed to conceal or mitigate their ethnic identity at checkpoints and on the street. I further analyze the ideological weight of Tamil by exploring Sinhalas' TSL practices at training programs for administrators and police officers, as well as at a peacebuilding NGO that promotes trilingual communication. I demonstrate that TSL classes provide a sphere of practice in which Sinhalas could comfortably speak Tamil, but on the street their use of Tamil was fraught because of its ideological association with Tamil ethnic identity. When Sinhala members of the NGO spoke Tamil, they

used a mocking variety that reinforced negative stereotypes about Tamil people (Hill 1995, 2008). I show how ideologies and practices around speaking Tamil reflect and produce ethnic divisions.

Chapter 7 discusses the processes by which language-based models of ethnic identity in Sri Lanka spread across institutional and noninstitutional settings. Tamil and Muslim students' identity as ethnic minorities was foregrounded in their schooling experience, but it was in the public sphere that ethnic differences around language were the most consequential. Tamil-speaking girls' imagining of a cosmopolitan Kandy enabled them to cope with the ethnic conflict as well as to aim for a comfortable future and be open to opportunities. I conclude by discussing Sri Lanka's political landscape since the end of the war in May 2009 and the importance of language rights to the reconciliation process. I argue that despite the fluidity of Sri Lankans' identifications, the very act of speaking Tamil, Sinhala, or English in public spaces enacts and preserves power relations and historically produced inequalities.

2

SCHOOL SEGREGATION AND LANGUAGE-BASED ETHNIC DIVISIONS

In postcolonial nations, language rights and access to education are often at the center of violent struggles for power and resources between majority and minority groups. In many of these contexts, language and education policy reforms have been an essential part of peacebuilding efforts. In contrast to nations where the colonial language was retained, in Sri Lankan policymakers advocated moving away from English to address the disparities suffered during colonial rule (Canagarajah 2005). From the 1940s to the 1950s the government replaced English with Sinhala and Tamil in state schools. However, the segregation of students on the basis of language of instruction increased interethnic enmity and mistrust (Tambiah 1986). In the last two decades the government has attempted to promote peace and national cohesion through further education policy reforms. These initiatives included a program that required all government school students to study their “additional” official language (Sinhala or Tamil) at the junior secondary level (grades 6–10). The study of English was also re-emphasized. However, as in many other national education systems, disparities exist between the aims of the reforms and their implementation in schools.

In this chapter, I demonstrate the persistent segregation of Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students and how linguistic, ethnic, and religious divisions are reinforced in national and local education policies and everyday practices. By doing so, I attend to the agentive role of principals and teachers in language policy implementation.¹ I consider the enactment of the recent trilingual reforms at two Kandy schools—Hindu College, a Tamil-medium Hindu school, and Girls’ College, a multilingual Buddhist school—in relation to the regimenting of language of instruction, ethnicity, and religion in school-based practices (e.g., classroom interactions, assemblies, and events). I argue that while the trilingual policies tried to create interethnic harmony, national

and local education policies and practices continue to use languages as a basis for ethnic difference, the results of which play out far beyond educational settings.

The National Education System: Reinforcing Linguistic, Ethnic, and Religious Differences

In Asia and elsewhere, postcolonial language and education policies have reproduced inequalities based on language, class, ethnicity, and religion. Colonial schools were established to groom a small elite to occupy civil service jobs (Rampton et al. 2008). General schooling was limited to the primary level, with higher levels of education tightly controlled by the colonial governments. This resulted in a stratified linguistic market; only the individuals who achieved higher education gained access to the colonial language (2008).

In India, Singapore, Namibia, and Brazil nationalist leaders promoted the colonial language because of the educational and economic opportunities it offered. In addition, some believed it would help unify ethnically divided societies (Rampton et al. 2008; Tollefson and Tsui 2004). As part of a larger *swabasha* (vernacular) movement, political elites changed the language of instruction in Sri Lankan schools to Sinhala and Tamil to address the gap between the postcolonial anglophone elite and the masses of the population, who controlled the vote (Canagarajah 2005; Tambiah 1986). However, Sinhala Buddhist nationalists, angered over the overrepresentation of English-educated Jaffna Tamils in the civil service, insisted that *swabasha* mean "Sinhala only." Shortly after the 1956 presidential election, won by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike of the Sri Lankan Freedom Party on a Sinhala Buddhist nationalist platform, the government passed the Sinhala-Only Act, which made Sinhala the sole official language of the nation, though Tamil was still offered as a language of instruction in schools (Devotta 2004).

The change in the language of instruction in state schools in the mid-twentieth century, combined with the gradual takeover of schools by the state, produced a centralized education system that guaranteed students a free education (Little 2003). In national contexts where segments of the population speak different languages, the availability of education in children's first language(s) can enable large numbers of students to get a quality education and even preserve ethnolinguistic identities (Hornberger 2008; McCarthy 2011). As a result of the new education system, the national literacy rate in Sri Lanka increased from 60 percent in the 1950s to nearly 95 percent, as it is today; and the net enrollment in primary schools rose to 91 percent (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka 2008a).² However, the change to Sinhala and Tamil had negative consequences

for interethnic relations.³ While the segregation of students by language of instruction had to some extent occurred as a consequence of the geographical distribution of Sinhalas and Tamils, that segregation became more systematic and pervasive (Perera et al. 2004). Stanley Tambiah, himself educated in an English-medium missionary school in Colombo, describes interethnic tensions in government schools in the post-1956 period:

Contact between Sinhala and Tamil students was reduced to a minimum, and the social distance served in time to convert difference into enmity and confrontation, and to create distrust, dislike, and fear between the youth that had never before been experienced so vehemently in the island's cities and towns, including the capital city of Colombo itself. (1986, 76)

The national education system was decentralized in 1987, but it remains administratively consistent by virtue of the standardized Sinhala- and Tamil-medium curriculum (Wickrema and Colenso 2003). It is organized into five levels: primary (grades 1–5), junior secondary (grades 6–9), senior secondary (grades 10–11), collegiate (grades 12–13), and tertiary (university). Students who pass the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary-level (O level) exam can go on to the collegiate level. The GCE Advanced-level (A level) exam is a university entrance exam.⁴ Schools are classified both by their language of instruction and religious affiliation (Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, or Christian). A small percentage of government schools offer English as a language of instruction (usually only at the secondary level) in addition to Sinhala or English or both.

In policy and practice, language of instruction divisions are intertwined with the concept of “mother tongue.” This English term is used in Sri Lanka to describe a person’s first or predominant language, but consistent with the Herderian notion of one language, one people, it also takes on a moral significance “as the one first and therefore *real* language of a speaker, transparent to the true self” (Woolard 1998, 18; emphasis in original).⁵ By policy, ethnic Sinhalas and Tamils study in their mother tongue. For southern Muslims, who define their ethnicity on the basis of religion rather than language, the situation is more complex. Claiming that their mother tongue is Arabic or that they do not have one at all, they may be placed into Tamil- or Sinhala-medium programs (most study in Tamil).⁶ In Table 2.1, I lay out the relationships between ethnicity, mother tongue, language of instruction, and religion for Sinhalas, Tamils, and Muslims, roughly as they are taught in the national curriculum. Many Sri Lankan students found these relationships confusing. For example, during a social studies O-level

Table 2.1 Ethnicity, Mother Tongue, Language of Instruction, and Religion in Sri Lankan Government Schools

Ethnicity	Mother tongue	Language of instruction	Religion
Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala	Buddhism or Christianity
Tamil (Up-country and North and East)	Tamil	Tamil	Hinduism or Christianity
Muslim	Arabic or none	Tamil or Sinhala	Islam

Table 2.2 Distribution of Sri Lankan Government Schools by Language of Instruction

Language of instruction	Percentage of schools	Number of schools
Sinhala	62.4	6,338
Tamil	29.4	2,989
Sinhala and Tamil	.65	66
Sinhala and English	5.5	554
Tamil and English	1.7	168
Sinhala, Tamil, and English	.46	47
Total		10,162

exam review at Hindu College, some Tamil students had trouble grasping the notion that Muslims base their ethnic identity on religion.

While the number of bilingual or trilingual schools has recently increased, the overwhelming majority of Sri Lankan government schools (92 percent) are monolingual. In Table 2.2 I present government schools by language of instruction (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka 2016). National statistics on the religious affiliations of schools were not available. Although students from one ethnic group occasionally study in a school dominated by students of another, most Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim students throughout the island study in separate schools.⁷ The organization of the national education system thus perpetuates the ideology that ethnic groups, as primarily defined by language or religion, are essentially distinct and should be kept separate.

Trilingual Reforms

In the late 1990s to mid-2000s the Sri Lankan government passed trilingual language policy reforms both in the public sector and in education. Following the Sinhala-Only Act of 1956, the government made several attempts to incorporate Tamil into the nation's language policies. The current iteration was added in 1987 with the thirteenth amendment to the constitution, which declared Tamil a "co-official" language and English an interethnic "link language," though this role was ill defined (Official Language Commission 2006). However, Tamil's co-official status with Sinhala remained mostly on paper. And despite the fact that English had an unofficial role as a link language among elites in the British period, it was not heavily promoted because it was seen as foreign (Devotta 2004).

Recognizing the significant gap between the content of the Official Languages Policy and its implementation, the Official Language Commission (OLC) issued a memorandum in 2005 calling for a full realization of the policy's content. They noted that Sinhala still functioned as the main administrative language in the South, with Tamil a *de facto* official language in the North and East. Although Article 20 of the constitution states that citizens have the right to communicate in Tamil or English in areas where Sinhala is the language of administration, the referendum noted that only 8.3 percent of Sri Lankan public administrators spoke Tamil. To address these concerns, the OLC and other government bodies launched Tamil-as-a-second-language (TSL) and Sinhala-as-a-second-language (SSL) training courses throughout the island. Police officers and government administrators were given incentives to complete these courses (more on this in chapter 6) (Government of Sri Lanka 2012; Rajandran 2009).

Violence on the part of Sinhala as well as Tamil youth spurred language policy reform in education. By the early 1970s, the rural Sinhala Buddhist youth who had benefited from the postindependence education reforms believed that their education (which was mainly in Sinhala) would result in government and professional employment (Kearney and Miller 1985). However, while some youth obtained mid-level government positions, the lucrative government and private sector jobs continued to go to the English-educated middle classes (Canagarajah 2005; Gunaratna 1990). Influenced by socialist struggles elsewhere in the world, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, People's Liberation Front) was founded in 1965 with the aim of staging a socialist revolution. Members of the JVP were children of the rural poor, all Sinhala and mostly Buddhist (Obeyesekere 1974; Tambiah 1986). In 1971 the JVP staged an abortive insurrection. A second insurrection occurred from 1987 to 1989, though it was fundamentally different from the first. Ethnonationalist in nature, it protested the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka

Peace Accord. An unprecedented disaster, this insurrection resulted in the deaths of over fifty thousand people, mainly youth¹ (Hettige 2002; Moore 1993).

Following the violence, the Presidential Commission on Youth was established in 1989 to investigate the causes of the unrest. The 1990 report identified the discrepancy between the national education system and employment opportunities as one of the primary reasons behind the youth violence (Government of Sri Lanka 1990). Building on the findings of this report, the National Education Commission (NEC) report of 1992 identified the “achievement of national cohesion, national integrity, and national unity” as an important national goal (Perera et al. 2004, 97). In 1997 the NEC introduced a proposal for comprehensive reform covering primary- and secondary-level education. It was created in conjunction with international education agencies and was influenced by a developing global agenda for education (Sørensen 2008). The aim was to extend educational opportunities and improve the quality of the learning experience (Little 2011; National Education Commission 1997). New planning tools and management structures were introduced, and new institutions were established to conduct policy-relevant research and advise the government (Perera et al. 2004).

The 1997 education reforms included revisions to controversial subjects such as history and social studies, and introduced courses designed to promote peace and national integration.⁸ In contrast to the previous curriculum, which propagated an exclusively Sinhala Buddhist imagining of the nation, the new curriculum sought to bring a more multicultural perspective (Sørensen 2008). As mentioned previously, one of the most significant changes was the bilingual language program. Sinhala and Tamil would be offered as required subjects at the junior secondary level (grades 6–9) and elective subjects at the senior secondary level (grades 10–11) (Perera et al. 2004). The NEC identified the teaching and learning of a second national language as “crucial to Sri Lanka’s national integration and cohesion” (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka 2008b, 13). By 2006 SSL and TSL programs had been implemented across the island, albeit with poor and rural schools often lacking sufficient teachers to offer them. In 2003 the NEC called for increased attention to English in primary and secondary education. The report underscored the increasing value of English as a global language as well as the importance of spoken English in strengthening communication skills. English was already offered as a subject at the primary and secondary levels, but the report paved the way for the introduction of English-medium subjects at some government schools (National Education Commission 2003).

The OLC’s and NEC’s initiatives were undertaken under President Chandrika Kumaratunga’s People’s Alliance government (1994–2005), which came to power under a mandate to promote peace and interethnic justice. Sri Lanka’s political climate shifted significantly with the election of President Mahinda Rajapaksa

in 2005, who subsequently started a campaign to eradicate the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by military means. After the army's May 2009 victory, Rajapaksa emphasized the importance of trilingualism in Sinhala, Tamil, and English to promote national unity in the reconciliation process. The government introduced the Ten Year Plan for a Trilingual Sri Lanka in 2012 (Government of Sri Lanka 2012).⁹ In 2014 Maithripala Sirisena, who had served as a minister under Chandrika Kumaratunga, announced his presidential campaign with her endorsement. After his election he advocated for the full implementation of the Official Languages Policy to achieve national peace and reconciliation (Government of Sri Lanka 2018; Wakkumbura 2016; Wijesekera et al. 2019).

In the following analysis, I transition from national policies to local practices by investigating the implementation of trilingual language policies at Hindu College and Girls' College in relation to the ideological regimentation of language of instruction, ethnicity, and religion. The effectiveness of these programs is hindered by the dominance of Sinhala in the South.¹⁰ Although Tamil holds status as a co-official language, first-language Tamil speakers (Tamils and Muslims) need to learn to speak, read, and write Sinhala to manage everyday tasks (e.g., apply for a job, visit a doctor, or get safely through an army checkpoint). Sinhala, like Tamils and Muslims, are highly motivated to learn English to increase their employability and advance their social status (Canagarajah 2005). However, they have very little political or economic incentive to learn Tamil. As I discuss more extensively in chapter 6, Sinhala are also reluctant to speak Tamil because they directly associate the language with Tamil ethnicity (de Silva 1998).

The segregation of Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim students in the national education system is also a direct impediment to the success of the trilingual reforms. The programs are based on the idea that interethnic integration will increase if Sri Lankan youth learn to communicate with one another in all three languages (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka 2008b). Since youth from different ethnic backgrounds rarely study together in the same schools, there are few in-school contexts where interethnic communication can take place. To the extent that the reforms do not contribute to changing the structure of education in Sri Lanka, they must be considered to be additive rather than transformative. As Kenneth Bush and Diana Saltarelli explain, transformative solutions "change the underpinning logic and structures of behavior" (2000, 33). While this is still not evident in Sri Lanka, it is possible that SSL, TSL, and English programs may prove effective at monolingual schools if students acquire language skills that they can use elsewhere. In addition, learning the "other" official language might help to bolster their interethnic tolerance. My examination of trilingual practices at Girls' College is particularly relevant to tracking the progress of reform since it is one of a small number of schools to offer instruction in Sinhala, Tamil, and

English. It provides a model for integrated education as well as a testing ground for the efficacy of trilingual programs.

Kandy Schools

Schools in the Kandy Zone are classified as government or nongovernment. This latter type of school consists of free parochial schools (mainly Christian); fee-levying Sinhala- or Tamil-medium private schools; and fee-levying English-medium international schools, which prepare students from the international exams that are equivalent to the UK General Certificate of Secondary Education. Originally started in 1977 to educate the children of expatriates, these schools have proliferated in urban areas since the 1990s (de Silva 1999). The best of these offer a higher standard of English education than is available elsewhere (Gunsekera 2005). Students who can afford the fees are given preference for private sector jobs—particularly in science, business, and technology fields—as well as opportunities to pursue further education abroad. Thus, as was the case in the colonial period, access to a high-quality English education is restricted to a very small percentage of the population (de Silva 1999; Parakrama 1995).

Government schools are provincial (managed by the provincial councils) or national (managed by the Ministry of Education). Although not part of the statistics I present subsequently, the government school system also includes government-assisted schools, which are mainly Christian (there are three in Kandy), and *pirivena*, or Buddhist clerical schools (Kandy is home to thirteen of these).¹¹ The quality of education provided at provincial schools, which are referred to as “small” schools, falls far short of that at national or government-assisted schools, which are referred to as “large” schools. Large schools often have superior facilities (i.e., classroom space, school grounds, teaching equipment, etc.), as well as more highly educated teachers, some of whom hold BA degrees (Little 2011).

Inequalities in access to quality education in Sri Lanka related to socioeconomic level are compounded by another institution, private tuition (tutoring) classes. In Sri Lanka, approximately 75.4 percent of schoolchildren attend tuition sessions (Gamlath 2013). Several Girls’ College students told me that school is for fun and tuition classes are for learning. Students who lack resources to afford the tuition sessions taught by well-qualified and experienced teachers face an additional barrier to their educational success.

In Kandy 81 percent of national and provincial schools are monolingual, while 19 percent are bilingual or trilingual. Kandy government schools are Buddhist, Hindu, or Muslim (there are no Christian national or provincial schools). In Table 2.3 I present the Kandy Zone national and provincial schools by language

Table 2.3 Distribution of National and Provincial Schools in the Kandy Zone by Language of Instruction

Language of instruction	Percentage of schools	Number of schools
Sinhala	54.7	64
Tamil	26.5	31
Sinhala and Tamil	2.6	3
Sinhala and English	10.3	12
Tamil and English	0	0
Sinhala, Tamil, and English	6.0	7
Total		117

of instruction (Provincial Department of Education—Central Province 2014). The percentages of Sinhala- and Tamil-medium schools is roughly consistent with demographics in the Kandy Zone. While several Buddhist and Muslim schools are bilingual or trilingual, all Hindu schools are Tamil medium.

In Kandy and elsewhere in Sri Lanka discrepancies in the facilities at Tamil- versus Sinhala-medium schools are not uncommon.¹² As provincial schools do not receive government funds for their everyday expenses, they rely on donations from individuals, businesses, and international organizations (e.g., the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF). Tamil educators, policymakers, and parents I spoke with in Kandy and Colombo associated the poor condition of the Tamil-medium Hindu or Christian schools with Tamils' relative lack of financial resources and political pull compared with Sinhalas and Muslims. Though Muslims are among Kandy's poor and uneducated populations, there is also a significant Kandy Muslim middle class employed in business, government, and professions such as law and medicine. This population has also financially benefited from remittances from the Gulf States. Tamil-medium schools—whether Hindu, Christian, or Muslim—are at a structural disadvantage with respect to the national curriculum. The content of most Tamil-medium textbooks and materials other than Tamil literature are translated from Sinhala into Tamil, which results in errors, omissions, and awkward translations (Devotta 2004).

Hindu College and Girls' College differ from one another by their subtype (provincial vs. national), language of instruction (Tamil vs. trilingual), religious affiliation (Hindu vs. Buddhist), and sex of students (mixed vs. girls only). Despite these differences, Hindu College and Girls' College share local status

as "town" schools. In contrast with comparable schools located outside Kandy, town schools have a high status and can attract talented teachers and students, as well as donations from wealthy community members. Since it only offers grades 1–11, Hindu College students who pass the O-level exam can apply to do their A levels at other schools. Every year, several Hindu College girls do their A levels in the Girls' College Tamil-medium stream.

Hindu College

Situating Hindu College

Early on in my fieldwork, I discovered the peripheral position Tamil-medium Hindu schools (referred to as Tamil schools) occupied in the Kandy educational milieu. During my initial trip in January 2007, I asked a Kandy upper-middle-class Sinhala Buddhist woman (whose children were privately educated) if she knew where any Tamil-medium schools were located. She said that she was unaware of the existence of any Tamil schools in Kandy. When I asked a prominent Sinhala Buddhist academic the same question, he replied that while some larger schools combined Sinhala- and Tamil-medium streams, there were, in fact, no separate Tamil schools in Kandy. These informants may have been unaware of the existence of Tamil-medium schools, or they may have simply been uninterested in the topic.

I got my first view into Tamil schooling in Kandy from one of my research assistants, Kausalya, an Up-country Tamil Hindu who taught English at a Tamil school outside the city. In July 2007 we hired an autorickshaw to take a tour of the three Tamil-medium Hindu town schools: Saraswati College, Lakshmi College, and Hindu College. As I discovered, Tamil schools were not just symbolically peripheral, but spatially as well; they were located in out-of-the-way or hard-to-find places. Although not far from the center of Kandy, Saraswati College is situated inside an army base. Over the years, the army base has encroached on the school's land, to the extent that teachers and students have to pass through the base's main security gate to enter the school. Lakshmi College is in a neighborhood called Mahaiyawa, which is near the Kandy cemetery. This neighborhood is occupied primarily by low-caste Sinhala and Tamils as well as Muslims, the majority of whom are employed by the Kandy Municipal Council as sanitation workers. Situated on a main commercial road a half kilometer from the city center, Hindu College occupies that most prominent location of all the Tamil schools. Still, it is easy to overlook because it is a very narrow building without visible signage.

I chose to do my research at Hindu College because of the principal's enthusiasm about my research project. An Up-country Tamil Hindu man from a tea plantation area outside Kandy, Mr. Ramakrishnan (Mr. R.) arrived at the school

in 2006. He was hardworking and dedicated to improving the school's reputation. Since he arrived, the students' scores on the O-level exam, which are treated as a direct measure of a school's success, had significantly increased. Kausalya, who had taught English at Hindu College for a decade, referred to Mr. R. as "Nalla oru aaLu" (a good person).

Hindu College had 285 students and sixteen teachers in the period of my fieldwork. As Mr. R. and the teachers told me many times, the biggest problem with the school was the lack of space.¹³ To enter the school, you needed to walk up a steep flight of stairs leading from the commercial road. Mr. R.'s office was in the entranceway of the school, across from a small music room. The secondary students (grades 8–11) were all packed into the single main room. The primary students (grades 1–7) sat in cramped classrooms on the first floor. The noise volume in the main room of the school was so high that it was hard for the students to hear the teachers. The school lacked any grounds, so students had to remain at their desks between classes and during lunch.

Hindu College was demographically almost entirely Tamil (Hindu and Christian). The only non-Tamil teacher in the school was a Muslim science teacher, who arrived in 2007. Most other Tamil schools in the Kandy Zone had at least one Sinhala teacher, who taught SSL or English. At Hindu College, both SSL and English were taught by Mrs. Devi, an Up-country Tamil Hindu who had studied in the Sinhala medium and was proficient in English. Since I knew that Lakshmi College had some Muslim students, one day I asked Mr. R. why Hindu College did not. He immediately replied, "EDukka maTToom" ([We] will not take [them]). He explained that Muslims have far more educational resources in Kandy than Tamils. If they started admitting Muslims, he added, they would try to dominate the school and Tamils would have nothing left of their own. Mr. R.'s statement reflects the common perception that Kandy Muslims have significant political power and wealth. In addition, it also shows his treatment of schooling as an ethnolinguistic resource that has to be protected.

Of the fifteen Tamil teachers, eleven (73 percent) identified as Up-country and four (27 percent) as North and East; twelve (80 percent) as Hindu and three (20 percent) as Christian. The teachers were mostly middle class (their children attended large schools). Of the 285 students, 265 (93 percent) identified as Up-country and twenty (7 percent) as North and East; 228 (80 percent) as Hindu and fifty-seven (20 percent) as Christian, both Roman Catholic (RC) and Non-Roman Catholic (NRC).¹⁴ The students were lower to lower middle class; their fathers worked as businessmen, shopkeepers, laborers, or petty merchants. Students wore the required government school uniforms, which consisted of a white shirt and slacks for the boys and a white shirt, skirt, and a school tie for the girls. All of the teachers wore Indian-style saris.

Regimenting Language Medium, Ethnicity, and Religion

At Hindu College, school practices were geared toward its orientation as a Tamil-medium Hindu school. As in all government schools, the day began with an interfaith prayer session. During this time Hindu students conducted a small puja (*puujai*), or prayer ritual, while the Christian students prayed at their desks. Every Friday morning, however, Hindu College had a special program. Beginning at 7:00 a.m., a lengthy puja was held in the main room of the school. The stage, which usually served as the grade 9 classroom, was transformed into a puja space. The ritual was conducted by a grade 10 boy, whose father is a non-Brahmin temple priest. Simultaneously, the Christian students gathered in an upstairs hallway space. They stood in front of a small cross and a candle mounted on the wall and conducted a combined RC and NRC service. During the Hindu and Christian programming, the Muslim teacher, whose hijab made her visibly stand out from the other teachers, waited in a narrow space between the school and the adjacent building.

When the religious programming was finished, teachers and students congregated in the main room for a special assembly, a practice that was unique to Hindu College. A student and a teacher each gave a motivational speech in Tamil. The principal then delivered a speech in Tamil, in which he added to the themes in the previous two speeches and made some announcements. Frequent themes of these speeches included the importance of school pride, the need for tolerance of difference, and the promotion of peace in Sri Lanka.

Throughout the year, Hindu College held numerous school-wide events, often funded by local Tamil businesses and prominent members of the Tamil community. One notable contributor to the school was the father of Muttiah Muralitharan, a star bowler on the Sri Lankan cricket team. Most school events were timed around Hindu holidays such as Saraswati Puja (a festival honoring the goddess of knowledge, music, art, and culture) and Deepavali (the festival of lights). Like all Tamil schools, Hindu College held an annual Tamil cultural arts program (*kalai vizhaa*) and participated in the Ministry of Education's National Tamil Language Day Competitions (Sinhala-medium schools participate in the Sinhala Language Day Competitions). Mr. R. maintained a close relationship with the nearby Kandy Pillayar Kovil, a Hindu temple devoted to the god Ganesh (see chapter 5).

While Mr. R. and the teachers—with the exception of Mrs. Devi—spoke to me mostly in Tamil, they frequently brought up the importance of learning Sinhala and English. They associated Sinhala with “managing” in Kandy—getting through checkpoints, filling out forms, and attending teacher-training programs; English was associated with career opportunities and access to global

networks. During my research period, Mr. R. asked me to tutor him and a friend (a principal of another Tamil school) in conversational English in the evenings. My research assistant, Kausalya, told me that Mr. R. was working to improve his English and Sinhala because he wanted to advance to a position in the Tamil-medium Zonal Education Office, which he managed to do five years later.

Mr. R. and the teachers' attitudes about the importance of Sinhala and English did not transfer to their teaching practices. Sinhala and English were rarely used outside of the SSL and English classes. Sinhala was not incorporated into any activities, but English was incorporated into some. During the Friday program, a student read the international news over the intercom in English. A few months into my research, Mr. R. proudly brought in a newspaper stand, which he supplied with three daily government papers: two in Tamil and one in English. Further reinforcing the idea that the school was a Tamil-speaking space, the principal often spoke to me in Tamil in school and in a mix of Tamil and English in other settings.

Mr. R. and the teachers had regular interaction with the directors at the Kandy Zonal Education Office regarding policies, the curriculum, and national exam preparation. As part of the state education system, Hindu College had to sporadically participate in national-level activities. These occasions highlighted the school's fraught relationship with mainstream imaginings of the Sinhala Buddhist nation. For example, on July 11, 2007, when the Sri Lankan army gained control of the LTTE-controlled peak known as Thoppigala, the government used this victory to symbolize the reclaiming of the entire eastern region. Many Sri Lankans, however, were skeptical of the victory because they knew that it was only possible because in 2004 the LTTE's eastern branch, led by Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan (Karuna), had broken off to align with the Sri Lankan government (Thiranagama 2011). As part of the national Thoppigala victory celebration, all government schoolteachers were required to bring the traditional Sinhala dish, *kiribat* (milk rice), for their students. Kausalya said that many Sinhala schools did not do this because they did not consider it a real victory. Tamils schools did it, she explained, because they were afraid of the consequences of not complying with the order. At Hindu College, a few teachers brought *kiribat* to school and quickly handed it out to students without saying much about it. They later complained that they had to pay for it from their meager government salaries. A few months later, all government schoolteachers were asked to give a half-day's salary for the development of the East. Although some teachers at Kandy Tamil schools claimed they would refuse to give it, a director at the Tamil-medium Zonal Education Office—a Tamil Hindu man—told me that all teachers would end up giving it because they had no real choice in the matter.

As was typical at most schools at this time, Mr. R. and the teachers generally avoided discussing politically charged topics. Kausalya told me that when students made comments about the LTTE or other topics related to the war, she told them that it was inappropriate to talk about such things in class. She commented that as a teacher, she tried to “stick with the program,” and not convey her own feelings of detachment from the nation. Hindu College students’ avoidance of politically contentious topics was deeply internalized. In my recordings of students’ speech inside and outside lessons, the only time I heard them mention the LTTE was when some grade 11 boys referred to a rival group of grade 10 boys as *pulihai* (tigers). In my conversation with students, when topics related to politics or ethnic relations came up, they often used expressions from their grade 11 civics and governance class, which had been introduced in the 1997 education reforms (Sørensen 2008). For example, when I asked one particularly outgoing girl if she liked studying Sinhala, she answered in a sly tone that she liked Sinhala since it is “Namma sagoodara mozhi” (our [inclusive] sibling language) and that Sri Lanka is “Namma taay naaDu” (our [inclusive] mother country). When I told my research assistant Kausalya about this interaction, she noted that the student was simply repeating terms from the textbook. The girl’s response could be interpreted as answering my question in a neutral way or a sarcastic commentary on representations of the Sri Lankan nation in the national curriculum.

The only time when Mr. R. explicitly situated Hindu College within Kandy as a whole was in his discussion of its lack of resources and facilities compared to large schools or small Sinhala and Muslim schools. Mr. R. and teachers at Hindu College were very sensitive to the students’ feelings of being disadvantaged, as related to their Tamil ethnicity, their lower-class status, their lack of financial resources, and their often-difficult family circumstances (alcoholic or absent parents, etc.). Mr. R. and the teachers were immediately focused on improving the students’ scores on the national exams, but they were also determined to instill pride (*perumai*) and confidence (*tannambikkai*) in their students.

Consistent with its structural position in the national education system and its demographics (all students were Tamil), Hindu College represented a Tamil-speaking Hindu sphere of practice in its linguistic, sociocultural, and religious orientations. The school allowed for some religious diversity in its incorporation of Christian practices. But the almost exclusive use of Tamil in school reinforced the ideological conflation of a Tamil ethnic identity with language of instruction and linguistic practice. Since all the students were of the same ethnic group, Hindu College could not use trilingual programs as direct tools of interethnic integration. Still, SSL and English programs could have a positive benefit by improving students’ trilingual competencies.

SSL and English Classes

At Hindu College all students spoke Tamil as a first language. Those who came from multiethnic Kandy neighborhoods were strong in Sinhala, but students from tea plantation areas outside the city struggled with it. The students had only limited English (see chapter 4). Some went to tuition classes in a few subjects, but most could not afford them. Half of the grade 11 students chose to take SSL (not required after grade 10), while the other half took health science, which had a reputation for being an easier subject. A higher number of girls enrolled in SSL than boys, with girls having a higher overall pass rate on the O-level exam.

Pedagogical practices were highly influenced by existing language-teaching norms. The education system in Sri Lanka is consistent with what Krishna Kumar (1986), referring to India, describes as a “textbook-oriented” system. In these systems the focus of classroom instruction is on learning material in government-issued textbooks to prepare for national exams, which only test written competencies (1986). There are significant lexical and grammatical differences between literary and colloquial forms of Sinhala and Tamil (see chapter 3) (Gair 1985; Suseendrarajah 1999). To familiarize students with spoken language, the SSL curriculum, like the TSL curriculum, includes both literary and colloquial varieties. However, Mrs. Devi focused on reading and writing in her SSL and English classes, to the exclusion of speaking (colloquial forms were written). This practice is consistent with the textbook-oriented system, but it is also influenced by the ideological association of formal education with writing and formal oratory rather than everyday spoken language (Annamalai 2014; Bate 2009; Gair 1968; Zubair 2010).

Mrs. Devi used similar pedagogical approaches in both her SSL and English classes. As part of the 1997 education reforms, the government introduced the “5E” method (engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration, and evaluation) to create a more student- and activity-centered approach to teaching and learning. In accordance with this method, Mrs. Devi presented a short lesson and then gave her students an assignment from the textbook, which they completed in pairs or groups. When they completed it, they gave it to Mrs. Devi to correct. Lessons and instructions were delivered mostly in Tamil. When she uttered a sentence in Sinhala or English, she immediately followed it with a Tamil gloss. Students asked clarification questions mainly in Tamil, although some students used brief words, phrases, or sentences in Sinhala or English. When I asked Kausalya why Mrs. Devi mainly taught her Sinhala and English classes in Tamil, she said that it was the only way to ensure that students understood the instructions and lessons. Chaise LaDousa (2014), in his work on English-medium education in North India, refers to the use of Hindi to frame teacher-student

interaction and give textbook glosses as examples of J. Keith Chick's concept of "safetalk." It involves "students and teachers colluding in interactional routines so that they can engage in a language over which they have little control" (2014, 155).

I experienced some of the challenges Mrs. Devi faced when I volunteered to teach an English essay-writing class to the grade 11 students. As I stood behind the teacher's desk and started my lesson, I quickly ascertained that only the students in the front of the classroom could hear what I said, even if I shouted. To address this problem, I maneuvered through the narrow aisle between the girls' and boys' desks and repeated my instructions. However, this technique proved to be awkward as my *shalwar kameez* (a long tunic with pants and a scarf) kept snagging on the desks. As this experience indicates, even had Mrs. Devi attempted to build students' spoken competencies, the spatial constraints and related noise made it extremely challenging.

My conversations with teachers at Sinhala-medium Buddhist provincial schools (Sinhala schools) pointed to certain similarities with the situation at Hindu College. Students at those schools gained a level of proficiency in written TSL and English, but they did not develop spoken proficiency in these languages. Still, given the dominance of Sinhala in the South, the situation is not really parallel. In contrast with Tamil-medium students, most Sinhala-medium students do not speak their additional official language (Tamil), or even feel the need to do so, which results in an incomplete implementation of the trilingual policies. At Hindu College, national policies interacted with local policies and practices to reinforce the ideological conflation of ethnicity with language of instruction and linguistic practice. While Hindu practices played a prominent role in everyday life, religion was second to ethnicity in the orientation of the school. Since the trilingual programs did not do anything to destabilize Hindu College as a Tamil sphere of practice, they had only limited impact in promoting interethnic integration and mutual understanding.

Girls' College

Situating Girls' College

Originally a Christian missionary school started in 1879, Girls' College is a Buddhist national school. It is located on a main commercial street, approximately one kilometer from the center of Kandy (just southwest of Hindu College). One of the leading girls' educational institutions on the island, Girls' College had 203 teachers and 3,961 students. In the very front of the school is a small chapel where occasional Christian services were held, a reminder of its missionary past. The sizable campus has a large central office complex, auditorium, primary school, secondary school, science laboratory, canteen, and sports field. Because of its status

as a national school, the level of security on its campus was high. Every morning, students and staff entered through a large security gate, where guards checked their bags with metal detectors.

Girls' College offered Sinhala- and Tamil-medium streams for grades 1–11, and for all A-level subjects. Students could apply to enter the English bilingual stream for grades 6–11. Students in this program studied select subjects in the English medium (math, science, and English literature) and other subjects in Sinhala or Tamil.¹⁵ A-level Commerce and Science were offered in English but not Arts. Roughly consistent with Kandy demographics, 2,990 (75.5 percent) students studied in Sinhala and 971 (24.5 percent) in Tamil. While some Tamil boys studied in Sinhala at a nearby boys' government-assisted school, Girls' College did not permit this practice. Sinhala students studied in the Sinhala medium and Tamil students studied in the Tamil medium. The majority of Muslims studied in the Tamil medium. Several Muslim parents told me that it was difficult for Muslim children to be admitted into the Sinhala-medium stream because the school administrators wanted to keep most of the spots for Sinhalas.¹⁶

Before the primary school (grades 1–5) opened in 2001, admission to Girls' College was based on the grade 5 scholarship exam. As a result, the students in grades 8–11 came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. In the new system primary school admissions were done on the basis of a formula that considers parents' education level, proximity to the school, and other factors. Since Girls' College is located near upper-middle-class residential areas, students in grades 1–7 tended to be from wealthier backgrounds. Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students ranked very high on the national O- and A-level exams.

Regimenting Language Medium, Ethnicity, and Religion

In its official publications and public events, Girls' College projects a multicultural image. Consistent with this promotion, Girls' College made a strong effort to celebrate Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian holidays. Although individual Islamic holidays were not celebrated, every year the school held an "Islamic Day" celebration. Girls' College also celebrated multiethnic holidays like Sinhala and Tamil New Year. Many school-wide programs displayed school and national pride, including the annual Sports Day, where students from each of the four social houses—which mixed Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students—competed in sporting events.

Despite the school's efforts to project a multicultural image, its Sinhala identification was dominant in practice. As is typical for schools that have a Sinhala majority, the principal was a Sinhala Buddhist and the main administrative language of the school was Sinhala. English functioned as a secondary

administrative language. The daily morning program, broadcast over the school intercom, consisted of an interfaith prayer period, the singing of the national anthem in Sinhala, and school announcements. Most of the announcements were delivered in Sinhala, but some content was given in English, such as sports results. The school day was completed by singing the school song, a Sinhala song written by a former teacher that praised the joys of being a Girls' College student. All school-wide assemblies were conducted in Sinhala and sometimes incorporated Buddhist religious practices.

To the extent that it combined students from all major ethnic and religious backgrounds, Girls' College has the potential to meet the NEC's goal of using trilingual programs to increase interethnic communication and mutual understanding. However, the separation of the Tamil- and Sinhala-medium streams prevented this from occurring. As necessitated by the separate curricula, Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students were divided for academic and extracurricular activities (e.g., music, dance, and drama). Programs like the annual Sports Day combined Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students, but they were infrequent.

Most of the secondary-level Tamil-medium classrooms were situated in a separate building from the Sinhala-medium students. This building also housed the Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam classrooms, as well as a small Tamil-medium staffroom. Sinhala-medium teachers used a much larger staffroom in another building. The English sectional head, an English-educated Muslim woman named Mrs. Deen, refused to use either staffroom because she did not want to encourage such ethnic and linguistic divisiveness. Although administratively integrated, the Tamil-medium stream often seemed to function as a self-contained unit removed from the Sinhala Buddhist mainstream of the school.

Teachers' ethnic and religious identities, as related to their language of instruction affiliations, were immediately evident from their dress. Almost all the Sinhala teachers wore Kandyan-style saris, and all Tamil and Muslim teachers wore Indian-style saris. Tamil Hindu teachers wore bindis (*poTTu*), decorative markers worn on the middle of the forehead. Most of the Muslim teachers wore hijabs, a practice only permitted in the last few years.¹⁷ Students' ethnic and religious identities, on the other hand, were only partially apparent from their dress. Most Hindu girls (and some Catholics) wore small black bindis. Muslim students were not allowed to wear hijabs in school, but many put them on before they left school at the end of the day.

Although Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students would have to be separated for most academic subjects, English, SSL, and TSL classes could have been used to integrate these students. Previously, Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students had studied English as a subject together (students were grouped into different

classes by their ability level). However, a previous principal changed the policy, to the disappointment of some of the English teachers. At the time of my research, Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students took English classes in their separate home classrooms. Students were admitted into the English bilingual program on the basis of their results on the grade 5 scholarship exam, their home language(s), and other factors. Girls who came to the program from the Sinhala-medium stream (Sinhalas and Muslims) studied in separate bilingual classrooms where they took their English- and Sinhala-medium subjects. Students who transferred from the Tamil-medium stream (Tamils and Muslims) came to the bilingual classrooms for their English-medium subjects but returned to their Tamil-medium home classrooms for their Tamil-medium subjects and English as a subject. The required classes in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, RC, and NRC underscored religious differences among students.

The separation of Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students in academic and extracurricular subjects was mirrored elsewhere. With the exception of Muslims, I rarely observed Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students interacting on school grounds. One Tamil Hindu girl told me that she had Sinhala friends in her neighborhood, but she did not talk to any Sinhala girls at school. The Tamil-medium section head and assistant vice principal told me that Tamil and Sinhala students used to talk with one another much more frequently, but the distance between them had increased as the ethnic conflict worsened in the last decade. Although ethnic tensions were certainly at issue, the students' lack of interaction was also due to their unfamiliarity with each other, since there were few joint activities through which they could have become acquainted.

Despite Girls' College's status as a multilingual and multiethnic school, local policies and practices further segregated students and reinforced ethnic difference as mobilized around language. Though the presence of Muslims in the Sinhala- and Tamil-medium streams seemingly complicates the ideological conflation of language (mother tongue) and ethnic identity, Sinhala and Tamil administrators and teachers tended to view them as an exception to a rule. In addition, as I discuss subsequently, the pervasiveness of language-based models of identity often prompted Muslims to distinguish themselves from Tamils and Sinhalas in terms of their linguistic practices.

English, SSL, and TSL Classes

As in other large schools, the quality of instruction in English-as-a-subject classes at Girls' College was quite high. Mrs. Deen, the English sectional head, had studied in the English medium, but was also proficient in Sinhala and Tamil. Unlike teachers at small schools like Hindu College, she did not use any Tamil or

Sinhala in her English classes. She based her lessons on the government textbook, but often used it as a springboard for class discussions, debates, games, and projects (she only roughly followed the 5E method). In contrast to students at small schools, many of the Girls' College students had significant exposure to English (as well as Sinhala) in their home and neighborhood settings. In addition, many had also received quality English instruction at the primary level and went to English tuition classes after school.

While the English-as-a-subject classes were very strong, SSL and TSL programs at Girls' College were unevenly implemented. As similar to Hindu College, SSL classes focused on reading and writing to the exclusion of speaking. However, because most of the girls could already speak Sinhala proficiently, the Sinhala SSL teacher, a Sinhala Buddhist woman, could successfully teach her classes in Sinhala only (she did not know much Tamil and her English was limited). The girls in the class would freely ask questions in Sinhala when they did not understand the lesson. The TSL classes were taught mostly in Sinhala, with students rarely speaking Tamil in the classroom or elsewhere. I observed classes taught by the two TSL teachers: Fatima, a Muslim, and Sachi, an Up-country Tamil Hindu. To examine her teaching practices as well as her rationalization of these practices, I detail Fatima's interactions with the students and myself during and after a TSL lesson.

Fatima's TSL Class

I met Fatima in the Tamil-medium staffroom and we headed over to the grade 8 Sinhala-medium classroom, where there were forty-three Sinhala girls and three Muslim girls. Fatima wore a sari and a hijab. She walked into the classroom and greeted the students with "VaNakkam" (a Tamil greeting), and they immediately repeated back to her, "VaNakkam maDam." As I would discover, this greeting was the only instance of Tamil being spoken in the classroom. She began the class by copying a series of Tamil sentences from the textbook onto the blackboard. As she wrote, the students quietly chatted with one another (only Sinhala was audible). I present these sentences with English glosses:

1. *naan annaasi pazham saappiTTeen* (I ate pineapple).
2. *ennudaiya paaDasaalai kaNDiyil amainduLLadu* (Our school is located in Kandy).
3. *ammaa sandaikkup poonnaar* (Mother went to the market).
4. *idu panguni maadam* (This is *panguni* month [mid-March to mid-April]).
5. *aNil saaduvaana piraaNi* ([The] squirrel is a gentle animal).
6. *tambi paaDasaalaikku poonnaan* (Little brother went to school).
7. *emadu naaDu ilangai* (Our country is Sri Lanka).

When Fatima finished writing the sentences, she read each sentence aloud in Tamil and then instructed the students in Sinhala to translate each of the sentences into Sinhala. Students raised their hands and called out the meanings in Sinhala; every student gave a correct answer on her first try. She then told the students in Sinhala to copy the sentences and write down the Sinhala translation. When they had started the task, she sat down at a desk on one side of the classroom and invited me to join her. With some of the students in earshot of our conversation, she told me in Tamil that the students dislike it when she teaches the class in Tamil since they say they cannot learn it that way. Because of this, she said, she teaches the class entirely in Sinhala. She commented that Sinhalas cannot speak Tamil, but the Muslim girls in the class speak it very well. She explained that all Muslims can speak Tamil because they speak it at home (she did not use the term *taay mozhi* [mother tongue]). When I asked her the difficulties of teaching the class, she laughed, saying that sometimes she did not understand the *sutta* (pure) Tamil words in the textbook for flora and fauna. She then explained that she uses Sinhala words for foods and spices, and Arabic words for things like prayer times.

As the students started to complete the assignment, they came up to her desk to have their work corrected. Fatima went through their notebooks with a red pen, correcting errors in the Tamil spelling and the Sinhala translation. When most of the students had finished the assignment, a large group of girls gathered around us. Fatima suggested to me that I try to chat with the girls in Tamil. I directed simple questions to a few girls standing in front of me, including "Kaalaiyila enna saappiTTiinga?" (What did you eat this morning?), but they did not respond. Fatima then pointed out a Sinhala girl who had recently won a Kandy-wide TSL competition, which involved reciting Tamil poetry in the literary variety, saying that her Tamil was excellent. The girl sat upright in her seat and looked over at us nervously, but Fatima did not invite her to speak. Next, Fatima called over a group of three Muslim girls she had referred to before, who all regularly sat together, and told them in Tamil to speak to me. They told me that they speak Tamil at home, but they also speak Sinhala and English. After chatting for a few minutes in Tamil, they switched to English and discussed their goal to be lawyers. Fatima then commented in Tamil that she dislikes when this happens, because she does not know English and gets excluded from the conversation.

This class focused entirely on translation, but in other classes I observed, Fatima led elocution exercises, in which students practiced pronouncing Tamil words from the textbook. I never observed her giving any instructions in Tamil or initiating any Tamil conversation. When Fatima covered colloquial usages, she had the students write them rather than speak them. The other TSL teacher,

Sachi, like Fatima, taught her classes entirely in Sinhala and did not speak to students in Tamil. Although my access to the Sinhala students was somewhat limited, I did not witness any of them speaking Tamil outside the in-class elocution exercises.

My presence in the classroom as a foreign TSL speaker likely made Fatima feel obliged to initiate a question-and-answer session in Tamil. Although she prompted me to ask questions in Tamil, she did little to encourage the students to respond to me. They may have been shy, reluctant to talk to a foreigner in Tamil, or they may not have known how to answer basic spoken Tamil questions. While the use of colloquial or everyday spoken language is generally de-emphasized in language teaching in Sri Lanka, as discussed previously, it was striking how little expectation Fatima had that her Sinhala students would speak Tamil. In her discussion with me, Fatima equated linguistic practices with ethnic identities. She distinguished Muslims from Sinhalas by their ability to speak Tamil. But by referring to her own inability to understand the "pure" Tamil words, she also distinguished Muslims from Tamils, again on the basis of linguistic practices. While Tamils are often associated with speaking what is considered a pure Tamil free from foreign borrowings, Fatima emphasized the heterogeneity of Muslims' linguistic practices, especially the use of Perso-Arabic and Sinhala borrowings. Thus, she emphasized that even though Tamils and Muslims share a predominant language, their linguistic practices are not the same. Her correlation of students' ethnic identities with their linguistic practices rationalizes the fact that Sinhala students spoke no Tamil in the classroom. These rationalizations, in turn, can contribute to naturalizing or stabilizing sociolinguistic practices (Irvine and Gal 2000).

Fatima's pedagogical practices (the lack of expectation that Sinhala students would speak Tamil) and her rationalization of these practices in the earshot of students discouraged Sinhala students from speaking Tamil. Although Tamil-speaking students practiced their written and spoken SSL skills in the classroom, TSL classes at Girls' College instilled the view that Sinhala-medium students should acquire written Tamil skills only to pass their national exams and for no other ends. This perpetuates a vicious cycle in which Sinhala youth do not have the skills to speak Tamil in everyday contexts because they do not have to speak it.

When I returned to Girls' College in 2011, I found out that Fatima had transferred to another school, but Sachi remained. She had been joined by two additional TSL teachers, both Muslim women. Several teachers told me that Muslims were favored as TSL teachers because they were thought to be full bilinguals. Teachers and students alike mentioned the problem of Sinhala students not

speaking Tamil in the classroom. One of the Muslim TSL teachers attributed this to the fact that they have no desire to speak it. When I repeated this to an Up-country Tamil Hindu student, she seemed hurt by the idea. She insisted that Sinhala students want to speak Tamil, but they simply do not know how.

As stated previously, national trilingual policies are premised on the idea that interethnic integration will increase if Sri Lankan students learn to speak an additional official language as well as English. However, the structure of the national education system, which segregates Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim students in schools and classrooms, prevents these programs from having any substantial impact. Local education policies and practices only increase this segregation. At Hindu College, pedagogical practices (related to language-teaching norms and the spatial constraints of the building) and the school's ideological orientation as a Tamil-speaking Hindu sphere of practice meant that the principal and teachers did not stress the development of spoken skills in Sinhala and English. Though multilingual schools combine students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, at Girls' College, the separation of the Tamil- and Sinhala-medium students in most school-based context prevented trilingual policies from being used as direct tools for interethnic integration. While Girls' College students gained valuable written and spoken skills in English, TSL and SSL programs were unevenly implemented, with Sinhala students writing Tamil (including colloquial forms) but not speaking it.

A Muslim woman who formerly worked for the Sri Lankan Ministry of Education commented on a presentation of some of this material at the Tamil Studies Conference in Toronto, Canada, in 2010. She told me that the problem is not the trilingual policies themselves, but with the way they are implemented. Language-based models of ethnicity, as found in the structure of the national education system, pervade local education policies and practices. SSL, TSL, and English classes do less to integrate students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds than they do to define and reinforce their sociolinguistic differences. While Muslims certainly have a more complex relationship to language, they also use their linguistic proclivities to distinguish themselves from others. The fact that they mainly study with Tamils (a different ethnoreligious group) in the Tamil medium prompts them to affirm their separate sociolinguistic identity.

The Reproducing of Language-Based Models of Ethnic Difference

Rather than improving interethnic communication and mutual understanding, national trilingual education underscores existing inequalities among Sri Lankan

youth related to socioeconomic level. As E. Annamalai (2004) notes regarding India, as long as government schools continue to offer first-language education, there will be a significant difference in access to social and economic resources between anglophone elites and the rest of the population. Although reforms in Sri Lanka have led to an increased emphasis on English in primary and secondary education, my comparison of Hindu College and Girls' College indicates that a high-quality English education is in fact available only to the small minority of students who attend national, government-assisted, or private schools (including international schools).

While English programs fail to destabilize inequalities related to class and socioeconomic level, SSL and TSL programs actually deepen inequalities between the Sinhala majority and Tamil-speaking minorities. It is necessary for Tamil speakers in southern Sri Lanka to learn Sinhala, but Sinhalas study Tamil simply to pass their O-level exams or gain employment opportunities in the government. Some Tamil and Muslim research informants expressed anger that government positions in TSL teaching and Tamil translation have been given to Sinhalas (see chapter 6). Such employment practices instantiate the view that Sinhalas should study TSL not to promote interethnic integration, but to take advantage of government policies simply to maximize benefits. Sinhala students' hesitancy to speak Tamil in the classroom, and teacher's reluctance to encourage them to do so, further solidifies the ideological association of ethnic identity with language of instruction and linguistic practice. Sri Lankan schools thus emphasize the view prominent in the South that Tamils and Muslims should speak Sinhala, but it is unnatural and odd for Sinhalas to speak Tamil (see chapter 6).

Despite recent attempts at education reform, the Sri Lankan system continues to segregate students and reinforce language-based models of ethnic difference. By institutionalizing the ideological connection between ethnicity, language of instruction, and linguistic practice, the national education system further objectifies it, makes it tangible and real. The impact of this objectification is not just limited to the educational experience but extends elsewhere to shape the way youth view themselves in relation to others. The language in which youth study structures their employment opportunities, literacy, and media practices (whether they watch Sinhala, Tamil, or English TV, for example), and their orientations to the multilingual environment. In Kandy Sri Lankans in various contexts have naturalized describing themselves in terms of their language of instruction along with their ethnicity or religion (e.g., "I am English medium"). These assertions often work to differentiate themselves from others (see LaDousa 2014).¹⁸ In the next chapter, I move from the implementation of trilingual policies to investigate how schools are spaces for the contestation of sociolinguistic inequalities.

I examine discussions and debates among Girls' College Tamil-medium teachers about which varieties of Tamil are the best in relation to shifting sociolinguistic hierarches in the post-1983 period. I also mention how language-based models of identity shape the ways different Tamil speakers distinguish themselves from one another and from the Sinhala majority.

3

TEACHERS AND "LEGITIMATE" TAMIL IN A MULTILINGUAL SCHOOL

This chapter analyzes discussions and debates among the Girls' College Tamil-medium teachers about which varieties of Tamil are the best in relation to shifting hierarchies between North and East Tamils, Up-country Tamils, and Muslims following the outbreak of the civil war in 1983. Since the colonial period, Jaffna (North) Tamils have dominated Tamil-medium education, with Jaffna Tamil varieties becoming legitimized in the national curriculum. However, as a result of demographic and institutional changes in the post-1983 period, power relations among Tamil-speaking groups are shifting in both the curriculum and school-based social practices. In the Girls' College Tamil-medium stream there was an inconsistency between the spoken variety that is commonly held to be the best (Jaffna Tamil) and the actual sociolinguistic situation, since the majority of teachers and students spoke the "normalized" Up-country Tamil variety common in the region (see Sri Lankan Tamil Varieties and the Ideology of Diglossia). Drawing on observations and recordings of Tamil-medium teachers' conversations in different spheres of practice at Girls' College and at home, I investigate how these teachers negotiated and contested Tamil sociolinguistic hierarchies.

Schools have long been considered key sites for the construction of linguistic hegemonies. Pierre Bourdieu (1991) illustrates the importance of education and state-level standardization in the creation and reproduction of sociolinguistic hierarchies, which he likens to economic hierarchies (also see Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). He argues that in the process of state formation conditions are created for the constitution of a linguistic market, dominated by an official language. The agents of the regulation and imposition of the official language are teachers, acting through the institution of the school. According to Bourdieu, when the official language is fully inculcated, it becomes a tool of symbolic domination, where subordinate classes devalue their

own way of speaking in favor of the official variety they sometimes cannot even fully produce (1991). In a prominent critique of Bourdieu, Kathryn Woolard (1985) points out that while he allows for the existence of multiple linguistic markets, he does not recognize alternative legitimate languages. In reference to her research in Catalonia, Woolard argues that the authority of the official language can be challenged by members of oppressed language groups. She also demonstrates that it can be as important to produce correct forms of the local linguistic varieties in local contexts as it is to produce correct standard forms in the wider linguistic market (1985).

Rather than assuming that schools perpetuate a single official language, recent studies in language and education treat them as intricate landscapes where various sociolinguistic norms and hierarchies are reproduced and contested.¹ Influenced by Woolard's (1985) account of dominant and legitimate alternative languages, scholars have observed that while some sociolinguistic hierarchies are sanctioned by the state, others are legitimized precisely because of their connection to non-state-level institutions, social groups, and practices.² What remains to be more fully considered is, in what settings and situations do particular beliefs and ideas about correct or appropriate speech come to the forefront? In addition, how do we figure out what is at stake in the way these ideologies are enacted in teachers' talk about language versus the way teachers correct and evaluate students on the basis of their speech?

As I discussed in chapter 1, linguistic anthropologists have recently begun to understand ways of comprehending and evaluating language not as being evenly distributed across social space but as having locations (Philips 1998, 2000; Wortham 2008). I build on these studies to investigate how these ideologies are connected to particular contexts within schools. In addition, I also look at how linguistic ideologies are involved in talk about language and language use (Irvine 2001; Silverstein and Urban 1996). As it can be a mistake to view spontaneous linguistic practices as more real than explicit ideological statements about language (Jaffe 1999), I investigate the intricacies both within and across teachers' talk about language and evaluative practices.³ The discussions and debates about language I recorded suggest that while the distinction between Jaffna and non-Jaffna Tamil was important in the teachers' conversations, hierarchies among Tamil-speaking groups in the post-1983 period lent other ideologies, sociolinguistic hierarchies, and evaluative frameworks real pertinence. By describing how teachers enact ideologies in different contexts, including subject-area classrooms, language classrooms, and Tamil oratorical performances, I show that the incongruities within and across ideological assertions and practices reveal subtle dynamics in the configuration of social inequality.

Historical Bases of Power Inequality in Tamil-Medium Education

At Girls' College, the unequal position of the Tamil-medium stream with respect to the Sinhala Buddhist mainstream is consistent with state-level hegemonomies. Power differentials within the Tamil-medium stream, however, map to institutional inequalities between Tamil-speaking groups.⁴ As mentioned previously, English-speaking Jaffna Tamils—and Batticaloa (East) Tamils, to a lesser extent—dominated civil service and professional employment in the colonial period, while Up-country Tamils and Muslims did not come to formal education until the mid to late twentieth century.

The Jaffna Peninsula, seat of the medieval Tamil kingdom conquered by the Portuguese in 1619, has long been considered the center of Sri Lankan Tamil literary culture and education. Under Portuguese, Dutch, and British rule, Jaffna developed some of the first Western educational institutions on the island. Since the arid and harsh climate made agriculture difficult, English-educated Jaffna Tamils sought employment in the South from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries (McGilvray 2008). The 1956 Sinhala-Only Act significantly reduced Jaffna Tamils' access to English-medium government jobs (especially Christians), but they soon came to dominate Tamil-medium government positions, particularly in education (Tambiah 1986).

During Portuguese and Dutch colonial rule in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Sri Lanka's easternmost region (centered in the present-day city of Batticaloa) was part of the feudal territories of the Kandyan Kingdom. In the British period, eastern Tamils had some access to civil service and professional jobs but fell under the hegemony of Jaffna Tamils. The East is a region socioculturally, linguistically, historically, and politically distinct from the North (McGilvray 2008; Thiranagama 2011). However, because both North and East Tamils are considered to be the historically oldest Tamil groups, in the South it is common for Sinhalas and other Tamil-speaking groups to collapse them into a single category, "North and East Tamils," or even subsume them under the "Jaffna" category.

In the colonial period, children of tea plantation workers were educated in low-quality plantation schools, which were separate from the national education system (Little 2003). Rendered stateless following the 1948 Ceylon Citizenship Act, Up-country youth did not have the option to attend government schools (Bass 2013). Their educational advancement occurred only with the state takeover of plantation schools between 1977 and 1992, and thanks to the fact that most Up-country Tamils had regained citizenship by 1988 (Little 2003). Although there was a small anglophone elite in Colombo, Muslim leaders discouraged

their community members from pursuing education in missionary schools, fearing them to be vehicles for religious conversion (Nuhman 2007). However, in the 1970s and 1980s Muslims made significant progress in formal education when their growing urban-based middle class shifted from business and trade to education and the professions (O'Sullivan 1999).

In the early 1980s almost all Tamil-medium government jobs in Sri Lanka were dominated by North and East Tamils. However, after 1983 large numbers of these Tamils fled Sri Lanka, seeking asylum in North America, Europe, and Australia (Daniel 1996). During this period, Muslims and Up-country Tamils started to enter Tamil-medium government jobs, and today they outnumber teachers from the North and East in schools across the Central Province. Yet despite the fact that North and East Tamils are no longer in the numerical majority in education, they retain high-status positions. Only a small number of North and East Tamil teachers work in provincial schools, but many can be found at prestigious national, government-assisted, and private schools. In addition, North and East Tamils tend to teach highly valued subjects such as math and science, while Up-country Tamils and Muslims teach arts. Before turning to the Girls' College examples, I will frame my discussion by describing the role of diglossia in Sri Lankan sociolinguistics.

Sri Lankan Tamil Varieties and the Ideology of Diglossia

Since precolonial times Tamil pandits have differentiated literary Tamil varieties from the everyday language of spoken communication (Das 2016). Literary Tamil (*ilakkiya tamizh*) is considered to be "modeled on the poetry and prose of a South Indian classical literature written during the Sangam period (ca. 100 B.C.E to C.E. 300)" (2016, 7). Because of the distinction between these two forms, philologists and sociolinguists have long applied the concept of diglossia to the Tamil sociolinguistic situation (Bate 2009; Britto 1986; Karunakaran 2005; Schiffman 1999; Zvelebil 1959a, 1959b, 1960a, 1960b, 1964). Diglossia theorizes the existence of opposed yet related linguistic varieties that are ranked as high or low, formal or informal, literary or vernacular, as originally argued for the different uses of literary versus spoken Arabic (Ferguson 1959, 1991; Fishman 1965). Scholars map the high/low distinction onto literary or pure Tamil and different varieties of colloquial Tamil, which are considered to be corrupt or vulgar (*koch-chai*) (Bate 2009; Das 2008, 2016).⁵ The concept of diglossia has been criticized for reducing complex sociolinguistic situations to a set of static relations.⁶ Bambi Schieffelin and Kathryn Woolard (1994) argue that diglossia is not so much a description of sociolinguistic situations but an ideological rationalization of those

situations. Rather than trying to make the Sri Lankan Tamil situation fit with diglossic models, I am interested in the ideological processes by which speakers label Tamil varieties high or low, that is, in how they map this distinction onto sociolinguistic hierarchies and use it to rationalize them.

Genres of literary and colloquial Tamil differ from one another in terms of lexicon and grammar (see Annamalai 2007; Levinson 1983). Literary Tamil is not restricted to writing but is produced in traditional oratory forms, including recitation, drama, and debate (Bate 2009). Colloquial Tamil is also written (in Tamil or roman script), such as in dialogue portions of movie scripts, plays, radio scripts, newspapers, magazines, and textbooks (Britto 1986). I use the terms "literary" and "colloquial" to differentiate the two varieties of Tamil. I use the terms "written" and "spoken" to refer to the acts of writing and speaking, respectively. In Sri Lanka, as well as South India, one of the main goals of Tamil primary and secondary education is to inculcate the literary variety in writing and oratory (Annamalai 2014). While students are expected to produce only literary Tamil in the classroom, in practice, students and teachers mix literary and colloquial varieties. A common pattern I observed in the classroom was teachers using a form close to literary Tamil when directly referring to the subject material and forms closer to colloquial Tamil (often infused with English words and expressions) when managing the class—eliciting responses, disciplining students, and conducting administrative tasks (see chapter 4).⁷ In addition, there is some overlap between literary and colloquial forms.

Most of the research on Sri Lankan Tamil varieties has come out of Jaffna University. Highly invested in the superiority of Jaffna Tamil over other Tamil varieties, these studies tend to treat Jaffna Tamil as representative of the Sri Lankan Tamil sociolinguistic situation as a whole. However, the literature also documents other varieties spoken in Sri Lanka, including Batticaloa Tamil, Up-country Tamil (often called Indian Tamil), and Muslim Tamil. Jaffna Tamil has been characterized as a variety of Tamil originally spoken in the Jaffna Peninsula, which, as a result of relative isolation from Indian Tamil varieties, developed unique lexical and grammatical features (Gair and Suseendrarajah 1981; Suseendrarajah 1999; Thananjayarajasingham 1974, 1977). Batticaloa Tamil is depicted as a variety of spoken in Sri Lanka's eastern region, differing from Jaffna Tamil in its lexico-semantics and pronoun systems. Up-country Tamil, centered in the tea-growing areas of the south central highlands, is described as closely related to the varieties spoken in India (Suseendrarajah 1999). Muslim Tamil is distinguished from other Sri Lankan varieties in terms of its lexicon (Perso-Arabic and Sinhala borrowings) and grammar (Hussein 2009; Nuhman 2007).

With this tight focus on distinguishing different named varieties (and those who speak them), Sri Lankan Tamil sociolinguistics has not considered the

emergence of Tamil koines in urban regions in the South, where North and East Tamils, Up-country Tamils, and Muslims live in close proximity. Koineization refers to the “development of a new, mixed variety following dialect contact” (Kerswill and Williams 2000, 65).⁸ I refer to the Tamil koine in Kandy and surrounding areas as “normalized” Up-country spoken Tamil. While it is influenced by Jaffna Tamil, it is closer to South India Tamil varieties.⁹ I avoid use of the term “standard” since it can imply legitimization at the state or institutional level (Milroy 2001; Watt and Milroy 1999).

Congruent with the institutional dominance of Jaffna Tamils in Tamil-medium education, the national curriculum used Jaffna Tamil as the dominant variety until only recently. This is not surprising since the curriculum was compiled almost exclusively by Jaffna Tamils, who wrote original materials and imported supplementary materials from India. (The difference between literary varieties in India and Jaffna is relatively small; Jaffna styles include more archaic features, while Indian styles include more colloquial forms [Suseendirarajah 1973, 1975].) As part of a program to remove bias in the national Sinhala and Tamil curricula, the National Institute of Education recently revised the Tamil-medium syllabus to include materials written by Tamil speakers from a variety of social backgrounds. The new Tamil literature syllabus, for instance, includes poetry and stories written by a variety of groups, including Eastern Tamils, Up-country Tamils, and Muslims.

Despite these recent shifts in the curriculum and teacher demographics, Jaffna Tamil teachers maintained a strong presence in the Girls' College Tamil-medium stream. In explicit discussions about language, Jaffna teachers instantiated their assumed superiority over other Tamil-speaking groups through frequent claims that Jaffna Tamil is the most “pure,” “original,” and “literary” variety.¹⁰ However, as discussed previously, there was an inconsistency between the spoken variety widely held to be the best (Jaffna Tamil) and that commonly spoken. At Girls' College there were equal numbers of North and East Tamil, Up-country Tamil, and Muslim teachers, but the overwhelming majority of students were Up-country Tamils and Muslims. In the face of this inconsistency, Tamil-medium teachers negotiated and contested sociolinguistic differences in relation to linguistic, ethnic, religious, and regional distinctions in both their explicit discussions about language and their evaluative practices.

The Girls' College Tamil-Medium Teachers

As I discussed in chapter 2, the Tamil-medium stream was removed from the Sinhala Buddhist mainstream of the school in everyday practice. Outside brief encounters in the main office complex, the school grounds, or the canteen,

Tamil- and Sinhala-medium teachers interacted very little. When Tamil-medium teachers were not in classrooms, they could be found in the Tamil-medium staff-room. Though they differed by ethnicity, region, religion, caste (for Hindus), class, place of origin, socioeconomic level, educational level, and English proficiency, Tamil-medium teachers themselves frequently distinguished each other as Jaffna Tamil, Batticaloa Tamil, Up-country Tamil, or Muslim. Jaffna, Batticaloa, and Up-country can be considered ethnic and regional categories, and Muslim is an ethnoreligious distinction.¹¹ As consistent with language-based models of identity in Sri Lanka, the Girls' College teachers ideologically mapped these social categories onto sociolinguistic varieties. Although the lexical and grammatical differences between Jaffna, Batticaloa, Up-country, and Muslim Tamil are extensive, in their talk about language the teachers associated each with certain emblematic linguistic features. In the following examples, we can see how they made sense of and contested social hierarchies through their discussions and debate about what constitutes the best Tamil speech.

My stated research project on *mozhi kalaachchaaram* (language culture) likely prompted the teachers to discuss Tamil sociolinguistic variation and difference more frequently than they would have otherwise. However, from the interactions teachers and students recounted to me, it is clear that such discussions were not uncommon in my absence, in the contexts of pedagogical or administrative affairs and other matters pertaining to social and political life. As an indication of their relative distance, Tamil-medium teachers often talked about Sinhala teachers as though they comprised an undifferentiated block. But, as I discuss in *They Will Put You Inside* as an LTTE, the teachers also related hierarchies within the Tamil-medium stream to the Sinhala-medium stream by arguing that a particular Tamil-speaking group was more compatible with Sinhala.

In addition to looking at teachers' talk about language, I analyze the linguistic varieties that the teachers employed. This was problematic because when I was present they often slowed or normalized their speech for me. I observed that the teachers also tended to alter their speech in interactions with one another depending on the participants involved and other contextual issues (the location, topic, and presence of overhearers).¹² Turning to my first example, I show how a Jaffna teacher drew on a widely circulating ideology to argue for the superiority of Jaffna Tamil over other varieties.

Jaffna Tamil as the Most Pure, Original, and Literary Variety

Rajani is a Jaffna Tamil Hindu commerce teacher and assistant vice principal at Girls' College. She was born in Jaffna but has lived in the Kandy area since the

early 1980s. Her husband, who is from the Vanni region south of Jaffna, is a retired police officer. At the time of my research, she and her husband helped care for a six-year-old Muslim girl who lived next door to them in the Tamil-majority town of Digana. The girl's mother had moved to Colombo and left her with her grandmother. One day at Rajani's house I noticed that she, despite having frequently insisted that Jaffna Tamil was the best, did not correct the little girl when she used features associated with Muslim Tamil. Later, over tea in the school's canteen (there were no other teachers present), I asked Rajani if she corrects Muslim students when they say "iikki," a shortened form of the colloquial Tamil verb "to be" (*irukku*) that is emblematically associated with Muslim speech. Rajani responded to me this way (her English words are in italics; the instance of a nonrising intonation in an interrogative phrase is underlined):

iikki nalla tamizh ille.	"Iikki" isn't good Tamil.
<i>kolokkiyal</i> tamizh, muslim aakkal peesiRa tamizh.	It's <i>colloquial</i> Tamil, the spoken Tamil of Muslim people.
viiTTula appaDi peesuvaanga.	They speak that way at home.
<i>School</i> -la appaDi peesa kuDaadu.	In <i>school</i> [you] can't speak that way.
viiTTu peechchu.	[It's] house speech.
nalla tamizh irukku, <i>esTeeT</i> tamizh irukku, muslim tamizh irukku.	There's good Tamil, <i>estate</i> Tamil, Muslim Tamil.
yaazhpaana(m) tamizh, nalla tamizh. <i>orijinal</i> tamizh.	Jaffna Tamil is good Tamil. <i>Original</i> Tamil.
ilakkiya tamizh.	Literary Tamil.
muslim tamizh matta vazhakku.	Muslim Tamil is another variety.
Vazhakku, <u>enna nu teriyumaa?</u>	Varieties, <u>do [you] know what they are?</u>
saadaaraNa peesura tamizh batticaloa, <i>esTeeT</i> , muslim.	The normal spoken Tamil [varieties are] Batticaloa, <i>estate</i> , and Muslim.
yaazhpaana(m) tamizh daa(n) <i>orijinal</i> tamizh.	[It's] Jaffna Tamil only that's the <i>original</i> Tamil.

In this example, Rajani notes that *iikki* is not "nalla" (good) Tamil.¹³ In this statement Rajani contrasts Jaffna Tamil with "colloquial Tamil," "varieties," or "normal spoken Tamil." Rajani maps the difference between high (*ilakkiya*, literary) and low (*kochchai*, corrupt) Tamil onto the difference between Jaffna and non-Jaffna varieties (Batticaloa, estate, and Muslim Tamil). Her use of "estate" rather than "Up-country" is clearly derogatory, since it implies her association of this speech

with tea estate labor. Equating Jaffna Tamil with the literary form, she positions all other varieties as "colloquial." Rajani subscribes to typical diglossic thinking when she states that Jaffna Tamil is appropriate in school because it is the most literary variety, while colloquial varieties are only suitable in the home.

I did not witness Rajani correcting any non-Jaffna youth on their speech at school or at home. Because of its slightly unfamiliar lexicon and grammar, some students at Girls' College had difficulty understanding the speech of Jaffna teachers. In her interactions with non-Jaffna students and certain teachers, Rajani often switched to something close to "normalized" Up-country Tamil. Since she knew I had difficulty understanding Jaffna Tamil, in this interaction she spoke the Up-country form, and the only recognizable Jaffna feature was her use of a nonrising intonation in the interrogative phrase.

Despite her accommodation to "normalized" Up-country Tamil, Rajani had a reputation for playing up her Jaffna identity. In fact, a Tamil-medium Muslim girl told me that the students referred to her as "Jaffni." When I asked Rajani direct questions about language, as in the preceding interaction, she seemed compelled to discuss the superiority of Jaffna Tamil. But, as was clear from other interactions I observed at school and in her home neighborhood, she was flexible and compassionate. The same student who told me about her nickname said that she was actually a sweet person. Rajani treated the six-year-old Muslim girl like a granddaughter, using her influence to get her admitted to grade 1 at Girls' College. She was also close with several Up-country Tamil families in her neighborhood (I did not see her interact with any Sinhala). One day we went on an excursion to a nearby river, where she and an Up-country Tamil woman coaxed me into swimming. Her interactions with the woman's teenaged sons revealed familiarity and investment.

Because Jaffna teachers dominated educational spheres where Tamil is used, they often extolled Jaffna Tamil in the company of non-Jaffna teachers. Given their relative lack of power, non-Jaffna teachers did not challenge this view, except in the absence of Jaffna colleagues. In the next example, three non-Jaffna teachers (a Batticaloa Tamil, an Up-country Tamil, and a Muslim), in conversation at school, employed various ideologies to argue why Jaffna Tamil is not the best. However, when one of them pointed to another's speech, the conversation quickly took a different turn, revealing other relevant ideologies and sociolinguistic hierarchies.

Jaffna Tamil as Not the Best Tamil

One day I went to the canteen with Geetha, an Up-country Tamil Hindu who taught Tamil and history; Ravi, a Batticaloa Christian who taught math; and Nabiha, a Muslim who taught geography. There were several Sinhala teachers

seated at the far end of the table. Without acknowledging them, we sat down at the near end. The teachers quickly started discussing a Tamil-medium administrative matter. Nabiha suddenly turned to me and asked if I was having trouble understanding Ravi's Batticaloa Tamil. The conversation then moved to the topic of language.

Ravi commented that Batticaloa Tamil, and not Jaffna Tamil, is the best, because it is closest to the literary variety, asserting an ideological stance similar to that of Rajani. Geetha, also refuting the common view of Jaffna Tamil, added that you cannot say one kind of colloquial Tamil is better than another because each has its place in the Tamil language. She then noted that she had recently watched a Tamil television talk show broadcast from Tamil Nadu where the speaker was from Chennai. She said that his Tamil was so hard to understand (Chennai Tamil is known to be fast and have Telugu influence) they had to use a translator, translating from Tamil to Tamil.¹⁴ While Ravi's statement implies a hierarchized view of linguistic varieties, Geetha's statement subscribes to a descriptive/neutral view. However, her comment about Chennai Tamil also raises the issue of comprehensibility—that some varieties of Tamil are more widely comprehensible, and thus more “normalized,” than others.

Speaking directly to me, Ravi switched from Tamil to English and reiterated his point that Jaffna Tamil is not the most literary variety and thus not the best (the English is in italics):

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Ravi: vaangoo.
<i>It's not a tamizh word.</i>
vaanga is tamizh. | “Vaangoo” (come).
<i>It's not a Tamil word.</i>
“Vaanga” (come) is Tamil. |
| 2. Geetha: vaangoo, poongoo,
irungoo. | “Vaangoo,” “poongoo” (go), “irungoo”
(sit). |
| 3. Ravi: nabiha Da tamizh idaviDa
vittiyaasoo(m).
pooReeLaa?
vaaReeLaa? | Nabiha's Tamil is different from this.
“PooReeLaa?” (Are you going?)
“VaaReeLaa?” (Are you coming?) |
| 4. Nabiha: muslims ellaa(m) appaDi
peesuRadilla. | Not all Muslims talk like that. |
| 5. Geetha: kaNDi muslim onDu,
akurana muslim onDu, kalheena
muslim onDu peesuvaanga.
pooRaa, vaaRaa. | Kandy Muslims speak one way,
Akurana Muslims speak one way,
Kalheena Muslims speak one way.
“PooRaa,” “vaaRaa.” |

6. Nabiha: irubadu irubadi anju
pirivu irukkudu muslim bashayila.
7. Ravi: oru naaL zakkiramaDat-
tooDa kadaichcha neeram nallaa
kadachchaa kaDaisyila pooRa
enDu keeTTaa enakku viLangalla.
piRahu daa(n) viLangichchu.
poohappooRiingaLaa
engiRadu daa(n)
pooRaa enDu keeTTuRukka.
8. Nabiha: ava inga vanda piRahu
konjoo(m) tirundiTTaa.
viiTTukku poonaa, pooRaa, vaaRaa
enDu daa(n) kadaiikkiRadu *school*-
ukku vandaa appaDi illa.
naanu(m) viiTTukku poonaa poRavu
enDu ella peesuRatu daa(n).
naanga uNmaiyaana tamizh
kadachchaa engaDa aakkaL
sirippaanga.
veDDing hovus-ukku ellaa(m) pooy
appaDi peesunaa sirippaanga.
avanga ninaiikkiRadu naanga veeNunu
peesuRoonu(m).
- There are twenty to twenty-five divi-
sions within the Muslim language.
One day when I was speaking with
Zakkira, she spoke well, but at the
end, she asked, "pooRa?" and I didn't
understand [what she was saying].
Only after did I understand.
She was asking, "poohappooRiingaLaa?"
(Are you going to go?), by asking
"pooRaa" only.
After she (Zakkira) came here she
changed a little.
If [you] go home, "poonaa, pooRaa,
vaaRaa" is spoken only, but when at
school it's not like that.
When I go home, I also speak like
"poRavu" (after) and all.
If we speak real Tamil our people
will laugh.
If [you] go to a *wedding house* (a house
where a wedding is held) and all and
speak like that they will laugh.
They will think that we are speaking
that way purposefully like that.

In Jaffna Tamil, the colloquial honorific command form is different from many other Tamil varieties in that it ends with "oo" rather than "a" (e.g., *vaango* [come] vs. *vaanga*).¹⁵ In line 1, Ravi makes the point that because Jaffna command forms do not correspond to the literary forms ("come" is *vaarungaL* in literary Tamil), those forms are not proper Tamil. Here Ravi does not question the implicit claim that the most literary-like Tamil variety is the best, but simply replaces Jaffna Tamil with Batticaloa Tamil.

Ravi's switch to English in line 1 has the effect of directly pulling me into the discussion. In addition, because English is widely ideologically associated with prestige and authority, his use of it gives weight to his views on Tamil linguistic variation. In line 2, Geetha switches the conversation back to "normalized" Up-country Tamil. The lack of much internal difference in the teachers' speech in the rest of the

interaction effectively puts them on equal footing, as well as creating some distance between the issues they are describing and their own linguistic practices.

While previously the teachers were all in alignment in arguing about why Jaffna Tamil is not the best, in line 3 Ravi changes the focus of the conversation by isolating Nabiha's speech. He also tries to imitate Muslim Tamil by saying "pooReeLaa" and "vaaReeLaa."¹⁶ Taking Ravi's comments as a negative evaluation of her speech, Nabiha responds in line 4 by pointing out that not all Muslims speak like that. In line 5, Geetha, aligning with Nabiha, points out that there are lots of different varieties of Muslim Tamil, naming those spoken in Muslim-majority towns. Still subscribing to what seems to be a descriptive/neutral view of Tamil linguistic variation, she starts to imitate the dropping of person, number, and gender (PNG) markers in finite verbs in Muslim Tamil (the tense is retained) (Nuhman 2007). However, just like her comment about the Chennai television program, her imitation of Muslim and Jaffna Tamil (line 2) assumes the existence of unmarked or "normalized" varieties from which these others differ.

In line 7, Ravi changes the focus again by telling a story of his interaction with another Muslim teacher, Zakkira, who had recently come to the school from a Muslim-majority town outside Kandy. Ravi says that she spoke well, but at the end of the conversation, when she asked "PooRaa?" he could not follow but later realized what she was trying to say. Ravi, by recounting Zakkira's shortened verbal form, illustrates the incomprehensibility of Muslim varieties to non-Muslims. He also contrasts Zakkira's "speaking well" in school with her subsequent inappropriate use of the shortened verb form. Thus, like Rajani, he subscribes to the diglossic view that Muslim Tamil is inappropriate in school.

In line 8, Nabiha defends Zakkira by saying that her speech had improved since she first arrived. She comments that when Zakkira goes home she can say, "poo-naa, pooRaa, vaaRaa" (further examples of the dropping of PNG markers in finite verbs), but in school she cannot speak that way. Nabiha notes that when she goes home she says, "poRavu" (*piRahu* [after]), which is a usage associated with Muslim Tamil. She adds that if you speak "real" Tamil at a wedding (assumed to be Muslim), people would laugh because they would think you were speaking that way on purpose to sound different. Her comment that Zakkira's speech had improved pointed not only to her Muslim identity, but also to her place of origin outside Kandy. The Kandy versus non-Kandy distinction also calls up class, socioeconomic level, and educational associations, since people from small towns and villages generally have fewer financial resources and less access to quality schools. In contrast to Ravi, Nabiha does not contrast Muslim Tamil to Jaffna or Batticaloa Tamil (the so-called literary-like varieties) but to "real" Tamil, which can be interpreted as the same unmarked or "normalized" version to which Geetha seems to refer.

By acknowledging that Zakkira can speak Muslim Tamil only at home, Nabiha seconds Ravi's diglossic view, that is, that some varieties are inappropriate

in school. Implicit in this is the observation that Muslims have the ability to code-switch. I got a better sense of Nabiha's views when she invited me to her home a few weeks later. Rather than taking me to the apartment she shared with her two daughters (her husband was working in Jordan), she took me to her mother's house near the school, where her younger sister's family also lived. They used some linguistic features widely associated with Muslim Tamil, but their intonation, speech patterns, and ways of mixing Tamil, Perso-Arabic, Sinhala, and English were specific to their family.¹⁷ When I brought up the interaction in the canteen to Nabiha (the other family members were in the back), she used the concept of "mother tongue" to describe her speech. Her Tamil is "broken," she admitted in a mix of Tamil and English, but that did not matter much to her since Arabic is her mother tongue. By using the term "broken," she was likely referring to the lexical and grammatical features characteristic of Muslim Tamil. She added that she tried to speak "uNmaiyaana" (real) Tamil at school so the students would not laugh at her. Thus, although Nabiha switches into "normalized" Up-country Tamil at school, she associates her own language with the Muslim Tamil spoken by her family members and her larger Kandy Muslim community. While this variety is stigmatized in schools and other institutional settings, she acknowledges its solidarity value as a counterlegitimate language (see Woolard 1985). In addition, in describing her language as "broken," she distinguishes Muslims from Tamils in terms of their sociolinguistic practices, thus substantiating language-based models of ethnic identity.

In this interaction the three teachers draw on multiple perspectives to evaluate Tamil linguistic forms, mapping them onto social categories. Both Ravi and Geetha distinguish speech that is appropriate in school versus in the home. However, while for Ravi the speech that is appropriate in school is a regional "prestige" (Batticaloa rather than Jaffna Tamil), for Nabiha (and perhaps for Geetha as well), it is an unmarked or "normalized" Tamil. The hierarchy between speakers who can produce the regional "prestige" language and those who cannot is most immediately related to ethnicity and region. The hierarchy between speakers who can produce an unmarked or "normalized" Tamil and those who cannot, however, is related to ethnoreligious identity (Tamil vs. Muslim), place of origin (Kandy vs. non-Kandy areas), class, socioeconomic background, and level of education. These distinct hierarchies are not necessarily in conflict but come to the forefront in different contexts.

Geetha's Home

The non-Jaffna Tamil-medium teachers were generally careful about what they said in the presence of their colleagues, but Geetha expressed more direct views about Jaffna Tamils in a conversation in her home on a Saturday morning. She

lived with her husband and two daughters in a small and simple rented apartment near Girls' College. Geetha and her eldest daughter sat me down for tea and *vaDai* (a fried donut-shaped snack made with lentils). After discussing her recent trip to visit family members in Trichy, Tamil Nadu, she asked me, "Jaffna Tamils piDikkumaa? MalainaaTTu Tamils piDikkumaa?" (Do you like Jaffna or Up-country Tamils better?). I told her I did not know many Jaffna Tamils and then asked her what she thought. She responded that Jaffna Tamils think they are superior to others and that their Tamil is the best. She expressed annoyance that a teacher from Jaffna frequently commented that Jaffna Tamil is the "original" Tamil. She added that Jaffna Tamils do not say what is in their minds, which I took to mean that they are evasive or insincere.

I mentioned to Geetha and her daughter that I was friends with several Jaffna Tamil students at the University of Peradeniya. I explained that they preferred to speak English with me. Geetha's daughter quickly stated that they did not want to "lower themselves" to speak Tamil to me.¹⁸ Geetha added that they (meaning Up-country Tamils), by contrast, were proud (*perumai*) to speak to me in Tamil because I am a foreigner learning Tamil.

Several other Up-country Tamil teachers also complained about the arrogance of Jaffna teachers in our conversations in their homes. Influenced by language-based ethnic models of identity, Muslim teachers, as evident from Nabih's comments previously quoted, were more concerned with differentiating their sociolinguistic tendencies from Tamils (Jaffna, Batticaloa, or Up-country) (see chapter 2). The next example is an interaction between Geetha, an Up-country Tamil English teacher named Divani, and myself in the Tamil-medium staffroom. In the immediate absence of any Jaffna teachers, they critiqued Jaffna Tamils' discrimination against Up-country students, but in an interesting turn, Divani took this critique a step further by attempting to subvert the Jaffna/Up-country sociolinguistic hierarchy. She ideologically mapped this hierarchy onto the sociopolitical distinction between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan state. Here, the teachers' talk about language shows how sociolinguistic hierarchies may obtain value in relation to quite different evaluative frameworks—from Tamil-medium educational spheres to wider sociopolitical spheres.

"They Will Put You Inside as an LTTE"

One day I came into the Tamil-medium staffroom and found Geetha and Divani discussing the prestigious Colombo boys' private school, Royal College. Having studied in a private English-medium school, Divani was one of only two ethnically Tamil English teachers at Girls' College; the others were Sinhala and Muslim. Because of her English proficiency and her sizable home near the center

of Kandy (her husband was in business), the other teachers often described her as "posh." However, she pointed out to me that her relative lack of competency in literary Tamil made Divani feel uneasy in Tamil academic discussions, particularly in the presence of the Jaffna teachers. I also knew from another teacher that she had a particularly difficult experience with Jaffna teachers at her prior school. Switching into English, Divani explained to Geetha and me that Jaffna teachers at Royal College frequently discriminate against Up-country students, telling them that their speech is *sariyilla* (not okay). Divani commented that rather than discriminating against Up-country students, Jaffna teachers should just go back to Jaffna to work, a statement that implies they (as opposed to Up-country Tamils) do not belong in the South.

Before Geetha or Divani had a chance to say another word, Rajani, the assistant vice principal from Jaffna, entered the room. Concerned that Rajani had overheard the conversation, I pointed to my notebook, where I had written down some Jaffna-colloquial Tamil verb forms from a session with my Up-country Tamil Hindu research assistant, Kausalya, the day before. I told her I had been studying the differences between Up-country and Jaffna Tamil. She glanced at my notebook with interest for a minute before shifting gears and talking to Geetha about an administrative matter.

As soon as Rajani left the room, Divani snatched my notebook from across the table and studied the Jaffna Tamil verb forms. Meanwhile, Geetha was called away from the staffroom by another teacher. With a sense of urgency, Divani asked me:

1. DIVANI: What, you are speaking Jaffna Tamil now? You think their Tamil is the best?
2. CHRISTIE: No, it's from my lesson yesterday.
3. DIVANI: Don't write that. They will put you inside as an LTTE.
4. CHRISTIE: They might send me. If you don't see me, that's why.
5. DIVANI: Yes. So, don't write that, no?
6. CHRISTIE: Are you serious?
7. DIVANI: Yes! Yes!

Recently, an Up-country Tamil Hindu teacher at a prominent private boys' school in Kandy had been arrested on suspicion of LTTE affiliation. Invoking this event, Divani warns me that if I continue to write Jaffna Tamil, "they" (security forces) will arrest me as an LTTE sympathizer. Divani's displeasure is related to my presumed ranking of Jaffna Tamil over Up-country varieties. While earlier she implied that Jaffna Tamils do not belong in the South, here she claims that the very act of speaking or writing Jaffna Tamil will mark me as

LTTE. Thus, Divani presumes that security forces might directly equate Jaffna Tamil with a political orientation opposed to the Sri Lankan state. The conversation continued:

8. CHRISTIE: But Sinhala people, do they know the difference between . . . ?
9. DIVANI: They know. People who have worked in Jaffna, they know.
10. CHRISTIE: They know?
11. DIVANI: Why did you write this?
12. CHRISTIE: For my research. I have to learn how to tell the difference between different Tamil varieties.
13. DIVANI: They won't accept all your research. They will just think that all those things . . .
14. CHRISTIE: Can the Sinhala-medium teachers here identify the difference between Up-country and Jaffna Tamil?
15. DIVANI: Yes. Yes. Yes. Because we have Jaffna Tamil-speaking people and Up-country Tamil-speaking people, they can tell the difference. And most of the Sinhalas know Tamil. They know.
16. CHRISTIE: Do they think Jaffna Tamil is the best?
17. DIVANI: No. They don't like it and they don't speak it. They speak the way we speak. They like us.
18. CHRISTIE: Yes . . .
19. DIVANI: They know that we are with them for a long time. So they speak the way we speak, so they very well know the difference between us and them, from the way that we speak they identify it.

Divani says that Sinhalas can identify the differences between Jaffna and Up-country Tamil (line 15). Emphasizing the difference between Jaffna and Up-country Tamil people through the use of "us" and "them" in line 19, Divani explains that Sinhalas speak Up-country Tamil because Up-country Tamils (in contrast to Jaffna Tamils) have lived among them for such a long time.

In this and the prior conversation with Geetha, Divani maps the distinction between Jaffna and Up-country Tamil onto the distinction between the LTTE (exclusively Tamil) and the Sri Lankan state (where Up-country Tamils and Sinhalas peacefully coexist):

Variety	Social groups who speak it	Sociopolitical association
Jaffna Tamil	Jaffna Tamils	The LTTE (the North)
Up-country Tamil	Up-country Tamils and Sinhalas	The Sri Lankan state (the South)

While in the earlier examples, sociolinguistic varieties obtained value in relation to Tamil-medium spheres of practice at Girls' College and other Tamil-medium institutions, here Divani has subverted the Jaffna/Up-country hierarchy by mapping these sociolinguistic forms onto wider sociopolitical associations.

I had not previously heard the view that Sinhalas preferred to learn Up-country Tamil. The government Tamil-as-a-second-language textbooks (written for Sinhala civil servants) at this time were based on Jaffna spoken Tamil and not Up-country Tamil. In addition, although Sinhalas negatively associated Jaffna Tamils with the LTTE, several Kandy Sinhalas I spoke to about Tamil still ranked Jaffna Tamil over other varieties.¹⁹ The Girls' College Sinhala-as-a-second-language teacher, a Sinhala Buddhist woman I discussed in chapter 2, told me once in a mix of Sinhala and English that she had studied a little Tamil when she was young. Enacting a widely circulating ideology, she said that Jaffna Tamil is the original and best Tamil variety. This is consistent with the pervasive view among Sinhalas that Jaffna Tamils are more educated and of a higher class and caste status than other Tamil-speaking groups (Daniel 1996).

The fact that this conversation occurred in English adds an extra layer to Geetha's and Divani's critique of Jaffna Tamil domination. Though Jaffna teachers may have lauded their Tamil over that from the Up-country region, Up-country Tamils tended to have stronger competency in English, a language that allows privileged access to national and global networks (Canagarajah 2005). Noticeably absent from the conversation were Muslims. Divani either excluded them entirely (the Up-country/Jaffna binary often ignores Muslims) or subsumed them under the category "Up-country."

These examples illustrate the complexity of Tamil-medium teachers' talk about language in relation to relevant social differences—particularly in terms of the presence of multiple ideologies, sociolinguistic hierarchies, and evaluative frameworks. However, what does this tell us about the relationship between the ideologies involved in teachers' talk about language and the way they actually correct and evaluate students' Tamil speech in the classroom? Do particular ideologies come to the forefront in some practices but not others? I now turn to how teachers' ideologies are enacted in subject-area classes, language classes, and oratorical performances.

Evaluating Students' Linguistic Performances in the Classroom

The way that the Girls' College teachers corrected and evaluated students on the basis of their speech was related to the sociolinguistic situation of the students.

As I previously mentioned in *Sri Lankan Tamil Varieties and the Ideology of Diglossia*, while there were an equal number of North and East Tamil, Up-country Tamil, and Muslim teachers, the overwhelming majority of students were Up-country Tamils and Muslims. Some of the North and East students came as refugees of civil war, but most were born in Kandy to parents from the North and East. It was common for students from all social backgrounds to incorporate Jaffna lexical and grammatical features in their speech (such as using “*vaDivu*” rather than “*azhahu*” for “beauty”). But most students spoke “normalized” Up-country Tamil varieties in school.

Of the forty-seven girls in the grade 10 Tamil-medium class, twenty-five (53 percent) were Tamil and twenty-two (47 percent) were Muslim. Of the Tamil girls, twenty-two (88 percent) identified as Up-country and three (12 percent) as North and East, twenty-two (88 percent) as Hindu and three (12 percent) as Christian (Roman Catholic and Non-Roman Catholic). While seventeen (36 percent) of the girls lived in Kandy, eighteen (38 percent) lived in towns and villages outside the city, and twelve (26 percent) came from other regions (see chapter 4). Kausalya and another Up-country Tamil Hindu research assistant named Uma analyzed recordings of the speech of the girls in the class in teacher-student and student-student interactions. Without telling them anything about the class demographics, I asked them if they could identify any girls from the North or East on the basis of their speech. They both said that they could not, but the most significant linguistic contrast was between Muslim and non-Muslim girls. They identified Muslim students as using “nonnormalized” features in their speech, such as the dropping of PNG markers in finite verbs as well as the pronunciation of *ṣ* as *sh* rather than *s* in some contexts (e.g., *shari* [okay])

The two girls in the class with parents from Jaffna were Selvi and Jayanthi. Selvi, the daughter of a teacher, emphasized her Jaffna identity to other students, particularly in reference to her high marks on quarterly exams, but Jayanthi preferred not to discuss it at all. In fact, she usually described herself as being from Kandy. However, both girls in their interactions with teachers and classmates did not speak in a way that was recognizable as Jaffna. Their avoidance of verbal Jaffna features seemed related to their desire to fit in with other students in the class, with whom they had been studying since grade 6. Additionally, given the security climate, it was risky to be identified as Jaffna either within or outside educational institutions.

In the Tamil-medium stream, the way that students’ linguistic practices were evaluated depended on the subject. While students are supposed to speak literary Tamil in teacher-student interactions in all subjects, students’ literary Tamil skills are accountable to the highest level of scrutiny in Tamil class, where they are required to produce forms of Tamil oratory (recitation, drama, and debate). By

contrast, other subjects stress the students' conceptual understanding of the subject matter over their linguistic performance. At the time of my research, Jaffna Tamils taught math, science, health science, Hinduism (Saivism), and commerce. When observing these classes, I rarely noticed teachers correcting students over issues of speech.

The Tamil-as-a-subject head was Kitana, a Jaffna Tamil Hindu, who was the most senior Tamil-medium teacher at the school. However, while Kitana taught primary-level Tamil, the secondary-level Tamil teacher was Geetha, an Up-country Tamil Hindu cited in the preceding examples. Geetha came from a high-caste background—*muttu veLLaaLar*—the highest division of the dominant non-Brahmin landowning caste—and held a BA degree in arts from the University of Peradeniya (Daniel 1996). But despite her qualifications and her excellent teaching skills, some Jaffna Tamil teachers, and students as well, doubted her ability to teach (and speak) Tamil appropriately (see chapter 4). I think she was well aware of this and it was part of the reason that she voiced negative views about Jaffna Tamils. Geetha corrected students on their ability to produce and sustain literary Tamil in teacher-student classroom interactions and in recitation, drama, and debate. I also noticed that she regularly corrected students for using "nonnormalized" features in their colloquial Tamil, both inside and outside the immediate context of lessons. Consistent with my research assistants' evaluation, the students Geetha targeted the most were Muslims, particularly girls from Muslim-majority towns and villages outside Kandy.

One day Geetha was sitting at her desk in the front of the grade 10 Tamil-medium classroom, doing some administrative work before class. The students were chatting at their desks. A Muslim girl, using the shortened forms of the colloquial verb "to be," called out to another girl across the classroom: "Panadol iik-kidaa?" (Do you have Panadol [a pain reliever]?) At this Geetha stood up and repeated the question in a mocking tone, causing several girls in the class to laugh. When the Tamil class was finished, Geetha came and sat next to me in the back of the classroom. Within earshot of several Muslim students, she referred to the incident, explaining that while Muslim Tamil is *sari* (okay) for home, in school Muslim students should speak what she referred to as *saadaaraNamaana* (ordinary) Tamil or *poduvaana* (usual) Tamil. Here Geetha expressed the diglossic view, a hierarchical view of Tamil linguistic variation she had avoided in the earlier example, which was likely related to the presence of a Muslim teacher, her close colleague Nabiha.

During and outside lessons then, Geetha corrected students for failing to produce proper literary Tamil and "normalized" or unmarked colloquial Tamil (like what I have identified as "normalized" Up-country Tamil). For Geetha, the production of incorrect forms derives from the students' ethnoreligious identity

(Tamil vs. Muslim) and place of origin. In exploring the way that teachers enact ideologies in practice, it is important to consider explicit oratorical performances, as it is in this context where students are expected to produce flawless literary Tamil.

I did not have a chance to observe any of Kitana's classes because I spent little time in the primary school. However, on several occasions I witnessed Kitana auditioning students of all ages for the interschool Tamil oratory competitions in the Tamil-medium staffroom. In these auditions, Kitana asked students to recite Tamil poetry in the literary form. During one of these, Kitana commented to me and the other teachers in the room (Jaffna Tamils and non-Jaffna Tamils) that Up-country students' pronunciation was not as good as that of the Jaffna students. While I could not detect any differences in the speech of the Jaffna and non-Jaffna girls, she had corrected some Up-country Tamil girls for improperly pronouncing the retroflex frictionless continuant ழ (*zh*) as *L* or *l* (Schiffman 1999).²⁰ The incorrect pronunciation of this sound, which is believed to be unique to Tamil, and is present in the name of the language, *Tamizh* (தமிழ்), is "often taken as an example of linguistic shift away from 'correct' Tamil, as the marker between good and bad speakers, native speakers and foreigners" (Nakassis 2016, 110). Though this is a widespread pronunciation tendency in Sri Lanka, Kitana and other Jaffna teachers widely associated it with Up-country and Muslim girls. When it came to selecting students to compete in competitions, Kitana invariably selected Jaffna girls. For Kitana, the production of the best literary Tamil was tied to a Jaffna identity.

Though Geetha frequently insisted to me and other non-Jaffna teachers at the school that Jaffna Tamil is not superior to other Tamil varieties, she frequently selected Jaffna girls for oratorical performances during Tamil lessons. There is a possibility that this was related to the Jaffna girls' formal training in oratory and Carnatic singing (a musical tradition from South India) rather than tied to their Jaffna identities per se. In one particular instance, Geetha called on three girls, two Jaffna Tamils and a Muslim, to sing a Tamil Carnatic song in the literary form. When they finished, she asked me to say who sang the best. Not well versed in this type of singing, I said that I had no way to judge them. On our way to the Tamil-medium staffroom after class she explained that the Muslim girl had not sung as clearly or as fluently as the others. This particular Muslim girl had in fact studied Carnatic music, but not for as long as the other two girls.

With Geetha, different ways of evaluating linguistic varieties and speakers came to the fore in different contexts—oratorical performances versus elsewhere. While she frequently corrected students on their ability to produce literary Tamil and unmarked or "normalized" forms during and outside lessons, it was only in

the context of academic oratorical performances (which were in the literary variety) that she, like Kitana, ideologically linked the production of a superior literary form to a Jaffna identity. Here the association is related less to the linguistic forms that the students actually employed, since all the girls appeared to employ correct or appropriate literary forms to varying degrees, but to the widely circulating ideology that Jaffna Tamils speak the best Tamil (their spoken language is ideologically equated with the literary variety).

Sociolinguistic and Ideological Shifts

The incongruities within and between teachers' ideological assertions and practices point to shifts in the configuration of social inequality at Girls' College and elsewhere. The variation and complexity of teachers' mapping of linguistic forms onto social difference in their talk about language and evaluative practices are consistent with shifts in power relations among Tamil-speaking groups in the South in the post-1983 period. Large numbers of North and East Tamils fled Sri Lanka. At the same time, Muslims and Up-country Tamils started to enter Tamil-medium government jobs, and today they outnumber teachers from the North and East. While the distinction between Jaffna and non-Jaffna Tamils was still highly salient at Girls' College, other distinctions—pertaining to ethnicity, religion, class, place of origin, socioeconomic level, and educational level—were becoming more prominent.

The ideology that Jaffna Tamil is the best did not move freely across social space but was associated with a particular context—oratorical performances. As related to the recent power shifts among Tamil-speaking groups, at Girls' College there is evidence of a shift in language ideological processes. Jaffna Tamil was still a highly salient sociolinguistic category, but as related to the fact that most teachers and students spoke the "normalized" Up-country Tamil common in the region, it was less tied to particular Jaffna spoken lexical and grammatical features than to the idea of producing the best Tamil, that is, correct or appropriate literary Tamil. Thus, while most of the Tamil-medium girls could produce that literary Tamil, it was the Jaffna girls who were chosen to compete in oratorical performances.

When I returned to Girls' College in 2011, I noticed changes in the dynamics between teachers. In the past three years there had been a slight demographic shift in the Tamil-medium stream. Since it was now considered safe to return to Jaffna for the first time in decades, two Jaffna teachers had accepted transfers to government schools there. In addition, four young teachers had been hired—three Muslims and an Up-country Tamil Hindu. In their discussions and debates

about language in the canteen and the staffroom, teachers still discussed the sociolinguistic distinction between Jaffna and non-Jaffna speakers. However, as a reflection of the demographic shifts, their discussions more frequently involved mapping linguistic differences onto ethnoreligious identity (Muslim vs. Tamil) and place of origin (Kandy vs. non-Kandy). Non-Muslim teachers (both North and East and Up-country) were particularly concerned as to whether the new Muslim teachers spoke correct or appropriate Tamil in the classroom.

In the future, I suspect that Jaffna Tamil will maintain some status as a "prestige" variety at Girls' College and other Tamil-medium schools in the south central region. But as "normalized" Up-country Tamil is further instantiated as a default variety, the ideological connection between the category "Jaffna" and the spoken linguistic forms speakers actually produce will become even more remote and indeterminate. At the same time, as Up-country Tamils and Muslims continue to rise in prominence in Tamil-medium educational institutions throughout the South, the ethnoreligious and sociolinguistic distinction between Tamils and Muslims will become more salient. In the following chapter, I turn to grade 10 Tamil-medium students to see how these Tamil and Muslim girls used Sinhala, Tamil, and English to interact in school and in their home and neighborhood settings, as well as how they realigned ethnicity-based models of Sri Lankan society to imagine cosmopolitan futures.

4

ENGLISH AND THE IMAGINING OF A
COSMOPOLITAN CITY

The Tamil and Muslim girls in the grade 10 Tamil-medium class (ages fourteen to sixteen) took pride in being Girls' College students, but they also felt exclusion and discrimination from the Sinhala Buddhist majority. In their multilingual interactions inside and outside school they mapped their social differences (ethnicity, religion, region, class, and socioeconomic level) onto their speech, academic performance, and other aspects of their identities. When they discussed Tamil sociolinguistic hierarchies, in contrast to their teachers, they focused more on positioning themselves with respect to Girls' College and Kandy as a cosmopolitan center. Being from Kandy was equated with prestige (approximately one-third of the students lived in Kandy city), but it was not immediately apparent what it meant to be local. Did Kandy status have implications for how they fit into their Sinhala-majority school and wider society, or did it simply relate to being educated, upper middle class, and worldly within their Tamil-speaking social networks? In this chapter, I investigate the complex role of English in how the girls navigated inequalities in the school as a whole and the Tamil-medium stream and claimed status as cosmopolitan Kandy or Sri Lankan girls.

The literature in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics considers how youth utilize their multilingual linguistic resources to configure their identities in relation to others, both inside and outside the classroom.¹ Recent studies add to these findings by demonstrating how, in a globalized world, the mobilization of highly diverse codes is not the exception, but the norm (Blommaert 2013; Canagarajah 2013). Along similar lines, ethnographic studies of postcolonial English, rather than looking at its role in assumed cultural homogenization (e.g., Phillipson 1999), treat it as a local interactional resource that is often combined with other codes (Canagarajah 2005; Nakassis 2016; Pennycook 2013). Building on this literature, I begin by looking

at the perceived values of English, Sinhala, and Tamil at Girls' College, and then consider how the grade 10 Tamil-medium students used these languages across different spheres of practice in the school. I show that while Sinhala teachers and staff often used English to exclude Tamil-medium students from Sinhala interactional space, in the Tamil-medium stream the girls skillfully employed English-inflected Tamil to articulate desired identities and to stake claims in the future.

In the second part of the chapter, I look at this same cohort's interactions in school in relation to their multilingual home and neighborhood environments. I focus on three girls—two Muslims and a Tamil—who lived in Kandy. I then analyze how the girls drew on their linguistic resources to make explicit claims to belonging to Kandy or a wider Sri Lankan society. The key here is how different kinds of cosmopolitanisms can be realized in practice (see Canagarajah 2013). Despite their proficiency in English and Sinhala, the girls' identities as Tamil speakers were dominant in how they interacted with and were perceived by others inside and outside school. The students' representation of themselves as cosmopolitan Kandy girls allowed them to think beyond the ethnicity-based models pervasive in school and society. However, I argue that, contrary to ideologies undergirding the Official Language Commission (OLC) and National Education Commission (NEC) policies (see chapter 2), the girls' status claims were less about identifying with a multiethnic Sri Lanka than their personal aspirations and potential for economic and spatial mobility, whether in Sri Lanka or abroad.

Postcolonial and Sri Lankan English

Due to its dominance in economically and politically powerful countries, especially the United States, as well as its role in globalization, competence in English is a highly sought after all over the world (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1999; Tollefson and Tsui 2004). In addition, English is implicated in global cultural flows (see Pennycook 1998, 2007). Dismissing the old distinction between native and indigenized varieties of English (Kachru 1994; Mufwene 1994), scholars now focus on how, in postcolonial contexts, English has become "splintered, hybrid . . . being appropriated, nativized and adapted by local environments" (Ramanathan 2005, vii).

Studies of socially occurring interactions complement the macropolitical approaches to postcolonial English by demonstrating the complex ways in which people around the world position English.² Scholars have called for the investigation of how English is used and appropriated, how global cultural flows are taken up in local ways (see Pennycook 2013). Christina Higgins, for one, analyzes how

"East Africans exploit the heteroglossia of language to perform modern identities through localizing global linguistic and cultural resources while generally maintaining the multiple layers of meaning from both the global and the local" (2009, 148). Drawing on these approaches, I do not conceive of Sinhala and Tamil as being in a simple opposition to English but demonstrate how the complex articulation of local and global ideologies, discourses, and practices combine in norms of appropriate language use.

In postcolonial contexts in Asia and elsewhere, English is widely implicated in class-based divisions, which also involve other modes of difference such as caste, gender, region, ethnicity, and religion. This complex is rooted in colonial histories, where regimes groomed select groups of people to occupy civil service jobs (Tollefson and Tsui 2004). As discussed in chapter 2, the postindependence *swabasha* (vernacular) and Sinhala-only policies in Sri Lanka did not alleviate inequalities between English-speaking elites and the Sinhala- and Tamil-educated masses. Though Sinhala replaced English as the official language for purposes of central administration, "English remained the language of higher education, commerce, communication, technology and travel" (Canagarajah 2005, 423). In addition, English carries high status for its role as a global language (2005).

Many Sri Lankans have a strong desire to learn English to increase their social status and job prospects nationally and abroad, but groups traditionally deprived of training in English often feel alienated from it, seeing it as a symbol of discrimination (Gunesekera 2005). In reference to its divisive role in Sri Lankan society, English is widely referred to as a *kaduwa* (sword) in colloquial Sinhala (Kandiah 2010). Anti-English sentiments are present in the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna's (JVP) stances, which purport to represent the interests of Sinhala people—particularly in the South—who lack opportunities due to class, caste, and poverty (Gunesekera 2005).³ The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has also had a history of anti-English policies. As Suresh Canagarajah (2005) discusses, the LTTE enacted a "Tamil-only" policy when it established a de facto state in the North in 1990. This policy was motivated by a desire to bring advantages and rewards to Tamil monolinguals versus middle-class Tamil- and English-speaking bilinguals. Still, even with Tamil-only policies in force, "through modes of code-switching, mixing, and borrowing, people still use English in discursively strategic ways" (2005, 428).

As related to differences between Sri Lankans proficient in English and those who are not, sociolinguists and education scholars have identified different named varieties of Sri Lankan English. The first, described by Passé (1948) and Kandiah (1979, 1999, 2010), is a Sri Lankan English widely identified as an elite variety used by Sinhalas, Tamils, Moors, Malays, and Burghers as a first language (Gunesekera 2005). Those who use this variety were generally educated in English and speak it at home. Scholars conceive this Sri Lankan

English as a mix of English and Sinhala influences, with some Tamil borrowings. The English spoken by nonelite groups is often referred to as “Not pot English,” and is marked by the influence of Sinhala phonology. Other varieties include Tamil English, which shows the influence of Tamil phonology, and Burgher English, which believed to be a mixture of elements of Portuguese creole and English (2005).

During the colonial period, Sri Lankan elites tended to speak English, though they used “kitchen” Sinhala or Tamil with their servants (Kearney 1978). Although globalization has recently increased youths’ desire to be proficient in English, most Sri Lankans today who speak English also speak Sinhala or Tamil or both.⁴ Reflecting this sociolinguistic shift, studies have moved away the naming of discrete varieties of Sri Lankan English to consider contact features and code-switching between English and Sinhala or Tamil (Canagarajah 1995, 1999, 2005; Lim 2013). This chapter contributes to that literature by showing how minority Girls’ College students used and conceptualized English in relation to Sinhala and Tamil.

English, Sinhala, and Tamil at Girls’ College

At Girls’ College, English, Sinhala, and Tamil had designated roles. Sinhala functioned as the main administrative language of the school, while English was the secondary administrative language. In addition, Sinhala, Tamil, and English were languages of instruction and were offered as additional subjects. Girls’ College students’ attitudes toward various languages are of particular interest because the students are located between elite and nonelite status. Many of their parents were educated to the secondary level and employed in middle-class professions (e.g., teachers, businessmen, and merchants), but they were generally not as wealthy or as socially or politically well-connected as students who attended English-medium international schools. While a few students spoke English as their main language at home, most spoke Sinhala or Tamil or both with family.

As is also common throughout South India, Sinhala- and Tamil-medium girls widely associated English with upper-middle-class status, urbanity, the West, and access to global networks. They recognized many varieties of English, including American, British, Indian, and Sri Lankan English. Consistent with the Sinhala and Tamil nationalisms, Sinhala and Tamil students also strongly believed in the value of their mother tongue and mother-tongue education, which they associated with their traditional culture, religion, and values.⁵ Muslims, however, were less invested in the notion of a mother tongue as related to their religion-based

identities. Sinhala-medium students (about 90 percent Sinhala and 10 percent Muslim) spoke Sinhala and English in school.⁶ Tamil-medium students (about 50 percent Tamil and 50 percent Muslim) spoke Tamil, Sinhala, and English. Before turning to the students, I look at the vision of Mrs. Deen (the English sectional head) for a multiethnic English sphere of practice at Girls' College. My discussions with her frame my inquiry by demonstrating her relative valuing of English, Sinhala, and Tamil in relation to local and global reference points.

Mrs. Deen's Vision

I got to know Mrs. Deen quite well since she oversaw my language teaching in the grades 9 and 10 English bilingual stream. In her late fifties, she was one of the most senior teachers at the school. Though teachers and students told me she had Malay heritage, she preferred to be identified simply as a Muslim. In contrast to most of the other Muslim teachers, she chose not to wear a hijab; she said she did not want to separate herself from others in that way. "I am a Sri Lankan," she frequently declared. She wore an Indian-style sari, which made her ethnic identity ambiguous. She commented to me once that her sari made her look like a Tamil, but her "Muslim bindi" (the callus on her forehead from praying) made her look like a Muslim. She added with delight, "But I talk like a Christian."

Mrs. Deen said that she speaks to her mother in Tamil, and that she speaks Sinhala and English as second languages. She fondly recalled her days studying at a Kandy English-medium Catholic missionary school that has since been converted into a Sinhala-medium Buddhist provincial school. Like other older-generation Sri Lankans who studied in English-medium schools (Tambiah 1986), Mrs. Deen said that she never took notice of who was Sinhala, Tamil, or Muslim. She was the only English teacher at Girls' College to stress the importance of English in uniting students from different ethnic and religious groups. Though Tamil- and Sinhala-medium students took English-as-a-subject classes separately, she insisted on refraining from using a single word of Sinhala or Tamil in her lessons. Outside the classroom, she tried to create an English sphere of practice by talking to students and fellow teachers in English only.

In our conversations, Mrs. Deen frequently spoke to me about the respective values of Sinhala, English, and Tamil for Girls' College students. Citing ideologies present in the OLC and NEC policies (see chapter 2), she stressed the importance of Sinhala as a national language and English as an interethnic link and international language. While it was common for Muslim teachers to de-emphasize the importance of Tamil to them, she spoke about it in a particularly negative way. That negative positioning may have arisen from her perception that I was biased in favor of Tamil speakers because I spent so much time observing

the Tamil-medium students. She also may have even been afraid I was sympathetic to the LTTE. She told me several times that foreigners, who lacked a full understanding of the war, tended to be pro-LTTE. In one conversation, I asked her if she spoke Tamil at home. She told me that she speaks it at home, but only to accommodate her mother. She said, "You see, Christina, if you speak English you can speak to anybody." To spur further discussion, I mentioned that Tamil is also spoken in many different countries. Making a sour face, she said that because of the terrorist problem, speaking Tamil caused people to be suspicious because they "think you are plotting something." In this statement, by ideologically associating the Tamil language with LTTE violence, Mrs. Deen had positioned it within Sri Lankan ethnopolitics rather than a broader framework.

News of a LTTE-linked suicide attack in a town northeast of Colombo on April 6, 2008, again prompted Mrs. Deen to express her disgust at LTTE violence. When I met her in a classroom, she informed me of the attack with tears in her eyes. She said the LTTE are like the "hair of Medusa." "They don't just go and do it, but they preplan it, living among the people for a long time," she said. She added that "Sinhala kill people, but they don't commit this kind of carnage." She then spoke of the innocence of Tamil citizens, stating, "Even these Tamil children, even the Tamil people, I feel sorry for them. What can they do? They were even shocked to see a minister die." While Mrs. Deen associated Tamil language with ethnic divisiveness and LTTE violence and Sinhala with the Sri Lankan nation-state, she depicted English as neutral with regard to ethnicity and religion. As a neutral language, she thought it could positively contribute to Sri Lankan society by enabling interethnic communication. Yet despite her best efforts, multiethnic English spheres of practice at Girls' College remained quite limited. Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students spoke English in their English-as-a-subject classes and in conversations with Mrs. Deen and their other English teachers and code-switched in English elsewhere (see Norms of Tamil Only). When Tamil-medium students spoke to Sinhala-medium students (usually regarding school-related matters), it was usually in Sinhala and not English.⁷ This practice was related to the status of Sinhala as the main administrative language of the school, as well as the negative associations with English, as I further discuss in *Unmixed English*.

Grade 10 Tamil-Medium Girls

Due to a space shortage in the secondary school building, the grade 10 Tamil-medium classroom was situated in the school's administrative wing, right next to the main office complex. Forty-seven Tamil and Muslim girls occupied the small, musty space, with five students to every three desks. One of the few decorations

in the classroom was a banner with President Obama's 2008 campaign slogan, "Yes We Can." Though the required school uniforms gave the girls a general similarity, their individual styles were apparent in their hairstyles (short or long pig-tailed braids) and accessories like earrings (gold studs or tiny gems). Three of the Tamil girls in the class identified as Jaffna or Batticaloa Tamils, while the rest identified as Up-country. While some girls associated Jaffna or Batticaloa Tamil with prestige, the most salient sociolinguistic differences were between Tamils (Hindu or Christian) and Muslims, and between the girls from Kandy and girls from outside (see chapter 3 for demographic information). The Hindu girls came from different caste backgrounds, but caste was not a subject overtly discussed among the students or the teachers.

Tamil-medium teachers and students often discussed how the girls from areas outside Kandy had a hard time fitting in with the Kandy girls. Most of the girls who grew up in the city attended a nearby bilingual (Sinhala and Tamil medium) primary school, which had similar academic standards and evaluation criteria. They often came from families with more financial resources, since the cost of housing in Kandy is high. Some of the Kandy girls were daughters of Girls' College Tamil-medium teachers; others knew their teachers from social networks. In the context of their Tamil-medium subjects, teachers and students widely associated fitting in as a Girls' College student with performing at a high academic level, being able to produce literary Tamil, and using "normalized" Up-country Tamil. Muslims and girls from outside the city were targeted by teachers and fellow students for using "nonnormalized" varieties of colloquial Tamil (see chapter 3). However, as I discuss in "Kandy is Our Place," the girls also associated proficiency in Sinhala and English with a Kandy identity.

The students were immediately focused on preparing for the O-level exam, which they would take at the end of grade 11. Almost all of the girls aimed to do well enough on the exam to remain in Girls' College to pursue A levels (grades 12–13) in science, commerce, or arts. Some girls wanted to do occupational training to become teachers or bankers or go into business; others aimed to obtain university degrees and become doctors, lawyers, or journalists. As entrance to Sri Lankan universities is highly competitive, girls from wealthier families also considered going abroad for their higher education—to India, Malaysia, Russia, or the United States. In the following, I discuss the girls' sense of their own exclusion from the Sinhala Buddhist mainstream of the school as this was manifested in language and linguistic practices. This discussion also points to the complex role of English in relation to the Sinhala and Tamil in everyday practice at Girls' College.

Nonratified Sinhala Speakers

As Tamil-speaking minorities living in the South and attending a multilingual school, the girls accepted and expected that they should know how to speak, read, and write Sinhala. During school-wide assemblies and events, they rarely admitted any difficulty with speaking or understanding. When I asked a Tamil Hindu girl if she had understood a particularly muffled Sinhala intercom announcement, she replied, "Of course."

As mentioned previously, the Tamil-medium girls were highly aware of the discrimination to which they were subjected. One day during a school-wide awards assembly conducted in Sinhala, a Jaffna Tamil Hindu teacher whispered to me in Tamil that the competitive sports teams did not take Tamils. When I asked a Tamil Hindu girl in the grade 10 class to verify this fact, she said it was true. Laughing, she said that when Tamil girls try out for a team they are simply told they are not good enough to join. However, she added that Tamil girls do not have much interest in sports because Tamil culture values music and dance (there were apparently a few Muslim girls on the sports teams). During the annual Sports Day, an event at which students participate in activities that exhibit school and national pride, I noticed there were no Tamil or Muslim students in the cadet core, which did militaristic drills. In a nonchalant tone, a Tamil girl told me that the cadet core was the only group entirely made up of Sinhalas because it was affiliated with the Sri Lankan army, which did not take Tamils or Muslims much anymore.

The Tamil-medium girls' sense of exclusion from the school was particularly evident in their discussion of code choice in encounters with teachers. Because of the location of the classroom in the administrative wing of the school, the girls were frequently scolded by teachers and office staff for being too loud. One day, I saw two Muslim girls standing in the hallway outside their classroom by the newspaper stand. They were chatting in Tamil about a sports article in a Sinhala government paper. The school did not provide any Tamil papers (some Tamil-medium teachers said they preferred English papers) and the girls said that the English government paper did not have good sports coverage. A Sinhala teacher—immediately identifiable by her Kandyan-style sari—came by and told the girls in English to go back to their classroom and be quiet. I noticed that the teacher's pronunciation showed a heavy Sinhala influence by local standards. When I followed the girls into the classroom, one told me in Tamil that even though they all speak Sinhala, the Sinhala teachers treat them like they do not know it. This student read the Sinhala teacher's choice to scold them in English instead of Sinhala as an indication that she was treating them as nonratified Sinhala speakers and excluding them from Sinhala interactional space. Later that same week, I visited the girl's house after school. When I mentioned the incident,

she brought up power inequalities between Tamil speakers and Sinhala as related to code choice. She stated in English, "We speak their language, but they [the Sinhala] don't speak ours."

At Girls' College, Sinhala- and Tamil-medium teachers commonly employed English to scold students. In these contexts, the use of English seemed to be associated with authority. The Sinhala teacher in the earlier example may have used English to scold the two girls as part of a more regular practice. However, the relatively heavy Sinhala inflection in her English indicates that she may not have been very proficient, and thus may not have used English often. The Muslim student's interpretation of this incident as an example of exclusion suggests that rather than using English as a way to incorporate Tamil-speaking students, this teacher chose to use it to manage them as linguistic minorities in a Sinhala-majority school. For the Sinhala teacher, who presumably did not know Tamil, scolding the girls in Sinhala might have been too inclusive. Scolding them in English was a way of maintaining appropriate distance, while also commanding respect and demonstrating authority.

The scolding example illustrates the intricate role of English at Girls' College. Though English was the secondary official language, contrary to Mrs. Deen's vision, it did not function as a language of interethnic communication used to bring Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students and teachers together. The grade 10 girls were well aware their identity as Tamil-speaking minorities was the source of their exclusion from the school as a whole; this was, in fact, an unavoidable part of the social terrain they had to traverse. While English had a multidimensional role in the school, its implications within the Tamil-medium stream were especially complex. In the following section, I discuss the grade 10 girls' uses of and attitudes toward Tamil, English-inflected Tamil, and English. Drawing on Canagarajah's (2005) explication of the English-inflected Tamil, I show how Tamil that includes English words and expressions can function as both a default code and a valuable interactional resource.

Norms of Tamil Only

As is the case in Tamil-speaking South Asia more broadly, in Sri Lanka it was the norm for all Tamil-medium academic subjects to be taught in Tamil only. Though lectures and answer elicitation were supposed to be in literary Tamil, teachers and students in fact mixed literary and colloquial forms (see chapter 3). Just as the ideal of producing literary Tamil in the classroom was rarely achieved, so too was ideal of producing "pure" Tamil, that is, Tamil that is unmixed with foreign borrowings (Canagarajah 2005).

In their classroom interactions, Tamil-medium teachers and students employed common English greetings ("Good morning"), terms of address ("students," "teacher," or "Madam"), and commands, including scolding phrases ("Be quiet"), as already discussed. But aside from these usages, the content of Tamil-medium academic subjects was conveyed mostly in Tamil, consistent with the nationally prescribed curriculum. In math and science classes, however, some English technical terms were used in accordance with the dominance of English in these fields. The grade 10 science teacher was a young Tamil Hindu man named Mani, who had recently come from Jaffna. In his lectures, he wrote relevant English terms such as "heparin" or "sodium saturate" on the board and then glossed them in Tamil in his lectures.

The use of English terms in science class sometimes caused students moments of uncertainty about the appropriate code choice for writing and speaking in the classroom. On one occasion, some girls were doing group work for science class in Mani's absence. One girl asked the others if she should spell "DNA" in English or Tamil letters. Another girl quickly replied, "Ellooru(m) tamizh medium daanee?" (Everybody [is] Tamil medium, right?). Here, in response to the first girl's moment of doubt, the second girl echoed the norm that Tamil-medium subjects should be in Tamil only. During group work, I would also occasionally hear a girl use an English term, such as "first," and then repeat it in Tamil, "mudalaavadu." These examples indicate the naturalness of English amid the Tamil-only norms of the classroom (Canagarajah 2005).

I rarely heard the girls mix Tamil and Sinhala; however, they commonly mixed their Tamil with English in student-teacher interactions that did not immediately pertain to academic material (such as talk about administrative matters).⁸ In these contexts, which were viewed as less "formal" or "official," the use of literary or pure Tamil would seem odd, forced, or even explicitly performative (Canagarajah 2005; Nakassis 2016).⁹ I identify the heavy use of English lexical items in Tamil as English-inflected Tamil (Ramaswamy 1997).¹⁰ Though this term is useful, it can imply that these usages are uniform or standardized. Tamil/English code-switching follows clear grammatical patterns, but the Tamil-medium girls showed considerable variation in their practice, as related to the number and type of English words and expressions employed, as well as their pronunciation.¹¹ In the following, I present a typical example of English/Tamil code-switching in a conversation between a teacher and a student before class. Here, a Tamil Hindu girl spoke to Geetha (the Up-country Tamil Hindu Tamil literature and history teacher I mentioned in chapter 3) about when they would have a double class period (the girl's and Geetha's English words are in italics):

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Student: <i>Double period maDam.</i> | <i>Double period, Madam.</i> |
| 2. Geetha: illayee, innikki oru <i>period.</i> | No, today [we have] a <i>period.</i> |
| 3. Student: naaLaikki daa(n) <i>double period.</i> | Tomorrow (Friday) only [is a] <i>double period.</i> |
| 4. Geetha: naaLaikki tamizh illa ungaLukku. | Tomorrow there's no Tamil for you. |
| neettu daa(n) <i>double</i> irundurukku. | Yesterday only there was a <i>double.</i> |
| sevvaay daa(n) <i>double period.</i> | Tuesday only [is] a <i>double period.</i> |
| 5. Student: <i>Monday</i> daanee? | <i>Monday</i> , right? |
| <i>Monday</i> daanee <i>double period?</i> | <i>Monday</i> , [there's a] <i>double period</i> , right? |

As was a typical pattern, the student uses slightly more English than the teacher. In line 4 the teacher uses a Tamil word for a day of the week, while in line 5 the student uses an English word.

The students also used a lot of English words and expressions in their interactions with their classmates during free periods (teachers were usually absent). In one instance, two Muslim girls took a break from their science homework to humorously discuss the effect of anger on urine (their English is in italics):

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Student A: koovamaa irukkiRa
aaLDa <i>urine</i> a <i>check</i> paNNi paattaa
enna <i>color</i> -ila irukku? | If you <i>check</i> the <i>urine</i> of an angry
person, what <i>color</i> would it be? |
| 2. Student B: <i>Red color</i> -ila.
<i>Yellow.</i> | I [would be] <i>red.</i>
<i>Yellow.</i> |
| 3. Student A: illa, <i>red.</i>
adukku mundi <i>yellow</i> , adukku mundi
<i>orange.</i> | No, <i>red.</i>
First it's <i>yellow</i> , then <i>orange.</i> |
| 4. Student B: naanga <i>test</i> paNNi
paattee(n). | We will <i>test</i> and see. |
| 5. Student A: enDa <i>red.</i> | Mine [is] <i>red.</i> |
| 6. Student B: ungaDa <i>maroon</i> -aa? | [Is] yours <i>maroon?</i> |
| 7. Student A: illa, <i>black.</i> | No, <i>black.</i> |
| 8. Student B: ayoo.
ennadu? | Oh my.
What? |
| <i>Red</i> -aa irukkoonumaa? | Should it be <i>red?</i> |

While the teachers tended to use Tamil terms for colors, the girls used English terms. Tamil speakers in Sri Lanka and South India make verbs out of borrowed English words by using *paNNu* (to do), as evident in the phrase “test paNNi” in line 4 (Schiffman 1999).

On-the-ground sociolinguistic norms prescribed that students draw on their linguistic resources in different varieties of Tamil and English-inflected Tamil in different contexts within the classroom. The use of relatively unmixed Tamil versus English-inflected Tamil reflected and produced different spheres of practice, distinguishing lessons from other types of classroom interactions, and teacher talk from student talk (students used more English). Though English gains its meaning partly from its opposition to Tamil, it is also a local resource. To more fully understand English-inflected Tamil ideologies and practices, I look at them not only in relation to unmixed Tamil, but also unmixed English.

Unmixed English

The students’ use of unmixed English outside Mrs. Deen’s English-as-a-subject classes was relatively rare. On my very first day at Girls’ College (February 2008), I stood in front of the class and introduced myself in slow and careful English. I told them that they could ask me questions about my research project or any other topic. A Tamil Hindu girl named Kavitha who sat in the back of the classroom raised her hand and pleaded, “Please, let’s talk in Tamil.” I knew Kavitha well since I had been staying in an annex above her parents’ house for the past seven months. Complying with Kavitha’s suggestion, I started to speak in English-inflected Tamil (as a nonnative speaker my code-switching practices were distinct from theirs). As my research continued, I found that in group contexts, the girls were much more comfortable speaking English-inflected Tamil than unmixed English.

Though reluctant to speak unmixed English with me in front of their classmates, many of the grade 10 girls were eager to try out their English with me one-on-one. A few weeks into my research, they started approaching me on the school grounds to chat for a few minutes in relative privacy. A Muslim girl from Puttalam named Nadira shyly asked me in English-inflected Tamil to tutor her in English at her house once a week. During these lessons we would have lengthy conversations in unmixed English, as I further discuss in the next section. When I asked her one day why she mainly spoke Tamil (English-inflected Tamil) to me in front of her classmates, she said that if they heard her speaking English with me they would think she was “proud.”

The Tamil-medium girls were highly aware that English, as a language associated with both the Sri Lankan upper class and a global world, was a coveted resource that some could manage better than others. As Nadira stated, speaking full English—particularly in my presence—had the potential to make them seem like they were trying to show off. Constantine Nakassis describes how Tamil youth in Madurai, India also associate speaking English “too well” with being arrogant (2016, 108). As stated previously, this negative association was one of the reasons Tamil-medium students spoke to Sinhala girls in Sinhala. In fact, one Tamil-medium Hindu student mentioned that she preferred Sinhala-medium girls to the girls in the English bilingual stream (who sometimes spoke full English), because the latter girls were too “posh.” The Tamil-medium girls also used Sinhala to conform to standard practices at the school.

In group discussions in my presence and many other settings and situations, English-inflected Tamil functioned as a relatively neutral code. Its use also somewhat mitigated the differences between the girls who could speak English well, and those who struggled with it. However, though English-inflected Tamil was unmarked in some instances, it could also have performative effects, indexing or “pointing to” upper-middle-class status, a higher education level, and the global world (Canagarajah 2005; Nakassis 2016).¹² The girls made particularly heavy use of English words and expressions when discussing travel abroad, higher education, or popular culture, not surprising given the dominance of English in these domains. In these discussions, some girls distinguished themselves from the others by their particularly apt use of English terms. In the following classroom interaction, two Muslim girls spoke to me about the University of Peradeniya in the earshot of their classmates (their English is in italics):

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Student A: <i>kitana maDam,</i>
<i>husband, husband lecturer.</i> | <i>Kitana Madam's husband, husband</i>
<i>[is a] lecturer (in the Agriculture</i>
<i>Department).</i> |
| 2. Student B: <i>ee Geography</i>
<i>Department-um pooRiinga?</i> | Why do you also go [to the] <i>Geography</i>
<i>Department?</i> |
| <i>Geography Department-um pooRiinga</i>
<i>daanee?</i> | You also go [to the] <i>Geography</i>
<i>Department, right?</i> |
| 3. Christie: <i>ille, Philosophy.</i> | No, <i>Philosophy.</i> |

In this interaction the girls correctly employ English terms for various academic departments, which displays their knowledge of the university. Similarly, in other discussions some girls would take pleasure in using the appropriate English

terms in reference to US popular culture, saying “pop music,” “Hollywood,” and “Michael Jackson.” While not as potentially alienating as the use of full English, the girls’ skillful use of English terms and expressions in their Tamil speech subtly indexed their astuteness in those particular social domains. English-inflected practices thus can be interpreted as aspirational since they indicate the girls’ desired identities.

In some instances, the girls’ use of English words pointedly contrasted with the Tamil-only norms of the classroom. One day, the science teacher, Mani, finished his lecture and left the room. Kavitha, the Tamil Hindu girl from Kandy, ran out to see if their geography teacher was going to come for the next period. After a few minutes, Kavitha burst in the classroom with a smile on her face and said, “Girls, ongaLukku good news. MaDam vara maaT’Taanga” (Girls, [I have] good news for you. Madam won’t come). Her exaggerated enunciation of “girls” and “good news” seemed to parody elite varieties of English spoken in South Asia, as popularly depicted in Tamil films from South India. In this interaction, her English-inflected Tamil signaled a break from academic matters and announced free time away from the watch of their teachers. On another occasion, Kavitha loudly sang “the doctor’s coming” to the tune of “Oh My Darling Clementine” while doing math group work while the teacher was out of the room. Kavitha’s turn to English in these two examples, rather than making her come across as proud or snobbish, was more mischievous or resistant in nature since it disrupted the Tamil-only norm in the classroom. However, her ability to use these words and sing the song also pointed to her good command of English, which subtly signaled her middle-class and educated status to her classmates.

These girls used English and English-inflected Tamil to fashion and imagine themselves, and much like Higgins’s (2009) observations of English and vernacular use in East Africa, their choices of which language to use and when was regimented by local norms of correct and appropriate speech. The girls skillfully balanced their use of English and Tamil to align themselves with desired identities without appearing snobbish. As was evident in Mrs. Deen’s characterization of it, English gains value through its articulation with the global. However, it represents a global resource that is highly localized.

In their daily interactions, then, the grade 10 girls navigated as Tamil speakers in a Sinhala-majority school, while also meeting complex sociolinguistic norms of the Tamil-medium stream. Not only did English fail to facilitate interethnic communication, but the scolding example highlights how some Sinhala teachers and staff used English to exclude Tamil-speaking students from Sinhala interactional space. The role of English, not just within the school as a whole, but within the Tamil-medium stream, is striking. In interactions outside lessons and group work, where unmixed Tamil would be construed as odd, and unmixed English

risked making them seem snobbish, English-inflected Tamil was a safe and effective alternative (see Canagarajah 2005). But the girls also drew on English-inflected Tamil to articulate desired identities, stake claims on the future, and subtly resist the Tamil-medium academic setting.

In the following section, I situate the grade 10 Tamil-medium girls' multilingual linguistic practices in school in relation to their home and neighborhood environments. The three girls of interest here—Nadira (Muslim), Faiza (Muslim), and Kavitha (Tamil Hindu)—lived in Kandy. Faiza and Kavitha were born and raised in Kandy, while Nadira had recently moved from Puttalam and struggled to fit in with her classmates. I discuss the girls' multilingualism in relation to their orientations as Tamil speakers, as well as their aspiration to be fluent English speakers.

Sociolinguistic Home Environments

Nadira

Nadira was born in Kandy but had spent most of her childhood in Puttalam, a city on the northwest coast of Sri Lanka. Its population is comprised of Muslim and Tamil fisherman, agriculturalists, and traders. Since 1990, it has also been home to thousands of Muslim refugees who were expelled from Jaffna by the LTTE (see Thiranagama 2011). Nadira's family had decided to move to Kandy three years before so Nadira could attend Girls' College. Her father commuted between Kandy and Puttalam, where he ran a business. He had studied in the English medium and was proficient in Tamil and Sinhala. Her mother, who stayed at home, was a Tamil monolingual. I agreed to tutor Nadira in English after speaking with her father. He offered to pay me for the service, but I refused to accept money.

Nadira's family's apartment was situated along a main commercial road, about half a mile southwest of Girls' College. The only piece of furniture in the large front room was a table that Nadira used for studying. Her mother would prepare us tea and cake in the kitchen while Nadira and I reviewed grammar lessons in her English textbook and then had free conversation in full English, usually about her teachers and classmates. She frequently mentioned that the transition from her Tamil-medium Muslim school in Puttalam had been difficult. When she first came to Girls' College her classmates had told her she spoke like she was from Puttalam. Because of that, she noted, she "quickly changed her speech." She said her Sinhala was still a little weak, but her conversational English was rapidly improving.

Nadira's daily life consisted of coming and going from school, tuition classes, and Carnatic singing lessons. She was not allowed to go out unaccompanied. Her

mother was friendly and often eager to speak to me in Tamil (her father spoke to me in English when he was around). Nadira, however, acted embarrassed by her mother's Puttalam regional variety of Muslim Tamil, which had particularly negative associations related to the disadvantaged status of the city's residents. On one occasion her mother asked me, "Nallaa iikkiRaa?" (Are you well?).¹³ Nadira quickly repeated the more "normalized" greeting, "Nallaa irukkiRiingalaa?" For Nadira, fitting in with her Kandy classmates meant distancing her speech from that of her mother and improving her proficiency in Sinhala and English. Several of Nadira's teachers told me that she had come to Girls' College knowing very little, but she had caught up quickly. It was also clear she felt tremendous pressure from her father to get high marks on her O-level exams.

Faiza

Faiza grew up in Kandy, attending the bilingual primary school near Girls' College. She lived with her mother and father in a house in a residential neighborhood just south of Nadira's apartment. Her father was a retired computer engineer from Kandy and her mother, who was from Batticaloa, was a home science teacher at a small Tamil-medium Muslim school outside the city. Her older sister, who had also attended Girls' College, was doing a BA degree in Russia. Two Jaffna Tamil University of Peradeniya students stayed in the back bedroom as borders.

In contrast to Nadira, Faiza was allowed to walk around her neighborhood alone, and even visit shops on the nearby commercial road. Faiza met me at a hair salon on a Saturday morning and took me to her house. She usually spoke to me in English-inflected Tamil. She introduced me to her mother, who spoke to me in Tamil (she was bilingual in Sinhala). Her father greeted me with a few English expressions before going into the next room to watch the news. When I commented to Faiza that the news program was in Sinhala, she told me he preferred to watch Sinhala TV because he had studied in the Sinhala medium. Her mother served us cakes and tea at the dining room table. At one point she yelled in from the kitchen to tell Faiza to speak to me in English. Faiza inquired about my favorite foods in English before switching back to English-inflected Tamil. Later she took me to her bedroom and showed me her Harry Potter books, which, as she pointed out, were in English and not in the Tamil translation.

Faiza invited me to visit a woman she referred to as Auntie, a Tamil Hindu who rented the house adjacent from them. The woman explained to me in Tamil that she is an "Indian," which, she clarified, meant that she was born in Tamil Nadu, India. After asking about my background and how I learned Tamil, she started telling us about a trip she took to Jaffna during the 2002 ceasefire. After describing her visit to the LTTE graveyard she started telling an elaborate ghost

story that took place on an island temple in Jaffna, the Nainativu Nagapooshani Amman Temple. As I could not fully catch the details (it involved a Sinhala servant), I later asked Faiza to explain the story, but she told me with a smile that it did not make sense because her aunty was “konjam paiththiyam” (a little crazy). I was not sure if the story was unclear, or if Faiza just did not want to discuss it. As we later surveyed the neighborhood from her rooftop, Faiza pointed out some houses where Sinhala families lived. She explained that she talks to them (in Sinhala) when she gets bored, as similar to her relationship with the “peey [ghost] auntie.” A Muslim girl with a mother from Batticaloa and a father from Kandy, Faiza regularly interacted with the Jaffna Tamil borders, a Tamil Hindu renter from India, and several Sinhala families.

Faiza represented herself to me as a strong student, who spoke “nalla” (good) Tamil, which she identified as Batticaloa Tamil. Highly lively and energetic, she frequently got into trouble for shouting during lessons. Her teachers would yell, “Vaay muDiinga” (Shut your mouth). Some of her classmates told me that she was a poor student and would have trouble passing her O-level exams in math and science. She was highly proficient in Sinhala and seemed fairly competent in English despite her reluctance to fully speak it with me.

Kavitha

Kavitha is a Tamil Hindu, who had grown up in Kandy and attended primary school with Faiza. She lived with her mother, father, and younger sister in a mainly Sinhala and Muslim neighborhood in the Kandy Hills (southwest of Nadira and Faiza's homes). This area has negative reputation because of the riots that took place there during the 1987 JVP insurgency. It was also associated with a slum settlement that had been relocated from the center of the city in the 1990s. More Tamil families had once lived there, but many had moved out because of the increased cost of housing and ethnic tensions.

Kavitha's family's social background is complex. Her mother, who was born in Batticaloa, had a high-level position in the Tamil-medium Kandy Zonal Education Office. Her father, of more recent Indian origin (although his mother was Jaffna Tamil), is a retired major in the Sri Lankan army who fought against the LTTE in the northern Vanni region for twenty-five years.¹⁴ He and his brothers had studied in the Sinhala medium at a government-assisted Kandy Buddhist school. In contrast to his wife, who held a BA degree in Tamil literature, he could not read or write Tamil. They identified their caste to me as broadly *veLLaaLar* (an upper-caste, non-Brahmin, landowning caste).

Kavitha's home environment was highly multilingual. Her father spoke to his brother in Sinhala (they had long chats on the verandah) and his wife and

daughters in Tamil. The family regularly invited me to come down in the evenings. We mainly spoke English-inflected Tamil, but Kavitha and I would have long discussions in full English (see *Managing in Society*). She liked to talk about English movies and novels (she owned every Harry Potter book). She also enjoyed hearing about the typical life of an American teenager. Consistent with the association of English with aspirational identities, her parents attempted to switch to full English when talking about Kavitha's plan to go to medical school in Sri Lanka or in Tamil Nadu, India.

A Sinhala Buddhist student at a nearby Catholic convent school stayed in the house as a border. On one occasion in which we all had dinner together, Kavitha's family spoke English-inflected Tamil, but translated key parts of the conversation for the border (the full use of Sinhala would have excluded me). Their trilingualism was complemented by Kavitha's mother's intense focus on the Tamil language. She would have long talks with me in earshot of Kavitha and her sister about what constitutes correct or good (*nalla*) Tamil speech.

Despite the presence of outsiders (the border and myself), Kavitha's family seemed rather insular. On weekends they visited Kavitha's father's family in the Up-country region. They used to visit her mother's family in Batticaloa, but they had stopped because of the war. Kavitha and her sister were brought to and from school, tuition classes, and *Bharata Natyam* (a traditional Hindu dance) classes in a van, and otherwise did not venture outside their home unaccompanied. The winding road that led down to the main road was unsafe due to the presence of monkeys, a large pack of stray dogs, and the risk of petty robberies. Kavitha's father, who was home most of the day, was involved in the neighborhood—occasionally being called in to mediate fights and disputes (in Sinhala) because of his military background.

One of the top students in her class, Kavitha was a favorite of many of her teachers. But her classmates did not seem to resent her, likely because she balanced her conscientiousness with her teachers by acting mischievously with her friends. Of the three girls, she was the most competent in Sinhala and English.

Discussion

The grade 10 girls' use of Sinhala at Girls' College was limited, but as the preceding vignettes suggest, their linguistic interactions at home and in their neighborhoods were highly multilingual. While some of the students lived in mainly Tamil-speaking tea plantation areas outside the city, they all used Sinhala to some degree to converse with shopkeepers, autorickshaw drivers, neighbors, friends, or borders. Nadira, who had grown up speaking mostly Tamil in Puttalam, associated fitting in with her Kandy classmates with improving her linguistic skills in Tamil (learning to speak the "normalized" Up-country variety), Sinhala, and English.

Nadira, Faiza, and Kavitha's fathers, who studied in the Sinhala or English mediums, were pervasively multilingual in that they spoke Tamil but preferred to use Sinhala or English in some settings, situations, and among certain interlocutors (including relatives). In contrast to their fathers (but similar to their mothers), all three girls interacted as predominantly Tamil speakers. They used Sinhala to talk to Sinhala and used Tamil elsewhere (as well as English-inflected Tamil and some English). They all had Sinhala acquaintances, but the closest people in their lives were their relatives, teachers, and friends, almost all of whom were Tamil speakers (Tamils or Muslims).

Muslims have some institutional flexibility with regard to language in that they can study in the Tamil or Sinhala mediums. While Faiza and Nadira studied in the Tamil medium by choice, Kavitha's father had wanted her to study in the Sinhala medium like him, but Girls' College did not permit it because she is ethnically Tamil.¹⁵ Language of instruction affiliations, whether chosen or prescribed, impacted all Sri Lankan youths' identifications, orientations, relationships, and trajectories (LaDousa 2014; LaDousa and Davis 2018). In Sri Lanka, language of instruction distinctions continually reproduce linguistic models of ethnicity by compelling youth to primarily identify as Sinhala or Tamil speakers, even though many also speak English.

Nadira and Kavitha, like many of their classmates, used my presence in their homes to improve their English and get used to an American accent. While Faiza was more comfortable speaking to me in English-inflected Tamil, she indicated her desire to be associated with English when she showed me her Harry Potter books. It is only natural that the girls would bring up topics related to English, the United States, and higher education in my presence. But it seemed that their homes, more than their school, were imagined as spaces for their English aspirations. After all, since their English-as-a-subject class was insufficient, it was at home where they improved their written and spoken English by consuming English media, including novels, TV, and the internet (for those who had it). It was also in their homes where they could practice full English (with me and others), without the fear of coming across negatively to their peers.

How then did Nadira, Faiza, and Kavitha claim status as Kandy girls in their interactions with me and with each other? Given their lack of substantial relationships with Sinhala inside or outside school, were their cosmopolitan notions of Kandy specific to Tamil speakers, or did they have implications for their sense of belonging in a multilingual and multiethnic Sri Lanka? I first turn to an argument between Nadira and Faiza over their respective claims to Kandy status that occurred in June 2008.

"Kandy Is Our Place"

Nadira and Faiza came over to sit with me near the front of the grade 10 classroom, aware that my recorder was turned on. The Hindu and Christian girls had gone to their respective religion classes, but the Muslim girls remained because their Islam teacher was on leave. Speaking loudly enough so their classmates could hear, Faiza joked that their upcoming quarterly exams would be canceled if there was a bombing in Kandy. Nadira, no doubt to steal the attention of her classmates, said that she wanted to plant a bomb in Kandy (the girls' English is in *italics*):

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Nadira: enakku kaNDiyila <i>baamb</i> vekoonu(m). | I want to plant a <i>bomb</i> in Kandy. |
| enakku kaNDiyila <i>baamb</i> vekoonu(m),
aanaa . . . | I want to plant a <i>bomb</i> in Kandy,
but . . . |
| 2. Faiza: kaNDi engaDa naaDu.
niinga puttaLam.
kaNDi engaDa naaDu. | Kandy is our (exclusive) place.
You're Puttalam.
Kandy is our (exclusive) place. |
| 3. Nadira: <i>Hello, Hello.</i>
naanu(m) poRandadu kaNDi, <i>birthplace</i>
kaNDi. | <i>Hello, Hello.</i>
The place where I was born is also
Kandy, [my] <i>birthplace</i> is Kandy. |
| 4. Faiza: <i>Birthplace</i> kaNDi enDadukku
niinga puttaLattula poRandiinga. | You say your <i>birthplace</i> is Kandy, but
you were born in Puttalam. |
| 5. Nadira: puttaLattula poRakkalla
<i>birthplace</i> kaNDi.
enakku kaNDikku urima irukku.
DaDaa kaNDi, maaaa daa(n) puttaLam. | I wasn't born in Puttalam, Kandy is
[my] <i>birthplace</i> .
I have rights to Kandy.
Dad is Kandy, mom only is
Puttalam. |
| naa(n) ippa kaNDiyila daa(n) iikkiReen.
naa(n) kaNDikkudaa(n) viruppam.
niinga appaDi solla elaadu, . . . appaDinDa
niinga baTTikola. | I'm now in Kandy only.
It's Kandy only that I like.
You can't say it like that, . . . if it's like
that, then you're from Batticaloa. |
| 6. Faiza: baTTikola vaa irundattukku
naa(n) poRandadu inga daa(n). | For being in Batticaloa, I was born
here only. |
| 7. Nadira: naanu(m) poRandadu inga
vaLarnda <i>two, three years</i> inga daa(n)
irundeen.
<i>Fourth</i> -kku daa(n) anga poonee(n). | I was also born here and I grew up
here only for <i>two, three years</i> .

In the <i>fourth</i> year, I went there. |
| 8. Faiza: sari.
<i>Two, three years</i> daanee.
naa(n) irukkavee illa baTTikola vila. | Okay.
<i>Two, three years</i> only.
I've never lived in Batticaloa. |

9. Nadira: ippa *five years*-aa irukkuRee(n). I've been [in Kandy] for *five years*.
 10. Faiza: kaNDi engaDa kaNDikku Kandy, in our (exclusive) Kandy,
 maTTu(m) edaavadu naDanduch- if something happens, I will kill
 chenDaa nadira va daa(n) kolluvee(n). Nadira only.

Faiza responds to Nadira (line 2) by telling her she does not belong in Kandy because she came from Puttalam. She likely felt that Nadira did not have the right to declare that she wanted to plant a bomb—and have it taken as a joke rather than a potential threat—if she were not actually from Kandy. Although it is common for students in Sri Lanka and elsewhere to wish for a disaster so they can avoid taking exams, Nadira's statement was a little extreme with tensions already so high.¹⁶ There had been a bus bombing in a nearby village just four days before, and the grade 10 girls had been discussing a rumor that the LTTE was planning to bomb national schools. In this interaction we see Nadira's and Faiza's criteria for claiming Kandy status, as well as how they use different varieties of Tamil and English-inflected Tamil to make this claim. After discussing their parents' respective origins (I omitted this three-second segment because the recording was unclear), Nadira continued the argument by claiming they have the same status because they both have a parent from Kandy and a parent from another area:

11. Nadira: adee maadiri daa(n) The same way only, mom is there, dad
 engaDa maaaa anga, DaDaa inga. is here.
Same equal aahudilla. But not the *same, equal*.
 12. Faiza: *Equal* aahaadu. It's not *equal*.
 naa(n) ingayee poRandu, ingayee I was born and raised here.
 valandadu.
 13. Nadira: naa(n) inga poRandu I was born here and raised here for *two*
 vaLandee(n) *two years*. *years*.
 14. Faiza: naa(n) enDa baTTikola enDu I won't even open my mouth and say I'm
 vaay toRandu sollavee maaT'Tee(n). from Batticaloa.
 15. Nadira: naanu(m) vaay toRandu I also didn't open my mouth and say it.
 solRa illa.
Class-ila puttalam *girl* yaaraachchu In *class* if someone asks if there is a
 irukkuRaa enDaa oo nadira enDa. Puttalam *girl*, they say, "Yes, it's
 Nadira."
 naa(n) enDaa puttalam enDu Up to now, I have never told anybody
 iduvarakku yaaru kiT'Tayu(m) that I'm the one from Puttalam.
 sollavee illa.
 Only kaNDi daa(n) solRa(n). I say Kandy *only*.
 puttalam, *I hate*. Puttalam, *I hate*.

16. Faiza: aanaalu(m) baTTikola aak- Even though Batticaloa people are
kal muuLa kuuDa . . . smart . . .
17. Nadira: adu ungaDa ishDam. That is your wish.
anda niinga sonniinga appaDiyu That it is you said you are from
niinga baTTikola enDiinga. Batticaloa like that.
18. Faiza: baTTikola muuLa irukku A Batticaloa brain, I have.
enakku.

Besides their parents' origins, their birthplace, and the number of years they lived in Kandy, the girls also point to how they regularly represented themselves to classmates (lines 14–15). Despite the fact that her mother is from Batticaloa, Faiza can be understood as having a stronger claim based on their established criteria since she was born and raised entirely in Kandy.

Faiza slightly shifts her focus in the interaction in line 16 by bringing up the intelligence of Batticaloa people. Here she draws on general associations of the Batticaloa region with high-quality schools and good Tamil speech. In line 17, Nadira tries to use Faiza's mention of her Batticaloa heritage as evidence of wavering on her claim to Kandy status. Faiza, however, responds by confidently stating, "A Batticaloa brain, I have." In associating her intelligence with Batticaloa, Faiza implies that because her mother's place of origin is associated with educational prestige, she can have a connection to Batticaloa and still be a Kandy girl.¹⁷ On the other hand, since Puttalam has negative associations, Nadira cannot make such a claim. As an indication of her interpretation of the argument, Faiza approached me the next day in the hallway and asked, using a typical English-inflected Tamil grammatical pattern, "SaNDaiya naa(n) win paNNiTTEE(n) illaiyaa?" (I won the argument, didn't I?).

Several features of Nadira's and Faiza's speech are notable. Most of the Muslim girls in the class switched between Muslim Tamil and "normalized" Up-country Tamil, depending on the setting and situation. As my research assistant Uma observed from my recordings, Muslim girls tended to use more Muslim features in conversations with each other than in conversations with Tamil girls.¹⁸ Faiza and Nadira seemed to largely avoid using features that could be locally identified as Muslim Tamil. Nadira, however, used a few.¹⁹ In this interaction, Nadira and Faiza employed a particularly large number of English words and expressions. The use of the English-based terms *mamaa* and *DaDaa* to refer to their parents is common among southern Muslims. By using these terms, they avoided having to choose between using the "normalized" Tamil terms, *ammaa* and *appaa*, and the Muslim Tamil terms, *ummaa* and *vaappaa*. While the use of English numbers was ubiquitous (lines 7, 8, and 9), the following usages were less common: "same

equal" (line 11), "only" (line 15), and "I hate" (line 15). Interestingly, I did not observe these particular girls using such a high frequency of English words and phrases in other interactions with classmates.

When I asked Uma if she had any comments about Nadira's and Faiza's language in this exchange, she said they used a lot of English terms, probably to show me that they knew English. But their language use did more than just display their knowledge of English to me, to each other, and to their classmates; it reinforced their status as Girls' College students and Kandy girls. Their use of "normalized" Up-country spoken Tamil rather than Muslim Tamil also substantiated their claim to these kinds of status.

While Nadira and Faiza argued their respective claims, they did not explicitly say what Kandy status actually means. Though their sense of Kandy likely had a broader reference point, they configured that status in terms of hierarchies (e.g., the equation of a Batticaloa origin with intelligence) quite specific to Tamil-speaking groups at Girls' College and in Sri Lankan society more broadly. In the final example, I discuss how Kavitha relates Kandy or Sri Lankan society to multiethnic spheres of practice.

Managing in Society

After I moved out of the annex above Kavitha's house in February 2008, I regularly visited on weekends. In July during one of my last visits before returning to the United States, Kavitha and I got involved in a long conversation in unmixed English. Her parents were present, but they remained on the other side of the large living room, seemingly proud that their daughter could sustain a long English conversation. Our chat about her Jaffna Tamil science teacher, Mani, transitioned into a discussion of Jaffna versus Up-country Tamil teachers' ability to "manage in society." Though almost the entire conversation occurred in English, Kavitha explicitly discussed Tamil and Sinhala speech (the contextual information is presented in parenthesis; their Tamil is in italics):

1. CHRISTIE: Mani Sir doesn't talk much with the other teachers.
2. KAVITHA: He is good, actually, but teachers don't like him. Because he is going on the correct path. His teaching is very good. We can understand. But he had told the children, you have to go in the correct path, you must know what you are doing, and you must know where you are going. Nabiha (the Muslim geography teacher) . . . they don't care about children.
3. CHRISTIE: Maybe the teachers feel uncomfortable because he doesn't talk to them.

4. KAVITHA: He is very good. He is correct.
5. CHRISTIE: And his language, you have no problem understanding him?
6. KAVITHA: I can understand his Tamil language, but some children cannot.
7. CHRISTIE: Nabiha's sister's children also say they can't understand him.
8. KAVITHA: Muslim students can't. It's very different.
9. CHRISTIE: It's very different, Jaffna Tamil.
10. KAVITHA: *Ammā's* (Mother's) language is very different. Our language and the people's in this area is very different.
11. CHRISTIE: Your family's language?
12. KAVITHA: Yes. With Jaffna Tamil language, you can manage in this society.
13. CHRISTIE: Why?
14. KAVITHA: It is nice to talk (speak). Sometimes in Kandy and Nureliya (another Up-country city), Tamil is very untidy. That kind of language is not nice in society. See, Geetha Madam's (the Up-country Tamil history and Tamil literature teacher) language is sometimes a little rough.
15. CHRISTIE: Rough?
16. KAVITHA: Rough. Sinhala teachers never respect her. Shouting. Vanisri Madam's (the Jaffna Health Science teacher) language is good. She is calm and nice. That's nice. Geetha Madam . . .
17. CHRISTIE: Because Sinhala people speak very softly. Sometimes you cannot hear them they are so soft.
18. KAVITHA: Like that language. So many of the Sinhala-medium teachers, they don't talk with Geetha Madam. In the society. Because she shouts. She doesn't talk in society. That Tamil is not good. She talks like this: "Ee appaDi pooRi-inga?" (Why are you going like that?).

In a conversation a few months before, I had asked Kavitha what kind of Tamil she speaks. She said she and her school friends speak "normal Up-country Tamil, like the people from here." When her mother mentioned the necessity of correctly pronouncing *ḷ* (*zh*), which is widely associated with good Tamil speech, she had stuck her tongue out in disgust (see chapter 3). In this interaction, Kavitha, who was experimenting with different identities, deviates from her previous stance by aligning her and her family's speech with Jaffna Tamil (lines 10 and 12).²⁰ As mentioned in chapter 3, it is common for Sri Lankans in the South to conflate Batticaloa and Jaffna Tamil, even though they are lexically and grammatically distinct varieties (Suseendirajah 1999).

In line 13, I ask Kavitha to explain why Jaffna Tamil enables you to manage in society. She says that Jaffna Tamil is "nice in society," while Kandy and Nuwara Tamil is "untidy." She imposes this distinction on the Tamil-medium teachers themselves, explaining in lines 14 and 16 that the Up-country Tamil history and

Tamil literature teacher Geetha's language is "a little rough," and because of this, the Sinhala teachers do not respect her. She then contrasts Geetha to Vanisri, the health science teacher from Jaffna who was friends with Mani, saying that Vanisri's "language is good" and "She is calm and nice." In line 18 she reiterates that Sinhala teachers will not talk to Geetha "in the society" because she shouts. She then repeats that Geetha "doesn't talk in society." She finally imitates Geetha's speech, voicing a blunt Tamil command. In the following, I outline Kavitha's equation of the linguistic varieties with the perceived characteristics of the people who speak them:

Variety	People who speak it	Characteristics
Jaffna Tamil	Kavitha's mother, Mani, and Vanisri	Nice to speak, calm, nice, get along with Sinhalas, can manage in society
Up-country Tamil	Geetha	Untidy, rough, loud, lacking respect, sounds like shouting, don't get along with Sinhalas, cannot manage in society

In this account, Kavitha projects the distinction between Jaffna and Up-country teachers onto society more generally. Her use of "society" refers to a multiethnic sphere of practice at Girls' College, Kandy, or Sri Lanka. She uses linguistic refinement to associate Jaffna Tamils and Sinhalas in contrast to Up-country Tamils, drawing on (and reinforcing) the widely circulating ideology that Jaffna Tamils are of a higher class and educational status and speak better Tamil than Up-country Tamils. By associating Jaffna Tamils and Sinhalas on the basis of linguistic refinement, she avoids addressing ethnic and political tensions between these groups. In chapter 3, we saw how the Girl's College Up-country Tamil English teacher, Divani, associated Up-country Tamils and Sinhalas (at the exclusion of Jaffna Tamils) on the basis of their shared sociopolitical orientation to the Sri Lankan state. While it would have been relevant to mention the locally significant difference between Kandy and Low-country Sinhala teachers in this interaction, Kavitha talks about Sinhalas as an undifferentiated category, which could be an indication of her relative unfamiliarity with them. Her use of English allows her to discuss different varieties of Tamil without having to make the decision to employ any particular Tamil variety. Her use of full English reinforces her class and educational status, and through this, her belonging to her conception of society.

Nadira and Faiza's argument over Kandy status reflects hierarchies specific to Tamil-speaking social groups. Here Kavitha imposed Tamil sociolinguistic

hierarchies onto a multilingual and multiethnic sphere of practice. By uniting different ethnic groups on the basis of class and educational status, Kavitha's cosmopolitan notion of society is quite similar to Mrs. Deen's vision for a multiethnic English sphere of practice. However, in contrast to Mrs. Deen, Kavitha does not directly represent a cosmopolitan Kandy or Sri Lankan society through English, but through refined speech. Kavitha's comment that Geetha did not mix well with the Sinhala teachers because of her "rough speech" was inconsistent with my observations. While Geetha's interactional style was a little blunt, she had grown up in Kandy and was highly proficient in Sinhala. She seemed to chat with the Sinhala teachers more than many of the other Tamil-medium teachers.²¹ Thus, Kavitha's concept of Kandy seemed more immediately about sociolinguistic hierarchies among Tamil speakers than about a wider Sri Lankan society.

These two examples also indicate how the girls understood this heightened period in the ethnic conflict. As it was a feature of their everyday lives, it was common for Sri Lankan youth to make jokes about bombings and other forms of civilian-targeted violence. For example, a young Kandy Muslim friend would say "bamb ekak" (a bomb) in a mix of English and Sinhala whenever he spotted a coconut on the sidewalk. However, as an indication that Nadira took the joke a little too far, Faiza plays up the idea that Nadira is a threat to Kandy in line 10 by saying that she will kill Nadira if anything happens in Kandy.

My interaction with Kavitha shows her desire to be part of a cosmopolitan model of society, one that avoids ethnic politics. Kavitha's family background may have encouraged her to want to represent Sri Lankan society this way, since it demonstrates the complexity of ethnic, regional, sociolinguistic, and sociopolitical orientations. Though she still encountered some discrimination based on her Tamil identity, because of her father's former position in the army, she did not fear for her safety as much as other students from the North and East. As I discussed in chapter 3, one of the Jaffna Tamil girls in the class emphasized her origin in relation to her high marks, while the other preferred not to discuss it (she, in fact, told me she was from Kandy). Kavitha's high level of proficiency in Tamil, Sinhala, and English also gave her additional confidence. But like her classmates, she largely oriented to school and home environments as a Tamil speaker. The grade 10 girls' configuration of a cosmopolitan society, though grounded in some of their experiences in Kandy, was hopeful and aspirational.

Cosmopolitan Futures

When I returned to Girls' College in 2011, I found that many of the students' lives had significantly changed. Most of the girls had been admitted to Girls' College

for their A levels in science, commerce, or arts. Faiza, who had argued with Nadira over her claim to Kandy status, had gone to Batticaloa (where she has relatives) to complete her A levels because her O-level scores were not high enough for Girls' College (as her classmates predicted). Nadira had gotten into A levels in Tamil-medium science, the most highly coveted subject, but had been expelled from school for a personal indiscretion. Several teachers and students told me that she ran off with a married Sinhala doctor, who had a house right behind the school. She stayed away for a month before returning home to her parents. Her teachers felt sorry for her but said the school could not take her back because it would set a bad example. Despite Nadira's voiced desire to stay in Kandy, her only tenable option was to return to Puttalam to do her A levels at a small Muslim school. It was likely that both Faiza and Nadira would return to Kandy after completing their A levels. Kavitha was in the midst of her A levels in Tamil-medium science.

When I next spoke to Kavitha in 2013, I learned she had taken her A-level exams, but narrowly missed the score she needed to be admitted to the University of Peradeniya. When I asked her about medical school, she said that it was simply too expensive. She added that she had been interested in journalism as well as medicine, anyway. She considered applying to universities in the United States before starting a BA degree in computer science in Colombo. She is currently completing her degree while working part time. An avid Facebook user (it became widely used in Sri Lanka in 2008), she frequently posts pictures of her family and her Kandy and Colombo friends, most of whom are Tamil. She recently announced her engagement to a young Tamil Hindu man who had also graduated from a leading Kandy school.

The grade 10 girls' desire to belong to Kandy seemed to avoid ethnicity-based models of Sri Lankan society, but it did not point to the inclusion of Tamil speakers into a multiethnic Sri Lanka. Rather, at a time when ethnic differences were particularly sharp inside and outside the schools, being a cosmopolitan Kandy girl pertained more to their own potential for social and economic mobility. Kavitha, Faiza, Nadira, and the other students saw the criteria for success in a Tamil-medium setting and projected that onto their own cosmopolitan futures. While they clearly associated English with an upper-middle-class status and global opportunities, their conceptualizations of English were intertwined with that of Tamil and Sinhala. Kandy cosmopolitanisms—just like the norms of sociolinguistic practice in the classroom—articulated with the global but were locally configured (Canagarajah 2013). Since their identity as Tamil-speaking ethnic minorities structured their interactions inside and outside school, envisioning themselves as Kandy girls gave them hope for achieving social mobility within their ethnically fractured society. And while that cosmopolitanism was shaped by Kandy as a place—with its middle and upper middle classes and

its elite educational institutions—the girls' futures were also open to global opportunities.

In a conversation in 2011, Kavitha spoke about her trips to Jaffna and Batticaloa following the end of the war in 2009. Complaining that people in Jaffna are war traumatized and Batticaloa is too hot, she pivoted to express her attachment to Kandy. She invoked the cosmopolitan vision she had described before, stressing that it was Kandy she liked, and Kandy where she wanted to be. Though Kavitha and the other Girls' College students might not end up living in Kandy, for them it remains symbolic of cosmopolitan mobility, a place that anchored their aspirations. In the next chapter I shift focus to the Hindu College students, who had fewer social and financial resources. I look at how these girls and boys managed the linguistic and behavioral constraints of school and nonschool settings, as well as the ethnicization of identity.

On the morning of their first O-level exam session in December 2007, the Hindu College grade 11 class went to do pujas at the Kandy Pillayar Kovil, a Hindu temple devoted to the god Ganesh. I arrived at the temple at 6:15 a.m. to wish them good luck on their exams. I joined a group of Hindu College girls who were standing in the paved space in front of the temple. The boys were huddled together a small distance away. The students chatted with one another in nervous excitement. The girls watched as the rest of their classmates arrived, saying, "Hi, morning" and "EppaDi?" (How's it going?). When a boy named Michael approached the girls, one whispered to another, "Enakku Michaela kaNNulayee kaaTTaadu" (I hate Michael). A girl asked her friend for money for a sugar bun because she had forgotten to eat breakfast. Another girl relayed how she had walked to the bus stand without her national ID card so she had to run all the way back to her house to get it.

Standing all together, the Hindu College students could observe students from other Tamil-medium schools and streams around the city. The girls were particularly interested in watching the boys. One girl asked the others, "Eey ange paaru yaaroo pakkattila nikkuRaa?" (Hey, look over there, who's standing nearby?). Another girl suggested that they get closer so they could see his school colors. The first girl then pointed to another boy standing right in front of the temple and whispered, mixing Sinhala and Tamil, "Sudu, ange, sudu, sudu" (White, there, white, white). The other girl answered in Tamil, "VeLLa daanee?" (White, isn't [he]?). She then commented that neither of his parents had blue eyes like him, thus raising doubt about his parentage. As time advanced, the students took turns holding each other's bags so they could go inside the temple. When it was almost time for them to head to their separate testing locations, I shook each of their hands and told them, "Best of luck." Some of the students moved off with determination, while others were more reluctant to break away from the group.

The Hindu College students' gathering at the Ganesh temple marked a significant milestone in their lives. These boys and girls, most of whom identified as Up-country Tamils (Hindu and Christian), had just completed grade 11 and were about to take an exam that had been the main focus of their secondary education. Those who passed O levels would pursue A levels (grades 12–13) at other Kandy schools, while those who failed would study to retake them, start occupational training programs, or get low-level jobs. The meeting at the temple was also significant because it was one of the few times they had been able to socialize as a group away from the immediate gaze of their principal and teachers. In South Asia the areas outside temples are commonly used as gathering places, but in Sri Lanka those activities were restricted because of security concerns.¹

The boys and girls were subject to different forms of monitoring of their linguistic and social behavior inside and outside school. In school their ethnic identities were continually reproduced in relation to language of instruction and linguistic practice (see chapter 2), while outside school they navigated a Sinhala-majority urban setting, where the very act of speaking Tamil could be considered inappropriate or offensive and might even be seen as a security threat. The students' lower-class status and lack of full proficiency in Sinhala and English made negotiating public spaces particularly challenging. Building on literature in linguistic anthropology that considers peer interactions in relation to different settings and situations, this chapter investigates how the Hindu College girls and boys interactionally managed different forms of monitoring and the reinforcing of ethnicity both in school and in other public places.²

Scholars of language and education have demonstrated how schools subject students to highly specific forms of monitoring and evaluation (Bourdieu 1991; Heller 1996, 2001; Wortham 2003, 2008).³ However, it is important not to assume that institutions play a central role in constraining thought in action, but instead "investigate the types of constraint actually influencing our object of study in specific instances" (Wortham 2012, 131). Breaking down the distinction between studies of talk in institutional and noninstitutional settings, Susan Gal (2002) argues that the categories "public" and "private" are not attached to separate spheres (like the office and the home) but are discursive phenomena that are interactionally produced and enacted.⁴ Influenced by these scholars, I take a more detailed view of the constraints to which the Hindu College youth were subjected. I analyze their linguistic and social practices across different spheres of practice inside and outside school with a focus on participant frameworks—namely, who was privy to specific interactions.

Moving beyond a simple speaker-hearer model of communication, Erving Goffman (1979) refined our understanding of the roles individuals play in social interactions (also see Hymes 1972). He broke down the categories of speaker

and hearer into smaller elements, the latter into ratified hearers (addressed and unaddressed recipients) and unrated hearers (eavesdroppers, overhearers, and bystanders). Following the call to use a simple set of participant roles (Irvine 1996), I distinguish between ratified and unrated hearers or addressees, and use some of Goffman's (1979) other categories to think through the way youth control their speech in relation to the gaze of others.⁵ Building on work that considers social spheres as interactionally configured (Brown 2014; Gal 2002; Goodwin 2006), I show how the Hindu College youth moved through and created different kinds of interactional spaces to which others were not privy: in classrooms, outside school, in groups, and traveling alone.⁶ I suggest that studies of youth interactions should look past more obvious school/nonschool comparisons to analyze how participant frameworks dynamically mediate linguistic and social behavior. I also show how these youths managed their status as lower-class ethnic minorities by building Tamil cocoons around themselves (in their peer groups or alone) to insulate them in Sinhala-majority public spaces.

Urban Up-Country Youth

A number of recent ethnographies on Sri Lanka have moved beyond a focus on the causes and manifestations of ethnic conflict to describe how different social groups managed their lives amid the conflict (Bass 2013; Daniel 1996; Thiranagama 2011). Up-country Tamils are a traditionally understudied group in the anthropology of the region, but newer studies have investigated how they experienced hardships related to the ethnic conflict as well as their legal, socioeconomic, and social marginality (Jegathesan 2015, 2018). Since I am concerned here with the "everyday work of ethnicity," I consider how ethnicity interacts with class, caste, gender, and sociolinguistic competency to shape Up-country youths' everyday social and linguistic practices (Spencer 2007, 163). While studies focus on the Up-country Tamils living and/or working on tea plantations (Bass 2013; Hollup 1994; Little 2003), I examine their experiences in a multilingual and multiethnic urban center.⁷

Kandy's Up-country Tamils differ from one another in relation to caste, religion (Hindu and Christian), socioeconomic level, level of education, and occupation.⁸ Although they had little historical connection to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) (Daniel 1996), during the tense period when I conducted fieldwork Up-country Tamils faced some risk of arrest or disappearance on suspicion of LTTE affiliation (see chapter 3) (Bass 2013; Jegathesan 2011). In addition to the possibility of being marked as potential Tigers, Up-country Tamils also faced discrimination from Sinhalas and other Tamil-speaking groups, who commonly thought of them as low class, low caste, and uneducated (Daniel 1996).

The city has a small Up-country Tamil middle class employed primarily in Tamil-medium government jobs and in business/entrepreneurship. Most are descendants of tea plantation laborers, the overwhelming majority of whom are from low-caste groups (Bass 2013). Some, however, are descendants of *kangaaNis*, or labor supervisors, on the tea estates. They were members of upper non-Brahmin castes, primarily *veLLaaLar* (Daniel 1996). Despite this evidence of social mobility, the majority in Kandy and nearby areas are not educated past the primary level, do not possess English skills, and occupy low-level jobs (Bass 2013). Some women and men go to the Gulf States for employment opportunities (Gamburd 2011). Kandy's Up-country Tamils have a varying relationship to tea estates; while some people's parents or grandparents worked on the estates, other families have lived and worked off the estates for several generations. In the following, I lay out the social and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the Hindu College grade 11 class and discuss how the teachers academically evaluated them.

The Grade 11 Class

The Hindu College grade 11 class (ages fifteen to seventeen) had twenty-six students, sixteen girls and ten boys. All of the secondary students were situated in a single main room, with the different grades separated by makeshift wooden partitions. In the grade 11 classroom space, the girls sat on the left, the boys on the right, with a desk and chalkboard at the front for the teacher.

Of the twenty-six students in the grade 11 class, twenty-three (88.5 percent) identified as Up-country and three (11.5 percent) as North and East; twenty as Hindu (77 percent) and six (23 percent) as Christian (Roman Catholic and Non-Roman Catholic).⁹ Students described their fathers as businessmen, shopkeepers, laborers (*kuuli veelai kaararhaL*), municipal workers, or petty merchants (*siRu viyaabaarihaL*), and their mothers as tailors or housewives. I did not ask teachers or students about caste, but it was clear from teachers' comments that the students came from a wide variety of caste backgrounds, which they referred to only generally as "high" or "low."

Because of its status as a town school, Hindu College brought together students and teachers from a wide geographic area. Some students lived in Kandy, usually in densely packed areas widely referred to as slums. Others lived in towns and villages outside Kandy, including tea plantation areas, though their parents were not employed on the plantations. All Hindu College students spoke Tamil as a first language. Those who lived in Kandy tended to have a higher level of proficiency in spoken Sinhala. The students' spoken English proficiency was generally poor, but some students managed basic conversation.

Academic Evaluation

The Hindu College teachers, who were all female, usually came from slightly higher-class backgrounds than their students. In conversations with me and one another, the teachers often identified three types of students: those who study well (*nallaa paDippaanga*), those who study moderately well (*paDippaanga*—they study), and those who do not study at all (*paDikka maTTaanga*). Teachers often related students' academic abilities to their chances of passing the O-level exam (fewer than half passed it). Perceptions of academic performance were immediately based on scores on in-class assignments, quarterly exams, and practice O-level exams.

The students who obtained the high marks on exams generally sat in the front rows of the classroom space. The girls got higher overall marks than the boys, as is typical in Sri Lankan provincial schools. However, a Jaffna Tamil Hindu boy named Vinod was considered to be the best student in the class. He, another Jaffna boy, and an Up-country Hindu boy all sat in the front row. While four other boys tried to sit as close to the front as possible, three boys who got low exam scores remained in the back row, where it was very hard to hear the lessons. The girls had a more equitable seating arrangement. The same groups of four or five sat together but regularly rotated their positions toward the front or back of the classroom. Three girls, however, who got poor to moderate grades on their exams, remained in the back row.

My research assistant, Kausalya, had previously taught English at Hindu College for a decade. She said that during that time there had been a male Jaffna Tamil Hinduism (Saivism) teacher who discriminated against Up-country students. He had routinely ordered them to sit at the back of the classroom so they did not disturb the Jaffna students in the front. Kausalya told me that one Up-country boy had dropped out of school after this teacher had told him, "Nii pooy, kuuli veela seyyu" (You [nonhonorific] go and do coolie labor).¹⁰ At the school there were only two Jaffna teachers who taught at the secondary level; one taught Hinduism and the other math. These teachers did not seem to favor the Jaffna students, although Kausalya said there were problems at other Tamil-medium Hindu schools in the Kandy Zone. Still, Jaffna and Up-country teachers ideologically equated the Jaffna students' strong academic performances and "good" Tamil speech with their ethnic/regional identities.¹¹ In the next section, I show how the Hindu College students managed different forms of monitoring in the classroom to create interactional spaces to which their teachers were generally not privy. I also discuss how the students worked with their teachers to mediate classroom dynamics.

Peer Interactions in the Classroom

Since Hindu College did not have any school grounds, students were confined to their desks for most of the day. The grade 11 students behaved in a way that allowed them to remain on the good side of their teachers while also getting a chance to socialize with their classmates. As Goffman (1961) mentions in his discussion of “total institutions,” remaining under the radar does not necessarily mean not being noticed by authority figures but staying below the threshold of what can be accepted without intervention. The high noise volume in the main room of the school made it difficult for the teachers to hear. The students could thus get away with chatting during lessons if they faced forward and had their textbooks and notebooks out on their desks.¹² They were usually disciplined for more flagrant disruptions like shouting, flailing around in their chairs, or disturbing other students. The teachers handled small disciplinary problems by screaming at students or giving them sharp slaps on the back. When more serious disciplinary problems occurred, Mr. Ramakrishnan (Mr. R.) called the students—typically boys—into his office and slapped the palms of their hands with a wooden ruler.¹³

I sat at the back of the classroom space to avoid disturbing the students. I often asked their permission to place my recorder on their desks to capture their talk during and between lessons. Several teachers told me students were supposed to use literary Tamil and “respectful” spoken Tamil in teacher-student interactions.¹⁴ In their talk with their peers they used nonhonorific commands and finite verb forms as well as intimate addressive terms common among same-aged peers, such as “Daa” (“bro,” “dude,” or “man”), “Dii” (“sis” or “girl”), and “machchaan” (“buddy”) (see Nakassis 2016; Schiffman 1999).¹⁵ They referred to each other with nicknames, and the boys sometimes swore, but not usually within earshot of girls.

It was common for the Hindu College students to code-switch between Tamil and English in their peer interactions in the classroom (see chapter 4); some of the students incorporated Sinhala. In the following dialogue, Prashanti, an Up-country Hindu girl from Bogambara, a multiethnic slum neighborhood near the prison, mixed Tamil, English, and Sinhala in a comment to a classmate during the science teacher’s lecture (her English is in italics and the Sinhala is underlined):

1. Prashanti: *My koppi is* ivarai.
engiDu koppi muDinchi.
2. Arivu: enna muDinchi?
3. Prashanti: koppi muDinchi.

- My notebook is* finished.
My notebook is finished.
What’s finished?
[My] notebook is finished.

Here Prashanti uses a Sinhala word, *ivarai* (finished), in an English sentence. She then repeats the sentence in Tamil, which was a common practice. During a math lecture a girl named Veena, who was from a similar neighborhood, informed a classmate that her bag had fallen on the floor. She used a Sinhala sentence with the English word "bag." She said, "Ooyage bag ekə bima" (Your bag fell). While I never heard any of the Hindu College teachers comment on students' use of Sinhala, Kausalya clearly associated the practice with multiethnic Kandy neighborhoods. After listening to the preceding exchange between Prashanti and Arivu, Kausalya correctly guessed that Prashanti was from Bogambara. She said that students from that neighborhood use a lot of Sinhala because they have close contact with Sinhalas and Sinhala-speaking Muslims. While there was significant variation in the students' linguistic practices as related to their place of residence and many other factors, their use of code-switching and other features of speech differentiated student-student talk from teacher-student talk, which was supposed to be mostly in Tamil (with the exception of Sinhala-as-a-second-language and English classes).

Students' conversations with each other often superseded the lessons. In the following interaction, Arivu, an Up-country Hindu girl, answered the math teacher's question, but as soon as the teacher started lecturing again, she turned to Kannan to collect money from him for test papers (students had to pay for their own school supplies). Kannan, whose mother sold newspapers near the school, was frequently absent because he had to care for his ill younger brother (the students' English is in italics).

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Science teacher: samandirama
eDuttaa enna ceyyu? | When it becomes parallel, what will
happen? |
| 2. Arivu (to teacher): kuuDum
<i>Tiichar.</i> | [It will] increase, <i>Teacher.</i> |
| 3. Arivu (to Kannan): kaNNan,
kaNNan pattu ruva kaasu enga?
<i>Test paper kaasu.</i>
tumbukaTTa kaasu daa(n)
kuDuttiinga, pattu ruvaa. | Kannan, Kannan, where's the ten
rupees?
<i>Test paper money.</i>
You gave money for the broomstick, ten
rupees. |
| 4. Kannan: poy. (He turns away) | False. |
| 5. Arivu: <i>Test paper</i> kaasu, <i>science</i>
<i>paper-kku.</i> (Kannan doesn't
respond) | <i>Test paper</i> cash, for the <i>science paper.</i> |
| 6. Arivu (to another
boy): kuppuDungalee. | Just call him. |

7. Veena: *How?*

How?

8. Arivu (to Kannan and others): aa,
niinga appaDi aaDikkorukka,
aamaavasakki orukka vandiinganaa
naanga eppaDi kaasu keekkuRadu?

Ah, if you come [to school] only once a
month, how can we ask money from
you?

Although separated by an aisle, the girls and boys conversed over school-related matters, as evident here. Most of their conversations, however, were within their own gender groups.

During and between classes the Hindu College students maintained interactional spaces to which teachers were not privy, although there was always a chance the teachers would overhear their talk as unratified participants, intentionally or not.¹⁶ But while students maintained a clear distinction between student-teacher and student-student interactions, they also colluded with their teachers. In the following example, I show how Michael, an Up-country Christian (evangelical) boy, interacted with his teacher and classmates during the review of a practice O-level exam they had taken the week before. Thin and relatively dark-skinned (classmates called him *kari* [charcoal] and *kaakkaa* [crow]), Michael was one of the three boys in the back row of the classroom space. He regularly attended school and participated in school activities, but his exam scores were very low (he had basic problems with Tamil reading and writing) and he was often criticized for his speech.¹⁷ The teachers attributed his poor academic performance and Tamil speech to a bad home environment: his mother had gone to work as a housemaid in the Gulf States, and while she was gone, his father, a heavy drinker, had taken up with another woman (he stayed with his grandmother).¹⁸ One Up-country Hindu teacher told me he was from a low-caste background. When I pointed out that Michael was Christian, she explained that many Christians are converts from low castes. I draw on McDermott and Tylbor (1995) to discuss how the students and teachers subtly worked together to incorporate the weaker students into classroom routines.

"I Can't Hear Anything You Say"

On the afternoon in question, the English teacher, an Up-country Hindu woman named Mrs. Devi, started going over the practice O-level English exam. Michael was sitting in the back row of the classroom. Devan, an Up-country Tamil Hindu boy, was sitting to his right, and Veena, an Up-country Tamil Hindu girl who code-switched with Sinhala, was sitting across the aisle to his left. I was at a desk behind the students. Mrs. Devi asked the students to redo one of the exam

questions in their notebooks. The question asked students to write sentences about particular occupations that followed the example of an air hostess named Mala.¹⁹ Mrs. Devi wrote the example on the board and then read out the instructions on the exam paper in English.²⁰ She then repeated the instructions in Tamil (the English is in italics):

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Mrs. Devi (To class): <i>Write a description of one of the following. Follow the example given.</i> | <i>Write a description of one of the following. Follow the example given.</i> |
| ida paarttu ida ezhuda sonneen. | Look at this and write, [I] said. |
| 2. Michael (to Mrs. Devi): niinga sonnadu onnume keekkalla. | I can't hear anything you (honorific) say. |
| 3. Mrs. Devi (to Michael): appoo, munnukku irukka veNDiyadu daanee? | Then, you could have sat up front, right? |
| 4. Devan: ooTTai paanaikku eppaDi viLangam? (Mrs. Devi comes to the back of the classroom and writes down an example English sentence in Michael's notebook.) | How can a pot with holes understand? |
| 5. Michael (to Mrs. Devi): ippa daanee <i>Tiichar</i> viLangadu. (Mrs. Devi returns to the front.) | Now I understand [it], <i>Teacher</i> . |
| 6. Michael (to Devan and Veena): ezhudittu koppiya taa. onnumee viLangalla. | Give me your notebook after you complete [the assignment].
I didn't understand a thing. |

In line 2 Michael complains to Mrs. Devi that he cannot hear her instructions. While it is unlikely Michael ever had a chance to come up front (there was no room for him there), Mrs. Devi seemingly legitimizes his complaint by coming back to write an example sentence in his notebook. Michael feigns understanding of the material (line 5), likely to get her to go away. Thus, despite his request, Michael did not actually want one-on-one instruction. He may have made the initial statement to show her that he was trying to understand the review exercise instead of being disruptive (he had been lightly scolded for singing Tamil songs a few minutes before). He also could have made this statement for the sake of his classmates—to see if they, too, were having trouble with the exercise, to solicit their help, or simply to show he was participating in the group activity.

R. P. McDermott and Henry Tylbor (1995) discuss a turn-taking reading activity in a US school in which a girl named Rosa (who is understood as not being a good reader) routinely passes on her turn. When she actually demands a turn to read in one instance, their analysis indicates that she was actually arranging to be skipped over while nonetheless being part of the group. They observe that this incident demonstrates how the students in the classroom work together to "construct a consensus (that we are all learning how to read) while allowing, ignoring, and hiding important exceptions—namely, that some of us are here only to not get caught not knowing how to read" (1995, 224). They argue that Rosa's "duplicitous" complaints that her turn was skipped represent an "institutionalized lie, a delicate way to avoid a confrontation with a smart-dumb contrast set, that too has to be organized across persons" (228).

In contrast to Rosa's case, the students and teachers in the preceding interaction did not work especially hard to maintain the "institutionalized lie" that Michael could learn, but rather they colluded to incorporate Michael into the classroom activity (McDermott and Tylbor 1995). The very fact that Michael routinely sat in the back presupposed his inability to learn. Mrs. Devi appears to try to help Michael, but she is rather quick to leave after he feigns understanding. Devan, himself a borderline student, points to Michael's academic inadequacy by calling him a "pot with holes" in line 4, but his teasing can be read as inclusive (they were close friends and regularly teased each other). After Mrs. Devi returns to the front of the classroom (and Michael admits he did not understand anything), Devan and Veena (a fairly strong student) incorporate Michael in their efforts to complete the assignment. They both lean over to inspect his notebook, working to decipher what the teacher wrote. Michael ultimately copied the assignment from Devan (who consulted Veena), a common practice at Hindu College that enabled the weaker students to turn in completed assignments.²¹

Even though the students widely differed from one another in terms of their academic aptitudes, whether in the classroom or standing around at the Ganesh temple before their exams, they maintained the appearance of being united in a common effort. When I later spoke to Mrs. Devi about Michael, she told me that he had no chance of passing English. She said that students like him do not come to school to learn, but to get a break from their difficult home lives. By gesturing to help him in this and other instances, she allowed Michael to feel a sense of participation. She also fulfilled her duty to teach all the students in the class. The reality that Mrs. Devi and the students worked together to suspend was not that some students were incapable of learning (this was obvious). Rather, it was that their disparate academic performances as ultimately measured on the O-level exam would set each of them on distinct life trajectories (see *After the O-Level Exam*).

There are significant continuities in the way the Hindu College students created interactional spaces in their peer groups across other spheres of practice. In school the students' speech and behavior was monitored by teachers, principals, and their peers. In public spaces, however, it was potentially monitored by both known and unknown others (e.g., youth, relatives, bystanders, police, and army).

Nonschool Settings

Hindu College is located on a bustling Kandy street. Just north of the school are a large mosque, a movie theater, the Ganesh temple, a Sinhala-medium Buddhist national school, and a police station. There are Sinhala-, Muslim-, and Tamil-owned shops, tuition centers, internet cafes, and street vendors selling newspapers, electronics, toys, belts, bed sheets, undergarments, and so on. The area is highly multilingual, but Sinhala is the predominant language (see Figure 5.1).²²

During this tense time in the conflict, Sri Lankans were careful about their conduct in public spaces such as the street or a bus. In contrast to places like Tamil Nadu, India, where people chat with their friends and relatives on the bus, Sri Lankans, and particularly ethnic minorities, refrained from unnecessary talk.



FIGURE 5.1 Downtown Kandy

A senior colleague from the United States who had done research on Sri Lanka for two decades explained that the silence on buses was a product of Sri Lankans' fear of public accountability for their words and actions, which was particularly pronounced during the last phase of the war (see chapter 6).

I had not heard about any Hindu College students encountering trouble with security personnel, but ten years before a grade 11 girl's mother who was from Batticaloa had been imprisoned for months on the basis of suspected LTTE involvement. The girls' and boys' visible identities as government school students gave them some public anonymity. Their Tamil identities were not evident from their uniforms unless people were familiar with the colors of specific schools. However, many Hindu girls (and some Catholics) wore small black bindis (*poTTu*), which identified them as Tamils.²³ Girls and boys could also be spotted as Tamil Hindus if they had red or yellow dots on their foreheads from attending pujas. At home and on weekends most girls wore a *shalwar kameez* (a long tunic with pants and a scarf), which in Sri Lanka is mostly associated with Tamils and Muslims. The boys' typical dress of T-shirts or button-down shirts and jeans did not reveal their ethnic identities.

Students' Tamil ethnicity was also evident from their Tamil speech, or from speaking Sinhala with a recognizable Tamil accent (Daniel 1996). I witnessed several conversations among Tamil adults and youth that suggested their awareness of the need to avoid the conspicuous use of Tamil in Kandy's public spaces. I once overheard a group of Up-country Tamil teachers at Girls' College criticizing a Jaffna teacher for speaking Tamil loudly in the center of town. When I shared this story with a male Up-country Tamil colleague named Vijay, he noted, "Growing up in the Up-country, you're used to the majority being Sinhala, so you don't speak Tamil loudly."

In addition to ethnicity, gender and class also shaped the way the girls and boys moved around the city. In Kandy and elsewhere in Sri Lanka, girls were not to needlessly spend time outside the home (see Bremner 2005). This constraint is also related to the need for women to protect their reputations before marriage. Wealthier Kandy girls—who attended national, government-assisted, or international schools—sometimes lived close enough to school to walk home. Other times they commuted by hired autorickshaw or were driven by a family member. Hindu College girls, however, had little choice but to take the bus or walk, often alone. These girls usually went directly home after school, but sometimes they ran an errand or went to tuition class, if they could afford it. Teachers and parents told me that the biggest impediment to a girl's academic success was a romantic relationship with an older boy. They felt that the chances of girls forming such relationships were reduced if they went home immediately after school.

In contrast, boys were quite free to walk around after school. Those who attended large schools often spent a lot of time at shops that sold sodas, Nescafé, and “short eats” (snacks, often fried). With little money, Hindu College boys spent their time moving around the city in groups, chatting in alleys, or huddling together at the bus station. They also occasionally went to nearby internet cafes. Those who attended private tuition classes, like the high-achieving student Vinod, spent less time with their Hindu College peers.

My gender shaped the extent to which I was able to observe the students outside school. Several of the girls invited me to their homes or to run errands with them. The boys were less comfortable walking around Kandy with me, so I used another method with them. I asked Michael and Devan to carry my digital recorder (worn suspended from their necks) to capture their speech around the city. I returned the favor by allowing them to record Tamil songs, which I burned onto CDs and gave to them. When analyzing this data, I kept in mind that they only shared with me what they wanted me to hear (they knew how to delete files).

The Girls

A group of Hindu College girls would walk together to the Kandy bus station (Goodshed) after school got out at 1:45 p.m. (see Figure 5.2). Their interactional strategies allowed them to chat outside the earshot of others. The city was highly congested at this time, traffic was at a near standstill, and sidewalks were crowded with shoppers, commuters, and students. They walked very close together and whispered in each other's ears in Tamil. When people passed close to them on narrower pathways, they quickly fell silent. I bent down and listened when they spoke to me, but I avoided initiating conversation.

It was difficult to know the extent to which the girls consciously thought about their interactional practices. One incident, however, clearly demonstrates their awareness of proper behavior on the bus. I took a bus home one day with a grade 11 Up-country Hindu girl named Aisha and her grade 1 sister. They lived in a lower-class housing block in an otherwise quite wealthy neighborhood west of the city center (Anniwatta). Sitting on the crowded bus waiting for it to depart, the little girl took out her notebook and asked me loudly, in Tamil, to look at her drawing. Aisha slapped her sister hard on the leg. She then crouched down and, speaking right into her ear, instructed her not to shout on the bus (“bus-la kattaadee”). In this instance, it was unclear to me whether Aisha had a problem with her shouting or shouting in Tamil.²⁴

Most of the girls claimed to know Sinhala, but one Up-country Hindu girl named Saavi, who had just moved from a tea plantation in Nuwara Eliya, said



FIGURE 5.2 Kandy Goodshed Bus Station

she struggled with it. It was her goal, she said, to pass her O levels and improve her Sinhala and English so she could better “manage” in Kandy and Colombo. Despite their stated proficiency in the language, I rarely heard the other girls speak Sinhala outside of brief interactions with street vendors or shopkeepers. Several girls at Hindu College and other schools told me that you need to speak Sinhala to buy a bus ticket, but I rarely observed the girls using any Sinhala on the bus. As was typical practice, they bought their tickets from the conductor by naming the stop (sometimes a Sinhala word) and holding up their fingers to indicate the quantity. The fact that they imagined Sinhala being spoken when it was not suggests that buses were seen as a kind of default Sinhala-speaking public space. I visited the homes of four girls in the class (including Saavi and Aisha), who all lived in neighborhoods outside the city center, and witnessed them mainly speaking Tamil with their family members and neighbors (also Tamils). However, as I have discussed, the girls from Bogambara and other multiethnic neighborhoods probably used Sinhala more widely.²⁵

The girls generally seemed more comfortable in Tamil- and Muslim-owned shops than in Sinhala-owned shops. On one occasion, I went with Aisha and another Tamil Hindu girl into a small gift shop down the street from Hindu College, which was owned by an elderly Muslim man. Aisha wanted to buy a birthday gift for her math teacher. As they browsed for gifts, the girls freely chatted with the shopkeeper in Tamil about me and their upcoming O-level exams.

When I asked Aisha why she and the shopkeeper had been so friendly with one another (I thought they had known each other), she explained that it was because he was Muslim. Kausalya noted that she was referring to the intimate affect that is typical of the way Muslim proprietors talk to their customers. On another occasion, a group of eight Hindu College girls (including Aisha) asked me to buy them soy ice cream at a Sinhala-owned shop. While I ordered the ice cream, they sat on the chairs that ran along the perimeter of the shop, silently watching Sinhala schoolchildren. They ate their ice cream quickly as they whispered to one another in Tamil (it was inaudible to me). The girls may have been uncomfortable because of the presence of the Sinhala clerks and students. However, I think they also found it to be awkward to be seen by other students in the company of a white foreigner.

One day Aisha invited me to accompany her to the Kandy Post Office to apply for her national ID card, which she needed for her O-level exam. Her two friends and I watched as she went up to the window and submitted her application form, which she had filled out in Tamil (the forms were bilingual). Although she did not seem to have any difficulty talking to the Sinhala postal worker, she said she was relieved when the interaction was over. Aisha was likely nervous because she was not used to speaking Sinhala in official or institutional contexts.

Like their interactions in the classroom, the girls created their own interactional spaces while walking around Kandy, spaces to which others were not privy. This practice is an example of what Gal (2002) discusses as the recalibration of the public/private distinction because the students created more private spaces within arguably public spaces (a classroom or the street). Their almost exclusive use of Tamil in their conversations with one another contrasted with the Sinhala-dominant landscape. A recording that Michael and Devan made for me gives a vivid sense of peer interactions in Kandy, as well as their ingrained awareness that they might be overheard.

The Boys

The boys had their own strategies to create more private interactional spaces in public. While the girls rarely touched one another, the boys usually walked down the street with their arms around each other's shoulders, a common practice among South Asian men. This practice enabled them to talk to one another without others easily overhearing them. But the boys were not always controlled in their behavior on the road; they occasionally shouted and acted unruly.

I decided to give my recorder to Michael and Devan (the Up-country Hindu boy who teased Michael in the classroom interaction) because they were enthusiastic about my project. Michael, who was strong in Sinhala (he had lived in

Bogambara and other slum areas), spoke to me only in Tamil. Devan was one of the few students to try to speak to me in English. He would approach me every morning and ask, "How are you, Madam?" He proudly told me he had learned English from his father, who worked as a driver in Jordan. He said his Sinhala was not very good because he lived in Digana, a Tamil-majority town. Although Devan was just as thin and young looking as the other boys, he had a mature and confident demeanor.

When I first handed Devan and Michael my recorder, I did not give them any instructions other than to record their speech outside school. The recordings let me hear the boys chatting in Tamil as they went about their activities. From the background noise Kausalya and I could guess their location at any given time. In addition to Kausalya and Uma, Vijay, my male Up-country Tamil colleague, helped me with the translation and analysis. He was highly familiar with the boys' language since he lived in Kandy for years and is only about eight years older.

One recording was particularly indicative of their awareness of their behavior in public. In that recording, Michael, Devan, and Jayaraman (an Up-country Hindu) leave Hindu College at the end of the school day. As they step out onto the sidewalk, Jayaraman loudly teases Devan about contacting a classmate named Priyanka (the boys' English is in italics):

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Devan: nii peesuRadu keekku. | [I] can hear what you say. |
| 2. Jayaraman: aa, SMS paNNiDuvan. yaarukku? | Ah, I'll <i>text</i> [her].
To who? |
| 3. Michael: " <i>Hello</i> naa(n) priyanka kadakkiReen."
"ah priyanka eppaDi irukkiinga priyanka?" | " <i>Hello</i> , this is Priyanka speaking."
"Ah, Priyanka, how are you Priyanka?" |
| 4. Devan: michael enga Daa poonnaa? | Michael, where did you go, bro? |
| 5. Michael: Deey koDaya taa. unga peer ennaa ooy? | Hey, give me the umbrella.
What's your name, man? |
| 6. Jayaraman: innikki pooy anda puLLakki call paNNu Devan. Deey sarinu sollu Daa appa daa(n) viDuvee(n). | Go today and call that girl today, Devan.
Hey, say "okay" bro and only then I will leave it. |
| 7. Devan: Deey <i>rooD</i> -ila pooRa neeroo(m) sattaama poonga Daa. manusa maadiri poonga Daa. | Hey, when you go on the <i>road</i> , go without shouting, bro.
Walk like a human being, bro. |

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 8. Michael: irundaappula <i>luv</i>
paNNuRiinga. | Suddenly you fall in <i>love</i> . |
| irundaappula pooRiinga, aiyoo. | Suddenly you leave, oh my. |
| Deey inda maadiri veela ceyyaadiinga. | Hey, don't do this kind of work. |
| inimee sari tirundi vaazhunga. | From now on be a good person. |
| 9. Devan: naanga ella(m) eppaDi
pazhahuRoo. | Look at how we all get along. |
| 10. Michael: ennu sollavaa? | Will you tell [me]? |
| ennu sollavaa? | Will you tell [me]? |
| 11. Devan: michael vaa poovoo. | Michael, let's go. |

While Devan may have scolded Jayaraman and Michael in line 7 to get them to stop teasing him, his comment demonstrates an awareness of proper etiquette on the road. When Michael starts teasing Devan, Devan points out their playful discord (line 9).

A few minutes later, Michael, Devan, and presumably Jayaraman arrive at the Kandy bus station, as apparent from the sound of the bus conductors yelling out destinations.²⁶ As they stand in the highly crowded area, they start talking about a nearby two-story building. After Michael mentions that a tuition class is held there, Devan mentions a "lovers" place:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 12. Michael: kaDaisi <i>halt</i> -ila class enga
irukku? | At the last <i>bus stop</i> , where's the [tuition]
class? |
| 13. Devan: meela kiizha kiizhayaa? | Up, down, is it down? |
| meela <i>luvars</i> nikkkiRadukku iDam
senju vachchurukkaangaLaam. | Upstairs they have a <i>lovers'</i> place. |
| 14. Michael: <i>Luvar</i> nikkiRa iDamaa? | A <i>lovers'</i> place? |
| <i>Luv</i> paNNuRatunaa, meela pooy <i>luv</i>
paNNaLaa(m). | If you want to <i>love</i> , you can go upstairs
and <i>love</i> . |
| 15. Devan: nii annikku varalla danee. | You didn't come on that day. |
| appa meela poonnee(n). | I went up there then. |

The place that Devan refers to is an unoccupied and relatively unmonitored space in the building where boys and girls can go to be alone. When Michael positively responds to Devan's comment about the lover's place (line 14), Devan takes it a

step further by saying he had gone there the other day. This could be true, but, as Vijay noted with a smile, he was probably just posturing to his friends—showing off his experience with girls and his knowledge of the urban environment. The disciplining of his friends for shouting in line 7 could also be interpreted as a way of performing his knowledge of the city.

The boys continued to talk for several more minutes. After a long conversation about problems related to putting credit on their mobile phones, Michael started to tease Devan about his seeming prowess with girls, calling him a *maa-maa* (pimp), or someone who sets up boys and girls:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 16. Michael: <i>namma skuul-ila ivaru daa(n) maamaa.</i> | At <i>school</i> he only is the pimp. |
| 17. Jayaraman: <i>yaarukku?</i> | To who? |
| 18. Michael: <i>ellarukku(m). skuul-akkee ivaru daa(n) maamaa. ayayyoo, ellaarukkum munnukku solliTTeenoo?</i> | For all.
For the whole <i>school</i> he's the pimp.
Oh my, did I say this in front of everybody? |
| 19. Devan: <i>tuNDukku maamaa daa(n).</i> | [I'm a] pimp to your thing (girlfriend) too. |
| 20. Michael: <i>Very good machchaa(n).</i> | <i>Very good</i> buddy. |
| 21. Devan: <i>Public-ila adellaa(m) solla kuuDaadu.</i> | Don't say that in <i>public</i> and all. |
| 22. Jayaraman: <i>naa(n) pooReen Daa, mazha varudu.</i> | I'm going, bro, it's raining. |
| 23. Michael: <i>naanu(m) pooree(n). neettu maadiri chaarT'Tar-aaha eLaadu.</i> | I'm also going.
We don't want <i>trouble</i> like yesterday. |
| 24. Devan: <i>michael enga Daa pooRa?</i> | Michael, where are you going, bro? |
| 25. Michael: <i>bogambara.</i> | Bogambara. |
| 26. Devan: <i>innikki unga motorbike illayaa?</i> | You don't have your motorbike today? |
| 27. Michael: <i>pattu ruuvaa taa.</i> | Give me ten rupees. |
| 28. Devan: <i>teevai illa. vachchukka.</i> | No need.
Keep it. |
| 29. Michael: <i>nii vaa, nii vaa.</i> | You come, you come. |
| 30. Devan: <i>sari, kaiya eDu.</i> | Okay, take your hand off. |

After Michael called Devan a pimp for the second time in line 18, Michael shows his awareness of the fact that there are others around him by stating, "Oh my, did I say this in front of everybody?" Devan quickly responds to Michael's statement by saying he is a pimp to Michael's girlfriend (line 19). Then, however, he resumes the role of the responsible boy by saying, "Don't say that in public and all" (line 21). His use of the English term "public" may refer to the particular group at the bus station or an abstract idea of a public space. Like most Sri Lankans, they were aware that seeming bystanders, or adventitious participants, could be monitoring them (Goffman 1979). But their playful and mischievous banter had more weight if there was an imagined audience, whether the crowd at the bus stand or even the recorder. It is possible that they enjoyed the limited performativity of their talk, even at the same time that they recognized its precarity. The boys decided to go their separate ways so they did not get caught in the rain like the day before. As they prepare to go, Devan tells Michael, "Take your hand off" (line 30). Vijay noted with a smile that Michael probably had his arm around Devan's neck for the entire conversation.

What is unique about the above conversation is that the boys' checking of their own behavior in public played a role in their interactional dynamics. In several different parts of the conversation Devan placed himself in the responsible (and morally superior) position by disciplining his friends for their behavior. He displayed a similar stance when he called Michael a "pot with holes" in the classroom interaction quoted earlier. By teasing his friends, he may have been attempting to draw attention away from his own weaknesses (in his knowledge of Kandy or academic performance). In this conversation, the boys created their own interactional space, but it was in close dialogue with their physical environment and the participant framework, including the possibility that others could be monitoring them.

In school and out, the Hindu College youth employed strategies to insulate their talk from unrated participants. However, it would be incorrect to assume that peer-group interactions are free from constraints, since student interactions with peers are subject to their own norms of conduct, which can be just as inhibiting as adult-student interactions (see Goodwin 2006; Mendoza-Denton 2008). But Hindu College students' peer groups helped them manage some of the demands of school and nonschool settings. In school, student-student and teacher-student interactions allowed a sense of shared participation despite their different academic abilities. In public spaces, their peer groups, as well as their visible identity as government school students, gave them some sense of security and camaraderie. The influence of school-based peer groups, however, was certainly more significant for the boys because the girls were discouraged from spending

time away from home. This discussion has shown that rather than focusing on the distinction between interactions that happen inside and outside school, it is also important to consider how individuals create their own interactional spaces in relation to the actual or potential gaze of others (Gal 2002; Goffman 1979; Wortham 2012).

As related to their socioeconomic level, the spaces where Hindu College girls and boys interacted were invariably public (e.g., sidewalks, alleys, and the bus station). In their linguistic interactions with peers they created a kind of Tamil cocoon around themselves that insulated them from Sinhala-dominant public space. A recording that Devan made for me further illustrates how youth managed their status as lower-class ethnic minorities by showing how he moved through Kandy and his hometown without the company and protection of his peers.

Devan's Journey Home

Devan's hour-long recording begins when he is leaving Hindu College with Michael at the end of the school day. They chat briefly before separating. After nothing but static for a few minutes the bus conductor yells, "Digana, Digana, Digana" in a nasal voice. Devan boards the bus, as evident from the sound of his feet on the metal steps. For the next forty minutes, the time it takes to get from Kandy to Digana in afternoon traffic, there are no audible voices on the recording. The only sounds are static and road noise. Next, it is possible to hear the sound of Devan's feet on the ground as he gets off the bus and starts walking. As he enters a shop near the bus stand, a number of clerks are talking to customers in Sinhala. He then asks a clerk in Tamil for a small packet of hair gel (their English is in italics):

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Devan: <i>Uncle</i> , anju ruva <i>gel</i> irukku daanee? | <i>Uncle</i> , there's a five-rupee <i>gel</i> , right? |
| 2. Clerk: anju ruva <i>gel</i> -aa? | The five-rupee <i>gel</i> ? |
| 3. Devan: peer ella(m) teriyaadu. <i>Gold color</i> onDu. "C" enDu. | I don't know the name and all. The <i>gold</i> one. [It starts] with a "c." |
| 4. Clerk: hmm . . . | Hmm . . . |

Large shops often employ Sinhala- and Tamil-speaking clerks to attract the maximum number of customers. In this interaction, Devan sought out a Tamil-speaking clerk, but he seemed to have trouble buying the hair gel.

After leaving the shop, Devan runs into two Tamil boys, who Kausalya guessed had finished their O levels a few years before. It is possible to hear boy A ask boy B for money. When boy B refuses, boy A replies that he is broke because he spent all his money on a prostitute (he uses the word *saamaan*, which means “thing”). Boy A then addresses Devan:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 5. Boy A: nii <i>kiLaasu</i> -kku poonniyoo?
innorukkaa O level seyyaniyoo? | Did you go to <i>class</i> ?
Are you doing O levels for the second time? |
| 6. Devan: innorukkaa vaa?
ippa daa(n) seyyuRee(n). | Another time?
I'm just doing it now only. |
| 7. Boy A: <i>kiLaasu</i> -kku poonniyoo? | Did you go to <i>class</i> ? |
| 8. Devan: illa, tuNDu paakka
poonnee(n). | No, I went to see a thing (girlfriend). |
| 9. Boy A (to Boy B): deey keeTTiyaa?
punda mahee(n). | Hey, did you hear [that]?
Son of a bitch. |
| 10. Devan (to Boy A): sari, machchaa(n).
pooyiTTu vaaree(n). | Okay, buddy.
I go and come. |
| 11. Boy A (to Devan): (unclear) | (unclear) |
| 12. Devan: nii enda <i>skuul</i> -kku poonna? | Which <i>school</i> did you go to? |
| 13. Boy A: asoka.
asokavila terinjavanga yaaru
irukkaangaLaa? | Asoka.
Is there anybody you know at Asoka? |
| 14. Devan: kupeendiran.
sari, appa naa(n) pooyiTTu varaTTaa? | Kupeendiran (a boy's name).
Okay, should I go and come? |
| 15. Boy A: <i>Okay</i> , Daa. | <i>Okay</i> , bro. |

As evident from his sarcastic response (line 8), Devan seemed annoyed by boy A's questions, particularly the presumption that he was repeating O levels. Devan tries to carefully get out of the conversation in line 10, but he does not succeed until line 15. Kausalya noted that it was common for boys like Devan to have to deal with rough older boys in their neighborhoods.

The recorder stopped shortly after Devan walked away from the boys. On a different day, he recorded a Tamil conversation with his mother and older brother in his home, in which he discussed Devan's upcoming exams, as well as how his father's absence had changed their family dynamics.²⁷ As is evident here, over his long commute from Hindu College to Digana, Devan spoke only in

Tamil with Tamils—his classmates, the shopkeeper, and the boys in his neighborhood. When I first played this recording to Kausalya in her home, she listened with particular interest. When it finished she stood up from her chair and danced around the room in excitement. She told me with a smile that it confirmed her long suspicion that Tamil youth who are weak in Sinhala move through Kandy in a way that is limited to Tamil-speaking networks and contacts.²⁸ Kausalya's interpretation of this recording, however, was influenced by her own experience. She is highly proficient in English but, like Devan, struggled with her spoken and written Sinhala. She often complained of the difficulties she faced in daily life because of this, from moving around Kandy (she sought out Tamil-speaking autorickshaw drivers), to attending teacher training workshops, to filling out government documents.

Also striking in Devan's recording was the forty minutes of near silence on his bus ride from Kandy to Digana. It is not surprising that Devan did not talk to anyone on the bus as he likely did not know any of the passengers. He was able to buy the ticket without speaking as he would have known the conductor. However, it is interesting that the recorder did not pick up any additional voices, in what would have been a crowded bus. While the content of the recorder is only a very partial account of what actually occurred on the bus, those forty minutes of static and road noise are representative of the atmosphere on buses I witnessed at that time.

Although Devan took on a confident stance with his Hindu College peers and with me, this recording gives a different sense of his everyday life. One of the reasons Kausalya found this recording so striking is because it gives a diagrammatic sense (an indexical icon) of the isolation and loneliness that many lower-class Up-country Tamil youth experienced in public spaces, particularly if they were weak in Sinhala.²⁹ The Hindu College students not only built ethnolinguistic cocoons around themselves in their peer groups, but also when they traveled alone.

Hindu College students' speech and behavior was subject to different kinds of monitoring inside and outside school and the reinforcing of ethnicity. In school the students' Tamil ethnicities were imposed upon them through national and local education policies and practices. Outside school, the students found ways to manage their identities as lower-class Tamils in relation to Sinhala-majority public space. Here I have looked at peer interaction not only in the context of youth activity, but in relation to the gaze of others. The Hindu College students created different kinds of interactional spaces situationally, whether in their peer groups or alone. While in-school participant roles were more fluid (teachers moved seamlessly between the roles of unrati- and

ratified hearers), in public space the students self-monitored their Tamil speech and behavior in relation to a Sinhala-majority public. The students did not necessarily think their words or actions would get them arrested, but they were acutely and intuitively aware that their speech marked them as Tamil minorities, whose presence could be construed as problematic (see chapter 6). Their lower-class status, lack of full proficiency in Sinhala, and gender only increased their sense of insecurity. Girls faced a complex position: they were a little less at risk from security personnel, but highly concerned about gendered norms of propriety. I conclude here by considering the students' trajectories after completing the O-level exams, as well as how they saw themselves in relation to the notion of a cosmopolitan Kandy.

After the O-Level Exam

The Hindu College students' everyday experiences as Tamil minority youth were partially structured by their role as government school students. As I realized after I wished them good luck at the Ganesh temple, their lives were about to drastically change. In April 2008, their O-level results were released on a government website. In the next few weeks the Hindu College youth were confronted with the consequences of their academic performance as well as the dismantling of their school-based peer groups.

Forty-five percent of the Hindu College class passed the exam, which was considered a good result. The students came into the school to discuss their results with Mr. R. Vinod, the top student, got A's in all his subjects and was awarded a scholarship to do A levels at a prestigious Kandy private school for boys. Four of the girls, who received A's and B's, gained admission to Girls' College in arts. Several other boys and girls won seats in other Kandy schools, some private, some government assisted, and some provincial. Veena, who had worked on the English assignment with Michael and Devan, got admitted to a mixed school, but her mother did not allow her to attend because she was afraid she would get into trouble with boys. Michael seemed particularly devastated over his results.

On a day I happened to be at the school, Michael arrived with his mother, who had recently returned from the Middle East. They went into Mr. R.'s office to get his results (he had not checked online). I stood in the hallway outside with the four girls admitted to Girls' College, who were helping a teacher with a project. After learning from Mr. R. that he had failed all his subjects, Michael walked out in tears, ignoring me and the girls. He walked down the steps of the

school and crossed the road; his mother left separately. He stood on the opposite side of the busy street watching us. One of the girls who had been particularly close to him called out to him to come back, but he nodded in refusal. With tears in her eyes, the girl said, "Paavam (poor) Michael."³⁰ Michael stood there for another ten minutes before slipping away into the crowd. Devan (as well as Jayaraman) had narrowly failed the exam, but he passed English.

While we cannot absolutely correlate their success inside and outside school, it is clear that students who passed the O-level exam would have an easier path than those who did not. The students who transitioned to other schools soon acclimated to new principals, teachers, and peers. The students who failed studied to take the exam over, applied for job-training programs, or started low-level jobs. Some still visited Hindu College, but they largely lost the support of their peers and teachers, which was perhaps more valuable to them than any academic knowledge. The students who went on to A levels eventually lost these support structures as well, but that loss occurred when they were a few years older and less vulnerable.

The Hindu College students who went on to A levels shared some of the same future goals as the Girls' College students. They aimed to get government jobs as teachers or administrators or even enter the private sector. As I found out when I returned to Kandy in 2011, Vinod finished his A levels and had gotten a second interview at a major Sri Lankan bank. The four girls who did their A levels at Girls' College were all in the process of applying for a government-funded teacher-training program. The students who failed O levels were struggling to earn a living in Sri Lanka or abroad. Saavi, who had moved from Nuwara Eliya, was working in a garment factory in Colombo, dyeing fabric. Jayaraman went to Iraq with his father, who had gotten a job at a health facility on a US Army base. Despite the safety risks that the Muslim science teacher had warned him about, he said he was looking forward to continuing his education and improving his English. Devan had gone to Jordan with his father (presumably to work) but had recently returned to Kandy. Michael was working at a small electronics shop near Hindu College. I called him on his mobile phone, but he ran out of credit and I did not hear from him again.

Like the Girls' College students, the Hindu College students were well aware of the importance of knowing Sinhala and English to be comfortable and successful in Kandy. While their personal trajectories varied, as a result of their lack of financial resources and social networks, they did not share the vision of a cosmopolitan Kandy with their Girls' College peers. As they faced difficulties just to get through their education, find jobs, and live their everyday lives, the multilingual and multiethnic city was not a source of inspiration, but something they had

to adapt to in order to survive. The next chapter moves away from Hindu College and Girls' College to delve further into the performativity of speaking Tamil in Kandy's public spaces and in the nearby capital city of Colombo. I demonstrate how Tamil interactional practices (by Tamils, Muslims, and Sinhalas) reflect and produce power relations between the Sinhala majority and Tamil-speaking minorities.

6

TAMIL SPEECH AND ETHNIC CONFLICT
IN PUBLIC SPACES

In December 2007, I went shopping in Borella, Colombo, with a sixteen-year-old Tamil Christian girl, the daughter of the housekeeper at my guest house. We went into a small gift shop to buy a present for her friend. She examined a music box and a colorful bouquet of plastic flowers. She spoke in soft Tamil and I replied in English. When she got a call on her mobile phone, she ducked out of the shop to answer it. As soon as she left, the Sinhala shopkeeper turned to me. He said in English that he feels nervous when people speak Tamil because they may be planning a bombing. The shopkeeper clearly associated my young friend's speech with her Tamil identity, which, in turn, he connected to the threat of a Liberation Tigers of Tami Eelam (LTTE) attack.

We have seen how ideological associations between language and ethnic identity are deeply embedded in institutional and noninstitutional practices in Sri Lanka. The nation's education reforms purported to promote a multiethnic and united country, but local policies and practices in schools only reinforced language-based models of ethnic difference. The preceding vignette illustrates how the implications of being a Tamil speaker were perhaps the most deeply felt in public places like shops, buses, and in the street. As is evident in the Sinhala clerk's comment, the Tamil language (particularly speech) is robustly associated with the Tamil people, who at this tense moment in the conflict were linked to the LTTE and acts of terrorism. This chapter turns to the performative force of speaking Tamil (by Tamils, Muslims, and Sinhalas) in Sinhala-majority public spaces in Kandy and the nearby capital city of Colombo. Drawing on seminal work in linguistic anthropology that demonstrates how everyday linguistic interactions in multilingual contexts are inexorably tied to power relations (Hill 2008; Urciuoli 1991, 1996; Woolard 2016), I argue that interactional patterns in public reinforce ethnic divisions and power inequalities between the Sinhala majority and Tamil-speaking minorities.

Just 117 kilometers southwest of Kandy, Colombo is the industrial, commercial, and administrative center of Sri Lanka. People in Kandy regularly go to Colombo to visit friends, shop, seek work opportunities, take licensing exams, apply for passports, and so on. Some of the youth in my study moved to Colombo after completing their O or A levels for employment or job-training programs. In the last three decades the city has been the target of frequent LTTE-linked suicide, bus, and roadside bombings.¹ Colombo has also been the site of numerous anti-Tamil riots, including 1983's "Black July," which started in Borella, at the central cemetery of Kanatte (Tambiah 1986). From 2006 to 2009, there were checkpoints, road closures, and armed soldiers on almost every street corner (Thiranagama 2011). Home to a large population of Tamil-speaking minorities, Colombo's interethnic relations were particularly tense.² Kandy, as I argue in this book, has a separate regional identity that is a product of its specific history, but social dynamics there were nevertheless related to and influenced by those in Colombo.

I begin by analyzing Ernest MacIntyre's (2006) play, *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*, set in Colombo during the 1983 riots, to investigate the notion that Tamil identities are produced through language. Building on the concept of "tactics of anticipation" (Jeganathan 1998, 2002), I look at the centrality of language—namely the use of Sinhala and the avoidance of Tamil—in the strategies Tamils employed to conceal or mitigate their ethnic identity at checkpoints and on the street. In the second part of the chapter, I further analyze the performativity of speaking Tamil by looking at Tamil-as-a-second-language (TSL) practices at training programs for Sinhala administrators and police officers, as well as at a peacebuilding NGO that promotes trilingual communication. I show that while spheres of practice can open up for Sinhalas to speak Tamil within the confines of TSL classes, on the street their use of Tamil was fraught because of its ideological association with Tamil ethnic identity and because it was perceived as a threat to the dominance of Sinhala. When Sinhala members of the NGO spoke Tamil, they used a mocking variety that reinforced negative stereotypes about Tamil people (Hill 1995, 2008). Integrating these diverse data will reveal how ideologies and practices around speaking Tamil reflect and produce ethnic divisions and power inequalities in society at large.

As I mentioned earlier, my status as a white American female significantly impacted what I was able to observe. At checkpoints and in various urban locales, my presence affected how my research informants behaved and also how others treated them. In addition, my proficiency in Tamil created unique interactional dynamics. I avoided speaking Tamil with my Tamil and Muslim informants in public—preferring to speak English, Sinhala, or not speak at all—since I wanted to avoid drawing negative attention to them (see chapter 5). Conversely, Sinhalas

who were studying TSL were often enthusiastic to try out their spoken Tamil with me. Because I fell outside their ethnic milieu, they could speak with me and not face the implications that ensued from speaking Tamil with a Tamil or a Muslim (though these interactions could still be strained).

Language and Tamilness in *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*

Rasanayagam's Last Riot (2006) was written by the Sri Lankan playwright Ernest MacIntyre, who is a Burgher (Sri Lankans of Dutch or Portuguese ancestry). First performed in Colombo in 1990, the play's action takes place on July 25, 1983. The story revolves around a middle-aged Jaffna Tamil man named Rasanayagam who takes refuge from the Colombo anti-Tamil riots with his Sinhala friend Philip (his former University of Peradeniya roommate), and Philip's Tamil wife, Sita. In a pivotal moment in act 2, Rasanayagam recounts to Philip and Sita how a Sinhala mob outside had forced him to take a linguistic test. In this test, the mob held up a bucket and ordered him to identify it. Rasanayagam employed the linguistic knowledge he had learned from Philip at university to correctly pronounce the Sinhala word for bucket, *baaldiya*, and this way avoided being killed. As MacIntyre (2006) discusses, Tamils tend to mispronounce this word (sometimes as "vaaLiya") because the Tamil word for bucket is *vaaLi*.³

Pradeep Jeganathan, in his analysis, argues that Rasanayagam produces aspects of his self through "tactics of anticipation," which he defines as the repertoire of practices Tamils employ in expectation of a violent incident (e.g., packing a bottle of alcohol when you need to wait out an ethnic riot) (1998, 90). He writes that the pronunciation of the Sinhala word *baaldiya* in the linguistic test is a master tactic of anticipation because it is a strategy Tamils employ to save themselves when confronted by a Sinhala mob.⁴ Rasanayagam is able to avoid being killed, Jeganathan suggests, because he "performs his Tamilness as Sinhalaness" (99). In other words, he is able to psychologically distance his self from his Tamil identity enough to disguise himself as Sinhala. Over the course of the play Rasanayagam continues to use various tactics of anticipation, until in one powerful moment he is finally killed by a Sinhala mob for refusing to say "baaldiya." Jeganathan's analysis is valuable in pointing out the necessity for Tamils to disguise or mitigate their ethnic identities, an idea to which I return in the next section. In order to refine my discussion of the role of language in relation to the ethnic identities, I discuss the play in more detail.

Rasanayagam's Last Riot (2006) can be understood as a nuanced analysis of ethnic and class identity in relation to the social and political shifts that culminated in the 1983 riots (see Kanapathipillai 1990; Silva 2008). The characters Sita

and Rasanayagam juxtapose Colombo Tamils from different classes, regions, and sociolinguistic backgrounds. Sita, along with her husband Philip, is a member of Colombo's westernized English-educated elite. She speaks English as a first language as well as some basic Tamil and Sinhala. MacIntyre (2006) writes in the preface to act 2 that though Rasanayagam received a Western education at the University of Peradeniya, he cannot be considered part of the Anglicized Colombo elite because he was born and raised in Jaffna. He is, moreover, part of a second wave of migrants to Colombo (arriving after independence) who did not fully assimilate, but he speaks Tamil and English, as well as some Sinhala he learned in Kandy and Colombo.

Throughout the play, Sita's and Rasanayagam's relationship to their Tamil identities (mediated by class) is realized through nonlinguistic vocalizations and language. In acts 1 and 2, Sita associates detachment from her Tamil identity—she calls herself a “nominal Tamil” (MacIntyre 2006, 167)—with the fact that she laughs and cries in English. In a discussion about the shift from English to Sinhala and Tamil in higher education, Sita pegs her lack of Tamil knowledge to the uselessness of the English-speaking middle class in the growing ethnicization of the nation (171). While Sita gains an increased awareness of her ethnic identity and concern for Tamil political causes as the ethnic riots intensify at the end of the play, her professed inability to speak Tamil continues to signify her distance from her Tamil identity.

At the end of act 2, Rasanayagam decides to head to a refugee camp rather than remain with Sita and Philip. As he prepares to leave, Sita does not comfort him, but rather presses on about the government's failure to protect Tamil people. Referring to the linguistic tests, she states, “The state is in default of its duties to its Tamil citizens, when it expects them to hide their identity inside a bucket to be able to remain alive!” (MacIntyre 2006, 230). When the Sinhala mob again confronts Rasanayagam with a bucket, he can no longer separate his self from his Tamil identity. In this final encounter, he asserts this identity not by speaking Tamil, but by refusing to say the Sinhala word:

Rasanayagam's chest heaved a big heave,
 And the two policemen thought,
 He was preparing for the password, “BALDIYA” [*sic*].
 At the top of his heave,
 He slowly deflated,
 His head went limp,
 And bowed.
 He didn't,
 He failed,
 To use his knowledge. (234)

While skillfully depicting the complexity of Colombo Tamil identities in relation to class, region of origin, and sociolinguistic practices, MacIntyre's (2006) play also reinforces the ideology that social identities are realized through language—as if the linguistic choices we make (even to say or not say a single word) embody the true self. Sita's failure to speak Tamil expresses her distance from her Tamil identity, but her husband's use of Sinhala substantiates his Sinhala identity. Rasanayagam's ultimate refusal to speak Sinhala represents the undeniability of his Tamil self.

Although MacIntyre's depiction of the 1983 riots is fictionalized, personal accounts reveal that Sinhala mobs used an identical linguistic test to distinguish Tamils from Sinhalas (McNamara 2005; also see Gunadheera 2008; Gunesekera 2005). One of my Up-country Tamil friends said the *baalldiya* test is widely discussed in reference to the riots. There is a very deep history of the use of linguistic tests to identify relative outsiders from insiders in conflict situations (Khan and McNamara 2017; MacIntyre 2006; McNamara 2005). The book of Judges refers to a linguistic test that was employed to distinguish two warring groups who spoke related linguistic varieties (McNamara 2005). The Gileadites used the pronunciation of "shibboleth" to identify and kill Ephraimites (who pronounced it "sibboleth") as they attempted to cross the river Jordan (Judges 12:4–6).⁵

While the linguistic test example is best understood in relation to the terrifying events of July 1983, it is also relevant to Tamils who live in fear of being so identified post-1983 (Ismail 2000; Jeganathan 1998; Kanapathipillai 1990; Thiranagama 2011). Jeganathan writes, "to be a Tamil in southern Lanka after 1983 is to produce one's identity, one's Tamilness, in relation to the anticipation of violence. To live as a Tamil, then, is to learn such a repertoire of tactics" (1998, 100). The tactics of anticipation notion, then, can help explain the linguistic and nonlinguistic semiotic strategies southern Tamils employed to conceal or deflect the effects of their identity at checkpoints and other public domains in relation to potential violence.⁶ As Jeganathan observes, anticipation is a broad practice that is not confined to explicit discourses, but involves "a range of ways of being, both subtle and sharp, muted and strong that are both spoken and unspoken, explicit and implicit" (1997, 185).

Tamilness at Checkpoints

Jeganathan (2002) writes about the centrality of checkpoints in everyday life in Colombo during the civil war. He discusses how the logic of the anticipation of violence transforms the urban landscape into an ever-shifting map of potential targets. He notes that the checkpoint is different from other urban spaces because it "delineates and focuses practices on the target" (2002, 360). Checkpoints

were a source of annoyance, fear, and dread for all Sri Lankans, but Tamils experienced them differently than non-Tamils (Bass 2013; Thiranagama 2011; Trawick 2007). Expanding on Jeganathan's discussion, Sharika Thiranagama writes, "If non-Tamils residents have flickering and constantly adjustable mappings of targets, Tamils fear that their own bodies are mapped onto such cartographies" (2011, 246).

At roadside checkpoints, male or female soldiers or police officers stop vehicles (cars, buses, or motorcycles) and ask questions of the driver and passengers. The first question is prefaced by a request for individuals to show their national ID cards. The front of the small yellow card includes a photo, a unique number, the date of issue, and the name of the administrator who issued it. The back includes a person's name, sex, birthdate and place, occupation, and the place of issue of the card. Security personnel use the content of the card—particularly the name, place of birth, and the language(s) in which it is written—to ascertain a person's ethnic identity (Jeganathan 2002). At this time ID cards issued in the North and East were written in Tamil and ID cards issued in the South were written in Sinhala (they were made bilingual in 2014) (*The Economist* 2017). While a Tamil person's ethnic identity is sometimes apparent from the name alone (particularly Hindu names), in other cases the information on the card is insufficient. For example, it would be hard to guess the ethnicity of a Tamil with a potentially Sinhala name who was born in Kandy and whose card is written in Sinhala.

Tamils employ various semiotic strategies at checkpoints to conceal or mitigate their Tamil identities.⁷ The flexibility they have representing themselves at checkpoints, however, is relative to the information on their national ID cards, and how it is interpreted, unless individuals can avoid showing them. Jennifer Hyndman and Malathi de Alwis (2005) discuss how a Tamil couple performs a middle-class professional identity to avoid scrutiny at checkpoints. When they drive through, the wife drives while the husband holds their child in his lap. When the security personnel ask for their IDs, the wife shows the ID that identifies her as a doctor in southern Sri Lanka. They said that in almost all cases the authorities simply wave them on without asking for their national ID cards, which would identify them as Tamils. Hyndman and de Alwis write that though the wife's credentials as a doctor from the South was enough for the couple to pass, they also drew on the middle-class indicator of having the husband hold the child on his lap (2005).

Colombo and Kandy Tamils and Muslims I knew mentioned the necessity of speaking Sinhala (and thus avoiding Tamil) in interactions with security personnel. Tamils from the North and East were generally at a greater risk of arrest or detainment at checkpoints because they were often presumed to have a connection with the LTTE. They faced increased difficulties if they lacked proficiency

in Sinhala. At a church on the University of Peradeniya campus, I talked to one middle-aged Tamil man who had come from Jaffna to take a national certification exam. At checkpoints he did not attempt to conceal his Tamil identity (he could not speak Sinhala), but rather his Jaffna identity. He related that he tried to speak to security personnel with an Up-country Tamil accent, so they would think he was from there (I did not ask his place of birth or where his ID card had been issued).

Luke Fleming (2011) provides insight into linguistic patterns of avoidance in his cross-cultural work on taboo speech (e.g., personal names and curse words). He argues that the “avoidance of a form is inextricably linked to its performative function and ideological conceptualization” (2011, 141; also see Nakassis 2013). Tamils’ ingrained awareness that they should avoid Tamil at checkpoint encounters and in certain kinds of public spaces is linked to its negative performative value in indexing or “pointing to” Tamil ethnic identity, which was often associated with the LTTE. Sinhala, by contrast, has a positive value in these contexts because it either indexes Sinhala ethnic identity or sociopolitically aligns speakers with the Sinhala-majority South and the Sri Lankan nation-state.⁸

I knew several Kandy Tamils who drew on linguistic and nonlinguistic strategies to mitigate, but not conceal, their ethnic identities at checkpoints. I spent a lot of time with a Tamil Hindu student at the University of Peradeniya named Shanthi. She was from a multiethnic Up-country town, Badulla, and was quite fluent in Sinhala. She had been particularly close with two Sinhala neighbor girls, whom she referred to as her *amba yaaluwa* (mango friends), a Sinhala term for long-standing friendships. Consistent with the ethnic politics among Peradeniya students, she dressed in a way that made her ethnic and religious identity apparent. She wore a *shalwar kameez* and a small black bindi (*poTTu*). Shanthi and I went through many roadside checkpoints together on our weekend trips from Kandy to nearby tea plantations. Security personnel would stop the bus and ask passengers to step outside and stand in a line to have their national IDs checked. When it was Shanthi’s turn, she flashed a warm smile as she handed over her ID card to the security personnel, who were often male. As she presented her card (her Tamil Hindu identity was evident from her full name), she would say in confident Sinhala that she was a university student, using the English word “campus.” Sometimes I would also have to show my passport, and other times I would simply be waved to pass. Shanthi told me that she rarely encountered trouble at checkpoints because of her status as a university student and her excellent Sinhala. She added with a smile that she sometimes flirted with the male security personnel, but “only a little bit.” Once, when she was subjected to prolonged questioning in front of me and my parents at a checkpoint at the Dalida Maligawa in Kandy, she became visibly embarrassed and upset.



FIGURE 6.1 Soldier in Kandy
Canaan Albright

The positive value of Sinhala in relation to Tamil was consistently enacted at checkpoint encounters. However, these examples demonstrate that Tamil ethnic identities could be taken up and presented in complex ways in relation to language, level of education, class, and gender (see Figure 6.1).⁹ However, while Tamils worked out routines for handling checkpoints encounters, those encounters could still be highly unpredictable. As Sami Hermez (2016, 2017) observes in his writing on the protracted conflict in Lebanon, anticipatory tactics can help individuals create certainty when the future itself remains temporally and spatially unknowable.

Public Space as Anticipated Violence

Though checkpoints focus and organize anticipated violence (Jeganathan 2002), Tamils also feared for their safety in other spaces, as I discussed in chapter 5. Tamils I met in Colombo and Kandy in 2007 and 2008 were careful about speaking Tamil in public, although the exact degree depended on their social background, as well as the settings, situation, and participant framework (e.g., the presence of nonrationalized participants) (Goffman 1979). When I was first in Colombo in January 2007

I stayed at a guest house in an upper-middle-class, multiethnic (primarily Sinhala and Tamil) neighborhood called Cinnamon Gardens. I first encountered the performative force of speaking Tamil in public when I attempted to use it with a Tamil Hindu autorickshaw driver that the staff had set me up with. When I asked him, "EppaDi suham?" (How are you?) in earshot of other drivers, he grew visibly nervous. We quickly reached an unspoken agreement to converse in English or Sinhala when there was a chance that we could be overheard.

I learned more about the way Colombo Tamils conducted themselves in the face of anticipated violence when I spent time with the head housekeeper at my guest house, a Tamil Christian woman named Gayatri (the chapter's opening vignette is a shopping trip to Borella with her daughter). Gayatri considers herself to be a Tamil of recent Indian origin. Her parents came to Colombo from Madurai in South India in the 1950s as municipal workers. She gave me some initial advice about my conduct as a foreign researcher. As I had already surmised from my previous experiences, she told me that I should avoid speaking Tamil to Tamils when I went out (she used the Tamil word *veLiye*), since it might draw unnecessary attention to them. The poverty and hardship Gayatri had faced as a young woman made her very aware of her behavior in public. She told me many times that when she goes out she passes as a "Sinhala lady" because she speaks Sinhala well, wears a skirt and a blouse (typical dress for Sinhala women), and does not wear a bindi. She told me that the only time she wears distinct Tamil dress (an Indian-style sari) is when she attends a Tamil function, such as a wedding.¹⁰

When I walked around Cinnamon Gardens or the adjacent Borella with Gayatri and her daughter and son, they spoke Tamil to one another in whispers or refrained from speaking at all. I usually spoke to them in English, particularly because they wanted to improve their English skills. During one conversation at the guest house I asked Gayatri why she did not speak much Tamil when she went out. She thought for a moment and said that if you speak Tamil around Sinhala people they might think you are talking about them (presumably because they cannot understand what is being said). While Gayatri's conveyed the idea that Sinhalas viewed the use of Tamil in public with suspicion, she did not directly relate the avoidance of Tamil to its association with the LTTE. When I asked an Up-country Tamil cook from Kandy the same question, he gave a franker response. He said with a chuckle that if he spoke Tamil in Sinhala shops in downtown Kandy people would think he was a "puli" (tiger).

I experienced Gayatri's general trepidation about her conduct in public when I rode a crowded bus with her from Borella to Pettah (a multiethnic commercial area opposite the Fort Railway Station) in July 2007. As we stood in the center of the bus, a man started to grab at me. While I maneuvered through the other passengers to get to the front of the bus, Gayatri remained in her spot, appearing not to

notice anything. The next day, however, she brought me a cup of tea in my room and said she was sorry I had such a difficult experience on the bus. She had clearly been concerned about my well-being, but she, like Tamils and many other Sri Lankans, avoided drawing unnecessary attention to herself in public (see chapter 5).¹¹

As I spent more time with Gayatri, I noticed that she was more careful about her linguistic and nonlinguistic conduct in some places than others. Noticeably distinct from the Tamil cocoons the Hindu College students built around themselves as they moved in public spaces (see chapter 5), in the multiethnic Borella market, she confidently switched back and forth between Sinhala and Tamil in her interactions with different vendors. Despite her claim that she presented herself as a Sinhala lady, she did not seem particularly concerned about people seeing her shopping list, in which the Sinhala words for spices and vegetable were written in Tamil script (she had studied in the Tamil medium). She told me that she did not choose a shop based on the identity of the owner, but on the quality and price of the product. She used Tamil with Muslims but was careful about her linguistic choices with Tamils. For instance, one day I observed her speaking Sinhala to a female newspaper vendor, who I knew was Tamil (she had chatted with me in Tamil when I bought a Tamil paper from her). When I asked Gayatri about it, she noted that after the 1983 riots many Borella Tamils had taken to speaking Sinhala as a first language and sending their children to Sinhala-medium schools (also see Kanapathipillai 1990).

When Gayatri talked about her conduct in public (or “outside”), she seemed to refer to Sinhala-dominant spaces where her actions could be observed by non-ratified participants such as Sinhala bystanders or security personnel (Goffman 1979). In those spaces her default behavior was to blend in as much as possible. At the local market, however, she could draw on her multilingual resources to negotiate the best prices. She had been working at the guest house for over ten years, and most of the vendors knew her and her circumstances, which may have made her a little more open in her conduct. At Borella, she was not negotiating an anonymous street or bus with unknown risks, but a partially known, multi-ethnic commercial space. Gayatri, like other multilingual ethnic minorities in urban settings, was skilled at making use of her linguistic and nonlinguistic resources. Having lived in Colombo since birth, she was astute at reading situations and their participants, and knew how to act appropriately. But what was different for Gayatri—and for many other Tamils in southern Sri Lanka at that time—was having to navigate the complex and vast urban milieu with an ever-present sense that her Tamil identity could put her in harm’s way.

The relationship between language and ethnic identity is especially complex for southern Muslims, as I have discussed elsewhere. Kandy Muslims I knew stressed the value of knowing Sinhala, but they did not express as much trepidation about

speaking Tamil in public (also see Thiranagama 2011). Some of them told me that they were unlikely to be mistaken for Tamils because of their distinctive dress (most Muslim women wore hijabs and some men wore skull caps), their “Arab” facial features, and the fact that they spoke a distinct variety of Tamil. Amir was a twenty-year-old Muslim man who had studied in the Sinhala medium (he volunteered at the Kandy NGO I discuss in TSL Practices). He typically wore jeans and a T-shirt, typical dress for young Sri Lankan men. When I asked him in Tamil if he could be mistaken for a Tamil on the bus or the street, he immediately dismissed my question. However, a few minutes later, he told me it was possible, particularly if he spoke Tamil. Thus, while mainstream southern Muslim politics stressed Muslims’ ethnoreligious distinctiveness from Tamils, as Amir confessed, they were not always immediately discernable from Tamils (particularly by Sinhalas).¹²

I gained insight into the role of power relations in interactional dynamics from a 2007 conversation I had with a senior Up-country Tamil Hindu university professor. During a visit to his home in the predominantly Tamil middle-class neighborhood of Wellawatte, I told him that some Tamils I knew seemed afraid to speak Tamil on the street. He immediately dismissed this idea, saying, “Maybe they are cowards . . . I don’t know.” Then, in a discussion of recent bombings in Colombo, he said, “We [in the exclusive sense] are Tamil, but we should not be afraid.” Compared to my other Tamil informants (an autorickshaw driver, a housekeeper, and a cook), this professor’s relatively secure social and financial position and his fluency in Sinhala and English gave him a different view of being Tamil in Colombo. His residence in Wellawatte may have allowed him a different perspective. Tamil was much more openly spoken there than in Sinhala-majority neighborhoods. But though Wellawatte and other Tamil enclaves did allow Tamils to participate in a Tamil social life, these areas were heavily surveilled by the military during the conflict years (Thiranagama 2011).

The performative force of Tamil in public spaces can also be reckoned by looking at Sinhalas’ TSL speaking practices. The implementation of the national trilingual policies in the mid-2000s meant that at the same time that Tamils were restricting their use of Tamil in public, Sinhala administrators and police officers were receiving rewards for learning to read, write, and speak it. My consideration of TSL practices across different settings and situations refines our understanding of interactional practices in public spaces in relation to power inequalities.

TSL Practices

Sinhalas, like Tamils and Muslims, learn English to increase their employability and advance their social status (Canagarajah 2005), but they have traditionally

had little political or economic incentive to study Tamil. In addition, some Sinhala are also resistant to learning (and particularly speaking) Tamil because of its association with Tamil people, who were linked to the LTTE and a lower caste and socioeconomic status (de Silva 1998; Daniel 1996). I met some Sinhala (e.g., police officers, government administrators, or plantation managers) who learned Tamil living or working in the North or East or in tea plantation areas.¹³ In addition, some anglophone upper-middle-class Sinhala studied some Tamil out of a commitment to human rights or to advance their academic and professional pursuits.¹⁴ I also came across Sinhala housemaids who learned to speak Tamil to communicate with their Tamil-speaking employers.

The Official Language Commission (OLC) and other government bodies launched TSL and Sinhala-as-a-second-language training programs throughout the island as part of the effort to fully implement the Official Languages Policy (see chapter 2). Police officers and government administrators were given benefits for passing proficiency exams, such as a raise or preference in promotion (Government of Sri Lanka 2012). In the following, I look at Sinhala adults' TSL practices inside and outside pedagogical contexts. I focus on training programs for government administrators and police officers, as well as a group of ethnically mixed volunteers at an NGO, Peace International (PI), that values trilingual communication. In each context, I consider how ideologies that associate languages with speakers and spaces limited viable opportunities for Sinhala to speak Tamil.

TSL for Government Administrators

From 2007 to 2008, I attended government-funded TSL classes for government administrators and police officers taught by Mr. Ramakrishnan (Mr. R.), the Up-country Tamil principal of Hindu College we met in chapter 2. Mr. R., who is trilingual, had started teaching TSL to supplement his income. He taught mostly in Sinhala, rarely deviating from the government TSL textbook. But in a later class I attended for administrators in a village district office outside Kandy, his teaching style and interactional rapport with the students had significantly improved.

Mr. R. and I rode the public bus together from Kandy to the nearby district office in a Sinhala-majority area. We entered the classroom and found a group of twenty Sinhala male and female administrators (ages twenty-five to fifty). Mr. R. asked me to introduce myself to the students. I explained that I was from the United States and that I was doing research in Sri Lankan schools. In order to place my knowledge of Tamil in a wider South Asian context, I said I had learned

Tamil in Tamil Nadu, India. I also mentioned that I was studying Sinhala. As on previous occasions, Mr. R. then prompted the students to ask me questions in Tamil. While Sinhala students at Girls' College had been reluctant to speak any Tamil with me (see chapter 2), these students asked me where I was staying, when I would return to the United States, and if I liked Sri Lankan food. A young man named Herath, who was obviously comfortable with spoken Tamil, asked me most of the questions.

When Mr. R. announced that the lesson would start, the students diligently readied their notebooks and pens. As Mr. R. started a transcription exercise, the friendly rapport between him and the students continued. When one student suddenly put his head down during the transcription, Mr. R. asked him in Tamil what was wrong. The student replied in Tamil, "Suhamillai, kaachchal" (I'm not feeling well—fever). Mr. R. immediately retorted with a toothy grin, "Enna kaachchal?" (What [kind of] fever?), implying that his fever could be romantic in nature. At one point the students spent some time discussing differences in the spelling of "America" in Tamil (*amerikkaa*) and Sinhala (*amerikaawa*). In a lesson on Tamil administrative terminology, when Mr. R. paused over the Sinhala gloss for a Tamil term, Herath immediately provided the word, transforming the class into a collaborative learning environment.

When the class was finished, I talked to Herath briefly. It turned out he was a village headman. When I asked how he knew Tamil so well, he said that the area where he went for job training was mostly Tamil speaking (probably a Muslim area). I asked him if he ever spoke Tamil outside class and he replied in Tamil, "Konjam tamiL teriyum" (I know Tamil a little bit).¹⁵ While this could be interpreted as an expression of humility, it also discounted his obviously strong spoken-Tamil ability.

As Herath and his classmates cleared out of the classroom, Mr. R. invited me to have tea at a stand outside the building. With only the Sinhala tea vendor present, we talked about the class in Tamil. When I commented that the students seemed very enthusiastic about learning, he said that their Tamil writing was very poor. He said they were only studying Tamil to get a small raise. He told me that TSL programs were being well implemented throughout the island, but that Sinhalas were starting to teach Tamil. He said that this is now another way for Sinhalas to win government jobs over Tamils. Our discussion of his class thus transitioned into a political discussion about employment inequity for Tamils in the government. We finished our tea and headed to the bus stand. As we approached, I noticed Herath waiting for the bus with a small group of people. I asked him in Tamil if he was heading home. He replied in English that he would take the bus home. Deciding to give him some distance, I turned away and stood in silence with Mr. R.

Rather than treating them as passive recipients of the lesson, Mr. R. and the students collaboratively created their own sphere of practice. In this sphere, the students freely drew on Tamil and Sinhala in joking exchanges and as they discussed the lesson material. In addition, Herath's helping Mr. R. with a Tamil-Sinhala translation indicated just how collaborative the class had become—an active learning exchange. These interactional patterns significantly contributed to creating an atmosphere where Sinhala speakers readily spoke Tamil.

But once class was over, a subtle ideological shift occurred in my interactions with Mr. R. and Herath. Mr. R.'s negative comments about the students' motives for learning Tamil and the discrimination against Tamils going into government employment presented a strong contrast to his apparently comfortable interaction with students in the classroom. Mr. R. may have had issues on his mind he wanted to discuss, or he may have wanted me to understand the politics that underlay teaching TSL to Sinhala students. Herath's dismissal of his Tamil language abilities was in immediate contrast to his confident use of Tamil during the lesson. At the bus stand, Herath may have answered me in English because he wanted to demonstrate that he could. Perhaps I should have been cautious about addressing him in Tamil in the public space of the bus stand (I was cautious addressing Tamils in similar contexts). Inside the TSL classroom Sinhala students spoke Tamil in the course of their participation in a government program, but outside class Tamil speech was a performative marker of a Tamil identity. Bystanders, unaware of Herath's status as a TSL student, might think he was Tamil, especially given that he was relatively dark skinned. And if they recognized him as Sinhala, they might question the motives of his speaking Tamil (especially with a foreigner), possibly even taking it as an expression of a political stance in relation to Tamil ethnic groups or the ethnic conflict.

The subtle interactional shifts indicate the limited sphere of practice where Sinhala adults comfortably spoke Tamil. While my conversation with Mr. R. outside the classroom revealed political inequalities in which his TSL teaching was situated, my interaction with Herath indicated how speaking Tamil with Sinhala speakers (as well as Tamils) can have uncomfortable social and political implications in Sinhala-speaking majority public space. I did not see this myself, but these administrators might well have been more at ease speaking Tamil in Tamil-speaking majority settings such as the nearby tea plantation areas or in Muslim villages. In the TSL course for police officers, most of the officers already had some spoken proficiency from their police work in Tamil-speaking areas in the Up-country region or in the North and East.

TSL for Police Officers

In December 2007 and again in May 2008, Mr. R. invited me to attend TSL classes he led for police officers at a Kandy police training center (these occurred before the interaction I have described). The police officers were at the time stationed in Kandy and surrounding towns such as Katugastota, with significant Tamil-speaking populations. Opportunities to speak Tamil with the officers presented themselves during my interactions with them before class and during their breaks.

In December 2007, I walked with Mr. R. from Hindu College to the police training center, which was just beyond the city center. Mr. R. brought me to the office of the inspector of police, a Sinhala Buddhist man in his mid-fifties. When we sat down in front of the inspector's desk, Mr. R. told me with a grin to speak to him in Tamil, since he knows Tamil very well. After I briefly introduced myself, the inspector explained in proficient Tamil that he had learned the language from working in Vavuniya (North) and Batticaloa (East). The inspector took us to a large auditorium where class was held. As Mr. R. laid out his supplies on the teacher's desk, he spoke to me about how it is important for a police officer to learn Tamil. He explained that when a Tamil person speaks to him (as a Sinhala person), he cannot understand; and if he speaks Sinhala to a Tamil person, he is not understood. He mentioned the difficulty he faced learning Tamil when he was first transferred to Vavuniya, joking that if you do not know Tamil you will get an *iDli* (fermented rice cake) instead of a *dosa* (fermented crepe). When I told him that I studied Malayalam in Kerala before learning Tamil, he pointed to his arm and said that his light skin color is similar to that of the Malayali people because his ancestors originally came from Kerala. Mr. R. then joined the discussion, giving some details about the historical connection between Sri Lanka and Kerala.

The inspector introduced me to the twelve male and female officers who had arrived for the class, and then promptly left the room. After I did a quick question-and-answer session in Tamil with the officers at Mr. R.'s suggestion, Mr. R. administered an exam and then started a lesson on administrative terminology. While this first group of police officers asked me quite typical questions, another group I met in May 2008 asked me questions that were much more focused.

When Mr. R. and I arrived at the Police NGO headquarters in May 2008, fifteen officers, male and female, were already waiting in the auditorium with their notebooks and pens readied. After I introduced myself to the students in Tamil, they began to ask me questions, also in Tamil. One middle-aged male police officer asked me my age (twenty-nine) and if I was married, and then commented, "Vayasu kuuDa," meaning I was too old to be single—a usual comment in the Sri

Lankan context. A younger officer asked what I would say about Sri Lanka when I went back to America. When I said I would mention that the climate, the food, and the people were good, he asked, "Ellaa(m) nalam nu solluviingaLaa?" (Will you say that everything is good?). This question implied that I might speak negatively about some aspects of Sri Lanka. When I stumbled a little in my answer, he changed the subject by asking if I had any Sri Lankan friends.

During a brief break, some of the officers remained in the classroom to talk to me. When I had originally introduced myself, I had told them that I could speak some Sinhala. The same middle-aged male police officer who had asked if I was married, followed up on this, asking me in Tamil, "Sinhala teriyaadaa?" (You don't know Sinhala?). I then switched to Sinhala and said that I knew some and that I was taking Sinhala classes. A young female officer, who seemed intent on practicing her Tamil, attempted to repeat what I had said in Tamil. The male officer then asked in Tamil if I was afraid to go out alone. When I said that I did not go out alone at night, the female officer asked if I was afraid of bombs. Before I could answer her, the male officer asked in Tamil if I was afraid of coming to the police station and then burst into laughter, which seemed a little menacing. I think he was pointing to the fact that police stations can be a hazardous place for women.¹⁶

In the program for police officers, like the program for administrators, these Tamil question-and-answer sessions opened a sphere of practice where Sinhala could comfortably speak Tamil. In both contexts the men spoke more than the women, indicating that gender may be a factor in TSL practices. However, the session in May was different from the others in that the officers seemed to challenge me a little, both as an unmarried woman and a foreigner who speaks Tamil. By asking me if I was afraid to go out alone or come to the police station, the male officers expressed gendered evaluations about the appropriateness of an unmarried female being alone in a foreign country. Though I had a ratified presence in the classroom as Mr. R.'s guest, the young male officer's asking what I would report about Sri Lanka, and the middle-aged male officer's doubting my knowledge of Sinhala suggested to me their suspicions about a foreigner proficient in Tamil and interested in Tamils and Tamil issues conducting research in Sri Lanka. This experience shows that though the officers were willing to speak Tamil with me in the classroom, my position as a Tamil-speaking foreign female was a little problematic.

Though I did not return to the police training center after May 2008, in June 2008 I spotted the inspector of police in downtown Kandy. He was walking toward me from the opposite direction on a crowded sidewalk. When I waved and said, "Good afternoon" to him (English greetings convey politeness and formality), he stared blankly at me, not acknowledging my presence. It is possible

that he mistook me for one of the many white female tourists in Kandy. It is also possible that he recognized me, but, as consistent with wider police conduct, did not want to endanger me by acknowledging me publicly. However, this encounter could also indicate that the sphere of practice presented by the TSL course—in which the Sinhala Buddhist police inspector conversed with a foreign researcher in Tamil—simply did not extend to public spaces.

Mr. R. did not invite me to attend another TSL course for police officers, though he invited me to several of his courses for government administrators (including the July 2008 class I described previously). I did not ask him about the classes for police officers, since I did not mean to pressure him to invite me to attend. In 2011, however, Mr. R. told me that he had been dropped from his job at the police training center. He told me with a knowing smile that they had found a Sinhala TSL teacher instead, a demonstration of the broader trend he had already discussed with me. My descriptions of Mr. R.'s courses show that the sphere of practice where Sinhala people spoke Tamil was largely limited to the TSL classroom. While my interaction with the Sinhala student (Herath) demonstrates how it might be uncomfortable for Sinhalas to speak Tamil in public, my interaction with the inspector suggests that the overall dynamics of my engagement with Sinhala students as a Tamil-speaking foreigner were fragile and provisional. To more fully understand TSL practices in relation to public spaces, I turn to spheres of practice where Sinhalas spoke Tamil outside a pedagogical context among an ethnically mixed group of volunteers at a Kandy NGO.

NGO (PI)

During my research period, I spent time with a group of youths who volunteered at the Sri Lankan branch of an international NGO, Peace International (PI).¹⁷ The focus of this NGO is building peace through international voluntary projects, and its leadership (Muslims and Sinhalas), influenced by global peace initiatives, stressed communication “in all three languages” to improve interethnic relations. In 2008 the regular membership consisted of four Muslims (all males) and six Sinhalas (three males and three females); two Tamils would join later that year. Ages eighteen to twenty-three, they were only slightly older than the Hindu College and Girls’ College youth in my study. Consistent with elsewhere in Kandy, the dominant language was Sinhala, with English used when foreigners like me were present.

One of the senior volunteers was Arshad, a twenty-two-year-old male from a nearby Muslim village, who spoke Tamil as a first language. He told me that growing up he had very little exposure to Sinhalas and Tamils, and, as a result, believed the negative stereotypes about them. He credited PI with teaching

him to respect other ethnic groups and improving his Sinhala and English. As is common among southern Muslims, he frequently contrasted Tamils' desire to speak a pure Tamil free of foreign borrowings with his heterogeneous linguistic practices, particularly his free code-switching among Tamil, Sinhala, and English (see chapter 2). Although he frequently emphasized his lack of attachment to Tamil, he often tried to get the Sinhala volunteers to take an interest in speaking Tamil (they had all studied some TSL in school), consistent with the trilingual aims of the NGO. He frequently sang classic Tamil film songs, patiently translating the lyrics into Sinhala and English. However, as I demonstrate with two brief examples, when a sphere of practice opened where Sinhala volunteers would speak Tamil, their use of it was often limited to a jocular or mocking expression.

In February 2008 I traveled by public bus with the volunteers to participate in a social service project near Colombo. Crowded into the back of the bus, they were excited and jovial. They blasted Sinhala songs from a portable radio as they chatted and ate snacks. While Sri Lankans at this time were careful about their conduct on buses, the volunteers seemed oblivious to the presence of the other passengers. As we neared Colombo, a Sinhala male, Nelith, stuck his head out the window of the bus, pretending to be the bus conductor, and yelled "Airport, airport, airport . . ." in a nasal tone, potentially confusing people who wanted the airport bus. For most of the trip I held a quiet conversation in Tamil and English with Arshad, who was seated directly behind me, about his childhood. Interspersed with banter and jokes in Sinhala, Nelith and the two other Sinhala boys periodically yelled out Tamil phrases in a gruff voice, which seemed to be directed at Arshad and me. These included the phrase common among male peers, "Enna Daa?" (What bro?), as well as an incomplete phrase pertaining to a wedding, "Enn-appaa? MaappiLLai vandu . . ." (What? Bridegroom come . . .).¹⁸ My Up-country Tamil research assistant Uma noted that these utterances seem to mimic sound bites from Tamil film dialogue or songs (films from Tamil Nadu, India were regularly broadcast on Tamil TV channels). Nelith's gruff voice parodied that of the uneducated village characters common in Tamil films. As usual, Arshad nervously laughed at their Tamil phrases but said nothing in response.

A few weeks later, Arshad invited Ruvi, a twenty-three-year-old Sinhala female, Janu, a nineteen-year-old Sinhala male, and me to his village before attending a PI-sponsored event at a local Muslim school. While we sat and chatted in Sinhala and English in the living room of his house, Arshad's mother prepared us tea in the kitchen. In an effort to look appropriate at the Muslim school, Ruvi was wearing a *shalwar kameez*, which is not typically worn by Sinhalas. She kept readjusting her scarf, explaining that she had never worn this kind of dress before. Arshad's teenaged brother walked into the room and said a few words to

Arshad in fast Tamil. Referring to our plan to visit the Muslim school, Ruvi asked Arshad's brother in Tamil, "PayaNam poovoomaa?" (Will we go on a trip?). He smiled politely at her question but did not say anything in response. In the course of our continuing conversation in Sinhala and English, Ruvi started interjecting random Tamil phrases, seemingly parroted from Tamil films, such as "KalyaaNam kaTTu . . ." (Get married . . .). When she struggled to say, "I'm pregnant" in Tamil in reference to a prior interaction, Arshad glanced toward his mother in the kitchen as if concerned about what she would think of our conversation. Feeling the urge to say something about her Tamil usages, I commented to Ruvi in English that she spoke Tamil like Nelith. Taking a pedagogical tone, Arshad explained in English that Nelith's Tamil is very good, but the voice he uses is too rough. He said that Ruvi and Nelith both tended to use Tamil in a joking way. He employed a phrase I had heard before, namely, that when Nelith is being serious, he can "actually speak Tamil." Ruvi recounted in English that one time PI took a trip to Batticaloa. When they stopped at a tea shop, a girl asked them in Tamil to change a thousand-rupee note. Ruvi said that Janu (who had actually won a TSL writing competition during O levels) had a lot of difficulty talking to her, but Nelith had managed well. As they chatted, they learned that she had grown up in the Up-country and spoke Sinhala fluently. Ruvi said they had all laughed at Nelith's well-intentioned but unnecessary effort to "actually speak Tamil."

As these examples demonstrate, when a sphere of practice opened up for PI volunteers to speak Tamil, they often did so in a joking manner. Jane Hill (1995, 2008) describes how white speakers in the United States use jocular forms of Spanish she refers to as "mock Spanish." She defines "mock" or "junk" Spanish as "a set of strategies for incorporating Spanish loan words into English in order to create a jocular or pejorative key" (1995, 205). Though the users may think they are being light, humorous, or displaying their knowledge of the Southwest, these usages indirectly reinforce negative stereotypes about Spanish speakers. This, in turn, indirectly propagates covert forms of racism. The jocular Tamil usages I observed are similar to the mock Spanish strategies Hill identifies, since they involve the use of Tamil expressions in a pejorative manner (1995).¹⁹

Since the PI volunteers had all studied at single-sex schools, PI provided a rare opportunity to interact in a coed environment away from their parents' homes. Their jocular Tamil usages could be interpreted as part of playful, sexually charged behavior. Like participants in the government and the police training programs, most of the TSL speakers were male. Ruvi's use of Tamil could be interpreted as a way to flirt with her male peers. However, it is also significant that the Sinhala volunteers rarely spoke Tamil *not* using this mocking tone. (And I did not observe them similarly using profanity or joking about risqué topics in English.) Arshad and the other Tamil speakers' (Muslims) lack of response to this practice

indicates they found it inappropriate or at least not worthy of encouragement. In a conversation with Arshad in 2013 I asked what he thought of the Sinhala PI members' Tamil usages. He told me that Nelith had since learned "proper" Tamil, meaning that he could read and write it, but that the others still spoke Tamil in a joking way. Noting that none of the new Sinhala members speak Tamil, he said that maybe speaking "joking Tamil" is better than not speaking it at all. In fact, when I visited the NGO headquarters in 2011, the only Sinhala young adult I observed speaking Tamil was a mentally challenged girl who invited me to sit down in Sinhala, Tamil, and English.

While mock Tamil may have some benefit in acclimating Sinhala to speaking Tamil, like Hill's (1995, 2008) discussion of mock Spanish, the Sinhala PI volunteers' consistent use of "mock Tamil" indirectly reinforced already existing ideological associations of the Tamil language. These stereotyped characteristics—rough, crude, vulgar—extend to views of Tamil speakers in Sri Lanka and India as uneducated and lower class. Though the mock Tamil usages were not specifically associated with Sri Lankan Muslims, they, too, were implicated as Tamil speakers.

It is significant that these instances of mock Tamil occurred while Tamil was being otherwise used in the same sphere of practice. In the first example, Nelith's shouting out phrases in the Sinhala-dominant public bus seemed to comment on my separate conversation with Arshad. While our conversation was fairly serious, Nelith's mock Tamil seemed an attempt to turn it into something light and ridiculous. In the second example, Ruvi may have been prompted to address Arshad's brother in Tamil since she wanted to act appropriately in a Tamil-speaking home. However, the setting was more complicated since the visit was part of an official PI activity. Ruvi's use of mock Tamil was likely spurred by Arshad's brother's failure to respond to her question. Her subsequent utterances treated the language not as a communicative code, but something laughable and potentially vulgar. These moments when Tamil was used were ideologically fraught for the volunteers because of the competing narratives available to them. The use of Tamil by Muslim members during PI activities (whether at the NGO headquarters, in a bus, or at a home) challenged the dominant status of Sinhala among the NGO members and in Kandy more generally. But at the same time, the Sinhala members' inability to fully speak and understand Tamil could also be interpreted as a failure for an international NGO that values trilingual communication.²⁰ Sinhala volunteers' use of Tamil provided a commentary on this ideologically fraught use of Tamil in interactional space, playfully undermining it as a code while also protecting themselves from any negative evaluation.

Though Sinhala and English were the predominant languages among the PI volunteers, there were times when Tamil effectively carried the conversation. One day, the volunteers were having a discussion at headquarters with a group of

Tamil-speaking Muslims who had come from an NGO in Batticaloa for a peace program. Though at first the conversation was trilingual (with Arshad and another Muslim member translating Tamil into Sinhala and English), when the conversation turned to the recent violence against eastern Muslims it switched to a very fast Tamil that was difficult for nonnative speakers to follow. A group of the young Sinhala volunteers, including Ruvi and Janu, abruptly left the room, seemingly annoyed that the conversation had become Tamil only. Though the Sinhala volunteers used mock Tamil to manage the use of some Tamil during PI activities, they showed little patience when it became the main language, presumably because it effectively excluded them.

Sinhala members widely used mock Tamil during PI-related activities, but in the interaction at Arshad's home, Arshad and Ruvi acknowledged the difference between using Tamil in a joking way and really speaking it in a way that facilitates communication. Ruvi's story about the interaction with the Tamil girl in Batticaloa indicates their awareness that mock Tamil is not a particularly productive use of the language. It also suggests that the Sinhala PI volunteers might have different attitudes about speaking Tamil in the North and East versus the South. In the Tamil-speaking North and East, Sinhalas use their Tamil resources to communicate with locals who were presumed not to know Sinhala. In the South, the expectation that Sinhalas should speak or understand Tamil threatens the dominant status of Sinhala. By representing Tamil as vulgar or useless, the Sinhala volunteers prevented it from threatening Sinhala in that sphere of practice. I witnessed similar uses of mock Tamil among ethnically mixed students at the University of Peradeniya, which indicates that it may be a more widely occurring phenomenon.²¹ Perpetuating negative stereotypes about the language and its speakers, such usage largely cancels out the positive value of learning and speaking Tamil since it sustains the idea that Tamil is only fit for joking or discussing risqué topics, particularly in mixed-gender company.

My interaction with Herath in the first example illustrates the ideological association of the Tamil language with the Tamil people and the LTTE, while the interactional dynamics at PI point to the use of Tamil as a perceived threat to the dominance of Sinhala in Kandy. Thus, spheres of practice can open up where Sinhalas speak Tamil in the confines of the TSL classroom, but in public spaces (a street or a bus), the act of Sinhalas speaking Tamil was ideologically fraught. In addition, though Sinhalas were open to speaking with me in Tamil in the classroom, my interactions with the Kandy police officers in that same setting revealed uneasiness with my position as a foreign Tamil speaker. Across these examples we see that in southern Sri Lanka Tamil has a robust and unyielding performative weight as an index of Tamil ethnic identity, which inevitably made it problematic in Sinhala-majority social space.

Tamil in Sinhala-Majority Public Space

In my discussion of the performativity of speaking Tamil at checkpoints and in public spaces in Kandy and Colombo, tactics of anticipation, as enacted in these situations, all point to the centrality of language in the way Tamils conducted themselves in the face of possible violence (Jeganathan 1998). The necessity to conceal or mitigate their identities reinforced unequal power relations between Tamil-speaking minorities and the Sinhala majority. In the South, Sinhalas could freely use Sinhala across contexts, but in public spaces Tamils largely avoided Tamil (preferring to use Sinhala or not speak at all) in the presence of people who might overhear and react, whether they be Sinhala bystanders or security personnel.

My description of Tamils' linguistic and nonlinguistic practices focuses on perceptions of their own conduct in relation to potential risk. While Tamils' checkpoint routines gave them a sense of control over their situation, the future was unknowable. Considering Sinhalas' TSL speaking practices at the government training program, the police training program, and the NGO provides additional insight into the performative and ideological force of Tamil in public spaces. While Sinhala officers and administrators received rewards for passing proficiency exams in TSL, the use of Tamil outside the classroom was still seen to mainly index Tamil ethnic identity or challenge the dominance of Sinhala, and through this, the privileged position of Sinhalas in relation to Tamil speakers.

Sri Lankans' ideologies and practices around speaking Tamil—from Gayatri's avoidance of it to the Sinhalas PI volunteers' use of mock Tamil—reinforced ethnic divisions and inequalities. Tamils in Colombo and Kandy at this time went about their everyday lives with an awareness that their ethnic identities, primarily indexed by their Tamil speech, could put them at risk. Sinhalas remained averse to speaking Tamil in public primarily because of the need to protect Sinhala-dominant social space from the Tamil language and its speakers. While the number of TSL programs in Sri Lanka is likely to continue to increase, deeply entrenched ideologies that associate the language with ethnic identities will continue to make the use of Tamil in public spaces in the South contentious and problematic.

7 CONCLUSION

The organization of state education systems in South Asia and other postcolonial nation-states presupposes ways of ordering differences that emphasize linguistic, ethnic, religious, and class differences and inequalities. In Sri Lanka, postindependence leaders claimed that *swabasha* (vernacular) policies were meant to alleviate inequalities between the English-educated elite and the Sinhala- and Tamil-educated masses. However, as I have argued in this book, the segregation of Tamil- and Sinhala-medium students reinforces ethnic divisions around language, the effect of which extends to the public sphere.

I have shown that schools are variegated, uneven, and contradictory ideological landscapes. Official assemblies and events at both Hindu College and Girls' College propagated a multiethnic and united vision of Kandy and the Sri Lankan nation-state that aligned with national education initiatives. However, local policies and practices reproduced linguistic, ethnic, and religious differences. The girls and boys at Hindu College took Sinhala-as-a-second-language (SSL) and English classes, but their almost exclusive use of Tamil in school reinforced their Tamil ethnic identities. As one of Kandy's few multilingual schools, Girls' College could have used SSL, Tamil-as-a-second-language (TSL), and English classes to integrate Sinhala- and Tamil-medium students, but these students studied these subjects in their separate home classrooms. In my analysis, the issue, then, is not with the trilingual education reforms themselves, but with how they were implemented in practice.

Tamil-medium students' speech in school was highly constrained, but there was also an open quality to some of their interactions. Girls' College, like all Sri Lankan schools, stressed the memorization of facts to be tested on standardized national exams. But students were provided with plenty of other opportunities—discussions and debates—to spur their imaginations. Even in student-teacher classroom interactions at Girls' College, girls had room to demonstrate skills and forms of social capital (such as spoken Sinhala or English) that were

not part of the curriculum. The Hindu College students had little opportunity to talk with their teachers during the school day. But several of the teachers would stay after school with students to counsel them on their upcoming exams, home lives, or future goals. In their peer interactions in various spheres of practice in school, on the street, and at home, youth at these two schools tried out different social roles they wanted to inhabit and subtly rearranged mainstream narratives.

This book has demonstrated the processes by which language-based models of ethnic identity in Sri Lanka spread across institutional and noninstitutional settings. While Tamil and Muslim students' identities as ethnic minorities were foregrounded in their schooling experience, it was in the public sphere that ethnic differences around language were the most consequential. At police and army checkpoints in Kandy, Colombo, and elsewhere in the South, a person's ethnic identity was pertinent to state security. Skin color, facial features, and clothing were also significant, but spoken and written language (as indicated on ID cards) was the most salient marker of ethnic identity. These interactional dynamics and modes of interpretation continued into other public interactions. Some Tamils in Colombo attempted to pass as Sinhala on the street or the bus, while others downplayed their ethnic identities by refraining from speaking Tamil or speaking it only in whispers.

Since the late 1990s and early 2000s the National Education Commission (NEC), the Official Language Commission (OLC), and other government institutions have struggled to promote trilingualism in education and the public sector. But, despite an increased emphasis on English in primary and secondary education, a high-quality English education is still only available to the small minority of students who attend national, government-assisted, or international schools. Differential access to English education thus perpetuates socioeconomic inequalities between the English-speaking elites and the rest of the population. The efficacy of SSL and TSL policies in achieving interethnic integration is imperiled by the linguistic ethnicization of identity. Sinhala youth and adults may read, write, as well as speak some Tamil in the classroom, but in public spaces in the South, the use of Tamil is inexorably associated with a negatively valued Tamil ethnic identity. Tamil speech in public is also problematic because many Sinhalas view it as threatening the dominance of Sinhala. Efforts to create a trilingual nation do not address how sociolinguistic norms and practice reflect and produce ethnic conflict.

Cosmopolitan Futures and Generational Differences

In my research in 2007 and 2008, Tamil-speaking teachers, principals, administrators, and parents conveyed a sense that they did not have much of a future

in Sri Lanka. They said they had little opportunity to advance their careers or increase their standard of living, given war-related inflation. They were used to experiencing discrimination and were decidedly grim about the possibility that the situation for ethnic minorities would improve. They cited frequent examples of how minorities were denied access to resources, such as government jobs or rental housing in Kandy.

By contrast, the Tamil-speaking girls and boys in my study were more optimistic. The Girls' College students, as a reflection of their middle-class status, had loftier career goals than did Hindu College students. But both groups aimed to fit into a multilingual and multiethnic notion of Kandy (in which the Girls' College students felt more of a sense of ownership). The students' idea of what Kandy was supposed to be, however, did not involve the incorporation of ethnic minorities into a united Sri Lanka, as promoted by the NEC and OLC. In the face of globalization and the mass migration of Sri Lankans abroad, the Girls' College students, in particular, saw Kandy as a city with elite educational institutions and a strong middle class that was oriented to, and porous with, the global world. Kandy was symbolic of their potential for social mobility, whether they would live their lives in Sri Lanka or abroad.

In the time since I completed my research, a significant number of the people in my study have left Sri Lanka, a testament to their sheer drive and resourcefulness. Several Girls' College students went to India, Malaysia, or the United States for higher education, and some Hindu College boys, including Devan and Jayaraman, traveled to the Gulf States with their fathers for low-level work. Arshad, my friend from the Kandy NGO Peace International went to work in Belgium, while Amir went to Qatar. One of my research assistants, Kausalya, emigrated to Australia with the help of some Kandy Tamil friends already living there. The daughter of the housekeeper at my Colombo guest house is also living in Australia.

Kavitha, like many of her Girls' College classmates, is yet to go abroad. However, she is navigating local and transnational spheres of practice in her daily life in Colombo (she is completing a BA program) and in her social media networks. She recently commented that she was just a kid when I was living in Kandy and that now she is excited to take me to her favorite Colombo hotels and cafes. The Girls' College students' imagining of a cosmopolitan Kandy enabled them to cope with the ethnic conflict and the "enshrouding fears" that the war created (Obeyesekere 2011, xii). It inspired them to aim for a comfortable future and to be open to opportunities. Their view of Kandy shows that while they had to navigate local ethnic politics in their daily lives, they could see their futures in a global field.

The End of the War

When I returned to Kandy in 2011, two years after the war's end, I asked many of my research participants how life was different for them. The Hindu College principal, Mr. Ramakrishnan (Mr. R.) smiled mischievously and said in Tamil, "The traffic in Colombo has reduced." Like Mr. R., many thought that the social, political, and economic conditions had changed very little.

A watershed moment occurred on January 9, 2015, when Maithripala Sirisena defeated Mahinda Rajapaksa (who had been elected for a second term in 2010) in the presidential election (see Figure 7.1). President Sirisena vowed to get a new constitution adopted that would devolve the powers of the central government. On October 1, 2015, the Sri Lankan government cosponsored a United Nations Human Rights Commission resolution to promote "democracy, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka" and implement a comprehensive transitional justice process (United Nations General Assembly 2015, 1). Many Sri Lankans hoped that Sirisena would lead the nation toward reconciliation as well as acknowledge the war crimes committed by both sides in the final months of the



FIGURE 7.1 President Maithripala Sirisena

war (Hammer 2016). However, in a February 10, 2017, report, the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights in Sri Lanka stated that the slow pace of transitional justice and the lack of a strategy to address accountability for war crimes were impediments to reconciliation efforts (UN News Center 2017).

The nation entered a new political crisis on October 26, 2018, when President Sirisena appointed former president Mahinda Rajapaksa to replace incumbent prime minister Ranil Wickremasinghe, a move that cabinet ministers deemed unconstitutional (Abi-Habib and Bastians 2018a). Wickremasinghe, who challenged the appointment, refused to vacate the official prime minister's residence. The crisis escalated two weeks later when Sirisena, who had failed to secure the support of a parliamentary majority, dissolved parliament and called for January elections. On November 14 the majority of parliament voted to remove Rajapaksa as prime minister, arguing that his appointment was illegal, but Rajapaksa refused to concede (Ananda and Ganeshanathan 2018). A Sri Lankan court issued a temporary order preventing him from holding office on December 3 (Bastians and Abi-Habib 2018). After Sri Lanka's Supreme Court ruled that the dissolution of parliament had been unconstitutional, Rajapaksa agreed to step down on December 14 (Abi-Habib and Bastians 2018b).

The chance of Mahinda Rajapaksa returning to power left Sri Lankan minorities, who were already discouraged by the government's lack of progress toward reconciliation and its continued appeasing of the military, fearing for the future (Ananda and Ganeshanathan 2018; Devotta 2017). Tens of thousands of government troops still occupy the Northern Province, and large areas of land confiscated during the war remain under military control. Thousands of northern Tamils are internally displaced, lacking homes and livelihoods, while others have been resettled in places without proper infrastructure. Families continue to search for their missing relatives (Jones 2015). Furthermore, Sinhala Buddhist nationalists' recent targeting of Muslims in the East and South is a cause for serious concern. On March 6, 2018, the Sri Lankan government declared a state of emergency after Sinhala mobs attacked Muslim businesses, houses, vehicles, and mosques in the Kandy District. Two people were killed in the violence (Devotta 2018; Mashal and Bastians 2018b). A *New York Times* article discussed how the spread of videos and rumors on Facebook's newsfeed likely fomented the violence in Sri Lanka (Taub and Fisher 2018).

Amid this recent political instability, the Sri Lankan government continues to take steps to fully implement the Official Languages Policy and improve school-aged youths' competencies in Sinhala, Tamil, and English (see Ministry of National Integration, Reconciliation, and Official Languages 2017; National Education Commission 2017). As the government has acknowledged

(Government of Sri Lanka 2011; Official Language Commission 2006), police stations, government agencies, and hospitals in the South often lack Tamil interpreters. Public signs and documents, legally required to be in all three languages, are sometimes in Sinhala only or contain errors in the Tamil or English. Sri Lankan Tamils, many of whom view issues over language rights to be at the very heart of the ethnic conflict, interpret the Tamil errors in multiple ways. Some view them as an example of the inadequacy of government language training programs. Others, however, see them as emblematic of the government's indifference to the plight of its minorities, or even an intentional attempt to destroy the Tamil language and people (Davis 2020). The efforts to create a trilingual Sri Lanka cannot be effective if the government does not fully and faithfully implement Tamil as a co-official language.

The Fluidity and Durability of Language and Ethnicity

I conducted my research during a particularly tense period in the twenty-six-year civil war. But I was struck, even in that historical moment, by the fluidity of some of my research participants' sociolinguistic practices and identifications. When I think about this issue, I remember a middle-class Sinhala Buddhist student at the University of Peradeniya. Having learned to speak proficient Tamil from her beloved Tamil Hindu nanny, she organized a trilingual drama group dedicated to promoting interethnic tolerance. I also think about my conversations with Arshad, a young Muslim man who volunteered at the NGO Peace International. Even though Tamil was his first language and the medium of his education, he frequently reiterated the widely circulating view that Sri Lankan Muslims are unattached to Tamil because of their religion-based identity. But when I caught him singing Tamil songs or explaining the meaning of Tamil expressions to the foreign and Sinhala NGO volunteers, he would smile and acknowledge his fondness for Tamil. He recently told me that while he grew up in Sri Lanka primarily seeing himself as a Muslim, when an Indian Tamil Hindu man in Belgium asked if he was Sinhala or Tamil, he found himself saying he was a Tamil to emphasize their shared sociolinguistic identification (Muslims in Tamil Nadu, India accept both linguistic [Tamil] and religious [Muslim] identities) (McGilvray 2008). Having lived abroad for years now, he often thinks about his linguistic choices in relation to his ethnic, religious, and national affiliations.

I particularly remember my Kandy landlord (Kavitha's father). A Tamil Hindu man, he had been a major in the Sri Lankan army. He studied at a leading Kandy school where Sinhala was the language of instruction. Although there were many more Tamils in the army when he joined, some of my Sinhala friends seemed perplexed by his Tamil identity. We would sometimes chat while he hung bed

sheets to dry in the patchy afternoon sun. He did not share any details of his experience fighting against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the Vanni region, but he would sometimes discuss techniques he learned to survive in the jungle, such as how to make turtle curry. He often mentioned the bullet fragments that remained in his legs. But his general reflections—given in English-inflected Tamil—suggested a highly nuanced and sophisticated understanding of both sides of the battlefield. It was clear that for him there was no easy explanation—for his role in the war or for the war in general.

But despite the fluidity of my research participants' sociolinguistic practices, there was a durability to the language-based ethnic models. In Sri Lanka, as elsewhere, people and groups differentiate themselves from others in multiple and overlapping ways. However, as I observed in my research, ethnic differences were fundamental to the way people saw themselves in relation to others. To speak Tamil, English, or Sinhala in the public spaces of Kandy and Colombo was to enact and reproduce power relations and historically produced inequalities.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

1. In Sri Lanka, and elsewhere in South Asia, the concepts of ethnicity and race are closely intertwined. Both terms are translated as variations of the Sanskrit word *jati*. In Sri Lanka, this term—*jaadi* in Tamil and *jaathiya* in Sinhala—is used to indicate ethnicity, race, caste, or nation (Bass 2013). In addition, the Tamil word *inam* denotes race, ethnic group, or community (Ramakrishnan 2008). The English term “ethnicity” is widely used by anglophone Sri Lankans.
2. Although the term “Sinhalese” is also used, I employ the term “Sinhala” to refer to both the people and the language. This term parallels “Tamil.”
3. I use the geographic designation “North and East Tamil” because the term “Sri Lankan Tamils” can imply that other Tamil groups are not citizens of Sri Lanka.
4. The term “Up-country Tamil” has been growing in popularity among this group since the 1990s. Rather than the term “Indian” Tamil, which contrasts them with so-called Sri Lankan Tamils, this term emphasizes their attachment to the hill-country region as the basis of their sociocultural and political identity (Bass 2013).
5. The Portuguese, Dutch, and British used the term “Moor” to refer to Sri Lanka’s Tamil-speaking Muslim communities (McGilvray and Raheem 2007).
6. <http://www.citypopulation.de/SriLanka-Cities.html>.
7. Cosmopolitanism is defined as “an intellectual ethic, a universal humanism that transcends regional particularisms” (Cheah 1998, 22). It is also associated with “empathy, toleration and respect for other cultures and values” (Werbner 2008, 2).
8. Bucholtz (2011), Das (2016), Davidson (2011), García Sánchez (2014), Mendoza-Denton (2008), Rampton (2005), Rosa (2019), Shankar (2008), Tetreault (2015), and Woolard (1997) provide nuanced accounts of how youth culture and identity are defined by language choice.
9. While studies of transnationalism theorize the disintegration of cultural, temporal, and spatial boundaries under globalization (Appadurai 1996; Bhabha 1994; Gupta

- and Ferguson 1992), as Mary Bucholtz and Elena Skapoulli write, “It is in local spaces and communities that identities are tried out, embodied, and adapted in order to be made coherent” (2009, 2).
10. My focus on the future is consistent with Jennifer Cole’s (2010) approach to understanding youth and social change. She writes that the “most effective way to understand a generation and the process of generational change is to focus not only on what young people do in the present, but on how they imagine—and seek to attain—a desired future” (2010, 5).
 11. I use pseudonyms to protect the identity of the schools.
 12. Brass (1996), Daniel (1996), Das (1990), Nordstrom (1997), and Trawick (2007) provide anthropological accounts of violence in South Asia.
 13. Goodwin (2006), Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (2003), Fader (2009), and Mendoza-Denton (2008) explore gender in relation to different social identities.
 14. See Amarasingam and Bass (2016), Kearney (1978), Spencer (1990), Spencer et al. (2015), Tambiah (1986), Thiranagama (2011), and Uyangoda (2009) for an account of the causes of the Sri Lankan civil war.
 15. The ceasefire was not officially dissolved until January 2008 (Wickramasinghe 2009).
 16. Although they differed from one another in several ways, the Buddhist and Hindu movements can be broadly understood as reactions to the dominance achieved by Christianity and Christians (who engaged in aggressive proselytizing practices) during the colonial period. By contrast, the Muslim revival, which started a few decades later, was more of a response to the emerging Tamil and Sinhala identities (Samaraweera 1997).
 17. Northern and eastern Muslims have suffered greatly in the Sri Lankan civil war. Eastern Muslims have been victims of brutal violence on the part of the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. In 1990, the LTTE, desiring a racially pure Tamil state, expelled tens of thousands of northern Muslims from Jaffna (see McGilvray and Raheem 2007; Thiranagama 2011).
 18. Ponnambalam Ramanathan (1851–1930), a Tamil Hindu politician, was the “Tamil” representative in the Legislative Council (he also represented Tamil-speaking Moors) (Thiranagama 2011). In 1885 he made a speech to the other members that used physical, social, and cultural evidence to argue that the Moors of Ceylon were ethnologically Tamils. His speech angered southern Muslim leaders because it denied their right to separate political representation. I. L. M. Azeez (1867–1950), a prominent Colombo-based lawyer and Muslim leader, explained in response that Sri Lankan Muslims only spoke Tamil as a first language because their Arab ancestors had adopted the local language for convenience. He denied the physical resemblance of Muslims to Tamils, but accepted the mixture of Muslim and Tamil blood, explaining that some Arab traders had intermarried with local Tamil women (Nuhman 2007; Samaraweera 1997).
 19. See Imtiyaz and Hoole (2011), McGilvray and Raheem (2007), Nuhman (2007), and Thiranagama (2011) for a discussion of Sri Lankan Muslim history and identity.

20. A Muslim-Tamil alliance emerged in the Northeast for brief periods in the mid to late twentieth century (McGilvray and Raheem 2007).
21. The tooth relic and an alms bowl, both powerful cosmic symbols (Obeyesekere 2013), passed into the possession of the Kandyan rulers sometime after the 1590s (de Silva 2005).
22. Nira Wickramasinghe writes that “Kandyanness was read as the authentic identity at a particular time and in a particular context. But it never became the hegemonic identity of the Sinhala” (2006, 110).
23. In the census North and East Tamils are referred to as “Sri Lankan Tamils,” Up-country Tamils as “Indian Tamils,” and Muslims as “Sri Lankan Moors” (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka 2012).
24. Judith Irvine and Susan Gal (2000) argue that there are common patterns in the way people make sense of the connections between linguistic forms and social phenomenon. They identify these semiotic processes as iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure.
25. See Irvine (2011, 2018), Irvine and Gal (2000), Kroskrity (2000), and Silverstein (1979) for a discussion of the interested nature of language ideologies.
26. See Blommaert (1999), Eisenlohr (2004), Gal (1993), Kroskrity (2000), Rosa (2019), Silverstein (1996), and Woolard (1989) for a discussion of language and group identities.
27. Agha (2007), Bartlett (2007), Eisenlohr (2004), Mehan et al. (1996), Mendoza-Denton (2008), Mertz (1998), Philips (1998, 2000), Silverstein (1985, 1993), Stroud (1999), and Wortham (2005, 2006, 2008) ground studies of language ideologies in space and time.
28. See Irvine (2001), Irvine and Gal (2000), Jaffe (1999), Meek (2010), Silverstein (1979), and Silverstein and Urban (1996) for a discussion of metadiscourse in relation to discourse.
29. My discussion of how linguistic forms are mapped onto social forms relates to Asif Agha’s concept of enregisterment, the process “whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized (or enregistered) as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users” (2005, 38). Jonathan Rosa (2019) applies this concept in his study of linguistic and racial ideologies among Latinx youth in a Chicago public school. He examines the processes by which features of Spanish and English become enregistered as signs of institutional affiliation.
30. While some Sri Lankan Muslims learn to speak Arabic in the Gulf States, most do not have a knowledge of Arabic beyond reciting the Quran.

CHAPTER 2

1. See Jaffe (1999), Lin and Martin (2005), McCarty (2011), Meek (2010), and Wortham (2008) for a discussion of the agentive role of teachers in language and education policy implementation.

2. The national literacy rate of 95.6 percent is for Sri Lankans age ten and above (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka 2012).
3. See de Silva (1999), de Silva (1998), Sørensen (2008), and Tambiah (1986) for a discussion of the negative impact of the postindependence education policies on interethnic relations.
4. Due to limited facilities, admission to public universities is highly competitive. Currently, only approximately 6 percent of students who take the A-level exam in grade 13 are admitted (University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka 2013).
5. I do not treat mother tongue as an objective feature of the world, but as an ideologically mediated concept, which, as such, is politically and morally driven (LaDousa 2010).
6. In the 1940s and 1950s the right to education was treated as a “right of an individual within a community or ethnic group rather than an individual right” (de Silva 1998, 59). Both Sinhala and Tamil politicians thought that parents should not be able to choose the language of instruction in which their child would study. Muslims, however, were given special provisions as a predominantly Tamil-speaking group with a distinct ethnic identity from Tamils (1998). During his tenure as minister of education in the early 1970s, Badiuddin Mahmud convinced the government to open a new category of Muslim schools, which were to be Tamil and/or Sinhala medium (McGilvray and Raheem 2007).
7. It is highly uncommon for Sinhalas to study in a Tamil-medium school. However, in tea plantation areas Tamil youth may study in a Sinhala-medium school if there are no Tamil-medium schools nearby.
8. For an in-depth discussion of the curriculum reforms see Chapin (2013), Little and Hettige (2013), Perera et al. (2004), and Sørensen (2008).
9. The Ten Year Plan for a Trilingual Sri Lanka states that Sri Lankan youth will be an influential force in driving out “the exclusiveness that has been erroneously built around different languages, which has trickled down to the very people that speak the particular language, thereby impeding the process of fostering shared values and aspirations as one people for the good of the country” (Government of Sri Lanka 2012, 18).
10. This chapter does not look at the implementation of the Sinhala-as-a-second-language program in the majority Tamil-speaking North and East, although it is an important topic of study.
11. Government-assisted schools are semiprivate schools that receive some government funding and follow the national curriculum. Originally intended to provide a free education for Buddhist monks, *pirivena* schools also admit laypersons and cater to disadvantaged and poorer groups in society (de Silva 1999).
12. Although this chapter is focused on the South, it is notable that there is evidence of a deterioration in the education facilities in Tamil-medium schools in the North and East since the outbreak of the civil war (de Silva 1999).
13. In 2018 Mr. R. notified me that construction had begun on a new school building.
14. The category “Non-Roman Catholic” includes anglicans and evangelicals.
15. Several teachers explained to me that it was called a bilingual program rather than an English-medium program because only a few subjects were available in English.

16. District statistics from 2006 show that only 15 percent of Kandy Muslims studied in the Sinhala medium (Nuhman 2007). Kandy Muslims may select Sinhala or Tamil mediums for varied reasons. Some Muslim students told me that they chose Sinhala to better their chance of obtaining a government job. Others mentioned that they would have less competition for admissions to public universities if they chose Tamil.
17. Sri Lankan Muslims started wearing hijabs in the last fifteen years as a form of identification with transnational Islam.
18. In one instance, a Sinhala Buddhist patriarch frequently distinguished himself from his family members by saying that he was English medium. This statement emphasized his age (he was educated in the early 1950s), his comfort in spoken and written English, and his upper-middle-class status. In another instance, a Muslim belt vender in the center of Kandy often commented to me in Tamil that he was Sinhala medium. This statement emphasized his difference from the Tamil Hindu newspaper vender next to him and explained his inability to read and write Tamil.

CHAPTER 3

1. See Bucholtz (2001), Gal and Woolard (1995), Heller (1996, 2001), Jaffe (1999, 2003), LaDousa (2014), and Wortham and Rymes (2002) for a discussion of schools as complex ideological landscapes.
2. See Jaffe (1999), Meek (2010), Mendoza-Denton (2008), and Rampton (1995) for a discussion of the legitimization of language ideologies at the state and nonstate levels.
3. I am concerned with what is called a “total linguistic fact,” the way linguistic forms are connected to usages, speakers, and domains through ideological mediation (Silverstein 1985; also see Wortham 2008).
4. Sinhala teachers and students told me that there is a significant division between Kandyan and Low-country Sinhalas in the Sinhala-medium stream. As a result of their access to civil service and professional jobs during the colonial period, Low-country Sinhalas hold sociocultural, economic, and political hierarchies over Kandyan Sinhalas, who were later to reap the benefits of formal education. Because Girls’ College is dominated by Kandyan Sinhalas, this hierarchy is reversed, with Kandyan Sinhala valued over Low-country Sinhala varieties.
5. See Bate (2009) for a discussion of the different ways scholars have classified genres of Tamil.
6. Bate (2009), Cody (2013), García (2009), Jaffe (1999), Khubchandani (1985), and Martin-Jones (1989) provide critiques of diglossia.
7. I asked Kavitha, a Tamil Hindu girl in the grade 10 Tamil-medium class, if she spoke *ilakkiya* (literary) Tamil in her lessons. She said, “Sometimes we speak *ilakkiya* Tamil, but it’s not full *ilakkiya* Tamil, only bits.”

8. See Auer (2007), Britain (1997), and Trudgill (1986) for a discussion of koines.
9. Although “normalized” Up-country Tamil is similar to the varieties of Tamil spoken in South India, some Kandy Up-country Tamil and Muslim friends told me that they were immediately recognized as speaking Sri Lankan Tamil when they traveled to Tamil Nadu, India.
10. Sonia Das (2008) discusses how the view that Jaffna Tamil is an unchanging and literary-like language is related to Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists’ contemporary depiction of Jaffna as the primordial homeland of Sri Lankan Tamils, who have resisted the invasion of Indo-Aryans (Sinhala) and other groups.
11. Many of the Girls’ College teachers recognized that these categories erased certain distinctions (Irvine and Gal 2000). For example, one teacher told me that teachers and students alike consider her to be a Jaffna Tamil, but she is actually from Vavuniya. It was common in Kandy for all northern Tamils to be called Jaffna Tamils.
12. The fact that the teachers adapted their speech to one another is consistent with theories of accommodation in face-to-face interactions. Howard Giles (1973) theorizes accommodation in dyadic linguistic interactions. Other scholars, such as Peter Trudgill (1986), consider it as a long-term process involving regional and class dialects.
13. See Annamalai (2014) for a discussion of the multiple contextual meanings of *nalla*.
14. Geetha was likely referencing one of several Chennai-based comedy shows that poke fun at different Tamil varieties. On these shows, they usually have a guest speaking a widely recognized variety of Tamil (such as Chennai Tamil or Jaffna Tamil) and another speaker translating it to a more “normalized” Tamil. Thus, rather than being special occurrence, which she seems to imply, the Tamil-to-Tamil translation is part of the regular format of these shows.
15. In South India, the “oo” ending in honorific imperative forms is widely associated with Brahmins.
16. A Kandy Muslim friend said that *pooReeLaa* and *vaaReeLaa* are expressions used by Muslims in the Kandy District, specifically in the town of Akurana.
17. Nabihā’s sister would elongate Tamil long vowels for dramatic effect, which her children liked to comment on and imitate.
18. There may be some truth to Geetha’s daughter’s statement about my Jaffna Tamil friends. However, another factor is that they all spoke English proficiently.
19. I was close with an upper-middle-class Kandy Sinhala Buddhist woman. She was uncomfortable when I mentioned my Jaffna Tamil friends at the university because she associated Jaffna Tamils with the LTTE. But in discussions of language, she would refer to Jaffna Tamil as the superior Tamil variety.
20. The Tamil *ṛ* (*zh*) is pronounced like the “r” in “road,” but with the tongue curled back.

CHAPTER 4

1. See Bucholtz (2011), Das (2016), García Sánchez (2014), Mendoza-Denton (2008), Nakassis (2016), Rampton (1995), Rosa (2019), and Rymes (2001, 2010) for a discussion of language and youth identities.
2. Annamalai (2004), Canagarajah (2007, 2013), Higgins (2009), Jacquemet (2005), Pennycook (2007), and Ramanathan (2005) present studies of postcolonial English.
3. Cala Zubair (2011) documents the “anti-English pro-Sinhala” ideologies among the JVP-affiliated Raggers (a group that practices hazing activities) at the University of Peradeniya.
4. Arjuna Parakrama (1995) estimates that only about 1 percent of Sri Lanka’s population speaks English only.
5. In his research on the Tamil language, E. Annamalai (2011) discusses how it was not accidental that Tamil would be considered to be a heritage language and English associated with economic mobility. Constantine Nakassis (2012, 262) notes in reference to Annamalai’s work that “it is precisely under conditions of language contact and colonialism that ancient Tamil texts were rediscovered, anthologized, studied, and widely circulated through print (and thus were usable emblems of political identity) and that English was institutionalized as a language of business and social mobility, governance, education and elite mobility.”
6. The small number of Muslims who studied in the Sinhala medium also spoke Tamil.
7. Sinhala-medium Muslim girls tended to talk to their Tamil-medium Muslim friends in Tamil.
8. Students’ code-switching practice in the classroom were highly influenced by existing sociolinguistic norms at Girls’ College. While some English was present in almost all spheres of practice, Tamil and Sinhala had much more clearly demarcated domains (e.g., Sinhala was not used in Tamil-medium classes). However, as I discuss in chapter 5, some Hindu College girls from multiethnic Kandy neighborhoods mixed Tamil and Sinhala in classroom interactions with their peers.
9. The girls sometimes recited Tamil poetry in the literary variety for their classmates’ entertainment.
10. Suresh Canagarajah (1999, 2005) uses the term “Englishized Tamil” to describe Tamil that is infused with English words and phrases.
11. It is not possible to draw a definitive line between English-inflected Tamil and Tamil speech because colloquial Tamil contains English words (Nakassis 2016).
12. Suresh Canagarajah (2005) makes a very similar point in his discussion of English-inflected code-switching practices in Jaffna.
13. This shortened greeting is common among some southern Muslims.
14. It was fairly common for Jaffna and Batticaloa women to marry Up-country or Indian-origin Tamil men.
15. Faiza had decided to study in the Tamil medium because her mother was a Tamil-medium teacher. Nadira likely chose the Tamil medium because Tamil was her main

language. In addition, there might not have been high-quality Sinhala-medium schools near her home in Puttalam.

16. A few weeks later a Tamil university student from Jaffna, who had been severely impacted by the war, spotted this transcript while flipping through my notebook (there was no identifying information). Both perplexed and a little disturbed by the comment, he asked, “Why would she say that?”
17. During a visit to her home, Faiza mentioned the superiority of a Batticaloa brain in the presence of her maternal aunt who was visiting from Batticaloa. Her aunt quickly asked in Tamil, “What’s wrong with a Kandy brain?”
18. In Batticaloa, Muslims and Tamils use similar forms of colloquial Tamil (McGilvray 2008). However, although Faiza claimed she spoke Batticaloa Tamil, her Tamil speech in school seemed closer to the Muslim Tamil varieties spoken in Kandy. Nadira and her classmates claimed she spoke as if she was from Puttalam when she first came to Girls’ College, but I did not identify any features of her speech that would be associated with a Puttalam variety of Muslim Tamil.
19. In line 10, Nadira shortens the verb “to be,” *irukku*, to “iikki,” which is a pattern widely associated with Muslim speech. Also, in line 10, she uses the nominal versus the dative case with the noun *viruppam*, a common pattern among southern Muslims.
20. By aligning her mother’s speech with Jaffna Tamil, Kavitha was not necessarily associating herself with the Jaffna region. Jaffna and Batticaloa Tamils have been prominent in urban centers in the South since the British colonial period.
21. In 2011 Geetha started tutoring Sinhala students in Tamil as a second language from her home. I noticed she had an excellent rapport with her students in Sinhala.

CHAPTER 5

1. In northern and eastern Sri Lanka, places of religious worship including temples, churches, and mosques have been sites of violence (see Spencer et al. 2015).
2. See García Sánchez (2014), Goodwin (2006), Mendoza-Denton (2008), and Woolard (1997) for a discussion of peer interactions inside and outside school.
3. My discussion of different forms of monitoring is influenced by foundational work on surveillance (Foucault 1977; Goffman 1961), as well as recent anthropological literature on the interactional aspects of surveillance in relation to power and authority (Feliciano-Santos and Meek 2012; García Sánchez 2014; Jones 2017; Philips 2000; Winn and Behizadeh 2011).
4. Susan Gal writes that the “public/private dichotomy is best understood as a discursive phenomenon that, once established, can be used to characterize, categorize, organize, and contrast virtually any kind of social fact: spaces, institutions, bodies, groups, activities, interactions, relations” (2002, 81).

5. Discussing how linguistic forms both presuppose and create their contexts of use, Judith Irvine argues that decompositional approaches to participant roles can be dangerous “if the role fragments are still conceived as primary, universal, and finite in number” (1996, 135).
6. My sense of “interactional space” is different from “sphere of practice” as I am more specifically concerned with how individuals manage their linguistic and nonlinguistic behavior in relation to the potential gaze of others.
7. While 18.7 percent of “Indian” Tamils were estimated to live outside tea estates in the 2001 census (Bass 2013), this number has likely increased over the last decade and a half as a result of youth seeking new economic opportunities in nearby towns and cities.
8. Some Tamils in Kandy and Colombo do not identify themselves as either North and East or Up-country, but as Sri Lankans of recent Indian origin. Many of their families came from India as professionals, merchants, traders, soldiers, or low-caste municipal workers (Bass 2013).
9. Two of the boys in the class were from Jaffna and one girl had a Batticaloa mother and an Up-country father, but strongly identified with the Batticaloa side of the family.
10. Kausalya said the boy now sells bed sheets on the sidewalk in the center of Kandy.
11. Most of the Jaffna students had moved to Kandy with their families to flee the war in the North. These students had suffered significant hardships and war-related trauma, but they nevertheless managed to do well in school, partly due to the strong emphasis on education in their families.
12. Erving Goffman (1979) emphasized the importance of attending to sight, touch, and sound in the study of face-to-face interactions. The Hindu College teachers monitored their students more by sight than sound.
13. Though corporal punishment was banned by the Ministry of Education, it was a common practice in Sri Lankan schools, particularly in provincial schools.
14. Several teachers told me, “Mariyaadaiyaa peesunu(m)” ([You] need to speak respectfully).
15. The exact meanings of the Tamil addressive forms *Daa* and *Dii* are highly dependent on context.
16. Erving Goffman’s (1979) distinction between intentional (eavesdroppers) and unintentional (overhearers) hearers does not apply well to the classroom context because teachers are supposed to monitor their students, but they are not always looking to catch particular conversations.
17. The negative evaluation of Michael’s speech may have been related to the fact that he did not use the appropriate academic register in teacher-student interactions during lessons. Also, certain features of his speech had particularly negative ideological associations, such as his use of the colloquial addressive term *va*, which Kausalya linked with Muslims.

18. I asked an Up-country Hindu teacher if she thought it was fair to associate Michael's speech and academic performance with his father's behavior. She responded that if children do not have a good home environment, they do not study well, and they do not develop good character.
19. Mala is a Sinhala name. The English textbook, which was issued by the Ministry of Education, tried to represent all major ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, so Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim names were used.
20. The text of the example was this:
 - Mala is an air hostess.
 - Treats / takes care of / looks after / people on the plane.
 - She gets paid for her work.
 - Sometimes she works late in the evening.
21. As discussed in chapter 2, the 5E method encouraged students to work together. But it was very common for the weaker students just to copy assignments from the stronger students, rather than attempting to learn from them.
22. Tamil and Muslim vendors tended to use Sinhala as a default language, but they spoke to known Tamil speakers in Tamil.
23. While many young women in Colombo avoided wearing bindis to make their ethnic identities less apparent, most Tamil schoolgirls in Kandy wore them.
24. I tried to ask Aisha about the incident, but she did not seem to want to talk about it.
25. The girls from the poorest backgrounds did not invite me to their homes, likely because of the expectation that they would have to serve me an elaborate meal.
26. Jayaraman may have left at some point and returned, but it is not clear from the recording.
27. In the recording, Devan's mother tells him to study hard for his O levels, but Devan comically accuses her of using swear words. When Devan brings up Priyanka, his brother scolds him for talking about girls in front of their mother. But Devan replies that their mother has to take on a fatherly role because their father is absent.
28. Sharika Thiranagama (2011) discusses her similar experience navigating a Tamil-speaking Colombo. She writes, "I traveled Colombo on buses memorizing money and destinations, and like many Tamils through Tamil. I became skilled at picking out another Tamil-speaking person to ask directions, eating lunch at Tamil canteens and eateries, memorizing certain kinds of ritualized buying encounters in markets, and going to Tamil area markets for everything complicated" (2011, 229).
29. Indexical icons are "contextually anchored diagrammatic" signs in that they combine indexical (based on spatiotemporal contiguity) and iconic (based on likeness) relationships (Parmentier 1993, 281).
30. The direct translation of *paavam* is "sin," but the expression can also be used to express pity.

CHAPTER 6

1. One of the deadliest attacks carried out in the history of the war was the Colombo Central Bank bombing of January 1996, which resulted in the deaths of ninety-one people.
2. Sharika Thiranagama writes that “in 2001 58.64 percent of people living in Colombo city were not from the majority community, and 54.95 percent of these could claim Tamil as their mother tongue” (2011, 231).
3. The Sinhala and Tamil terms for “bucket” were likely derived from the Portuguese word *balde* (MacIntyre 2006).
4. In the poignant and powerful end to his book, E. Valentine Daniel (1996) gives an example of a Sinhala woman performing a tactic of anticipation to save a Tamil man from a riot. He recounts an incident where a Sinhala mob boarded a train in Kandy. When the mob enters the Tamil man’s car, a Kandyan Sinhala woman sits next to him and holds his hand. A member of the mob says, “No Tamils here, go on to the next compartment” (1996, 212).
5. Shibboleth means “an ear of grain” or “flood water” (McNamara 2005, 352).
6. In one incident in 2008, a male Jaffna Tamil engineering student at the University of Peradeniya used English as a tactic of anticipation. In 2008 there was a riot on campus between students in the science and engineering faculties. While preparing to flee his residence hall, he was confronted by a mob of Sinhala science students holding cricket bats and wire. When they asked him in Sinhala if he was science or engineering, he answered in English that he was in the medical faculty, and they moved on (many medical students are part of the anglophone middle class). He told me he would have been beaten up if they had seen his student ID card, which identified him as an engineering student. The division between science and engineering students, however, was not directly connected to ethnicity.
7. My discussion of the semiotic strategies Tamils employed at checkpoints is different from my discussion of the Hindu College students’ interactional practices inside and outside the classroom in chapter 5. Here I am concerned with their tactics for representing the self in relation to ethnicity, language, class, gender, etc.
8. Bonnie Urciuoli (1991, 1996) also discusses the relative ideological values of different linguistic varieties (Spanish and English) in relation to various spheres of practice in her study of bilingualism among Puerto Ricans in New York.
9. In her study of Colombo street life, Francesca Bremner (2005) provides insight into the interplay among ethnicity and other sociocultural factors in public space. Framing her position as a Tamil female in relation to the mainly lower-class Sinhala males who spent time on the street, she writes that her ethnicity was mitigated by her fluency in Sinhala. In addition, her gender—as it was looked down upon for women to “hang out” on the street—was mitigated by her family’s long-standing connections in the neighborhood and her ability to avoid attracting attention to herself.

10. An Up-country Tamil friend told me that some Tamil women on his tea plantation would rearrange their saris in the Sinhala style before passing through the nearby Sinhala village. He said they did not want to visually stand out as Tamils.
11. When I relayed Gayatri's story to Kausalya (my Tamil Hindu research assistant), she showed me a large safety pin she kept around her neck. She said that when men grab her on the bus, she discretely pokes them with the pin.
12. Amir went to Qatar to work in a retail shop for almost a decade. When he returned to Kandy and got married, he adopted a long beard that made him more immediately identifiable as a Muslim.
13. I knew some Sinhalaes who chose to deny their Tamil proficiency. For example, a Sinhala Buddhist woman who had lived on a tea plantation for decades repeatedly claimed to me that she did not know Tamil. However, when she overheard me speaking Tamil to her Tamil cook, she would sometimes correct me on my incorrect use of particular words and phrases.
14. At a conference in the United States, one Sinhala lawyer told me that because her first language was English and not Sinhala, she was not particularly attached to the language as a marker of ethnic identity and was thus much more open to learning Tamil.
15. Sinhalaes often pronounce *ḷ* (*zh*) as *L*.
16. A teenaged boy tried to steal my bag when I was staying with a Sinhala Buddhist family in a middle-class neighborhood near Kandy Lake. The family insisted I report the incident to the police, but afterward some Hindu College teachers commented with a laugh that the police officers were more of a risk to me than the boy.
17. I used a pseudonym to protect the identity of the organization.
18. *Appaa* (father, older man) can be used as an addressive term "when addressing persons younger than the speaker or persons older than the speaker, but perhaps of lower professional or social status, or between friends and equals" (Schiffman 1999, 50).
19. Jane Hill identifies several mock Spanish strategies that I did not observe in "mock Tamil." For example, she mentions that mock Spanish can involve aspects of Spanish morphology used to make English words humorous or pejorative (e.g., "mistake-o numero uno") (1995, 205).
20. I introduced myself in Sinhala, Tamil, and English at a PI event. One of the leaders of the group then shamed the Sinhala members for not doing the same.
21. It was common for Up-country Tamils to imitate Jaffna Tamil speech in a mocking way, but I did not hear Jaffna Tamils imitate Up-country Tamil speech.

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