

English Usage *for* Preaching

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Introduction

This document was created from the corrections given to native Sinhala speaking monks during English preaching class. Although targeted at native Sinhala speakers, anyone learning to preach in English could benefit. It is constantly being updated and suggestions and feedback are most welcome. Some sections will refer you to lessons in other grammar books (see abbreviations). Some sections contain practice exercises. Main topics are either important grammar points such as subject verb agreement or teaching topics such as precepts. There is also a lengthy miscellaneous section at the end for words that can't otherwise be grouped into a topic.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations and conventions used in this document:

= (equals) means that the meaning is basically the same.

~~strike through~~ means it is incorrect.

... (ellipse) means the phrase or sentence would continue at this point or that text is missing.

/ (slash) means you could use either word.

~ means this is how a word is pronounced (use a dictionary for more precise pronunciation)

sth: something

smb: somebody

NA English: North American English (USA and Canada)

Y contains a practice exercise

EEG: *Essential English Grammar*, first edition.

IEG: *Intermediate English Grammar*, second edition.

AEG: *Advanced English Grammar*, first edition.

ACTIONS

The words *bodily*, *verbal* and *mental* are all adjectives that describe action or conduct. So the phrase *bodily action* is used as a noun. *Body*, *speech* and *mind* are nouns. Usually we say that we do things *with our body* or *by body*, etc. so we use the phrase as an adverb. See the examples below.

Nouns:

Bodily conduct, verbal conduct, mental conduct = bodily action, verbal action, mental action

good bodily conduct, etc.

wholesome bodily conduct, etc.

good bodily actions, etc.

wholesome bodily actions, etc.

actions with the body, with speech and with the mind

We want to develop wholesome bodily conduct, wholesome verbal conduct and wholesome mental conduct.

Adverbs

by body, by speech, by mind = by body, speech and mind

with our body, with our speech and with our mind

with the body, with speech, and with the mind.

We do actions by body, speech and mind.

in the past

When we talk about actions someone did in the past, we can use simple past or past perfect.

~~If someone is doing bad actions in the past, they may be reborn in hell.~~

If someone did bad actions in the past, they may be reborn in hell.

If someone has done bad actions in the past, they may be reborn in hell.

When we want to say someone did things in the past and is still doing them, we can say,

He has been doing good actions for a long time.

with

We use with to indicate the method that an action is done.

He does bad things with his body.

He clings to the cold water with his mind.

We see forms with our eyes.

ADJECTIVE ORDER

The order of adjectives in English is rather complex. One common mistake is the placement of *all*. In Sinhala the equivalent word usually appears directly before the noun, but in English it comes before any other modifiers, even articles. Although the meaning will be the same, it sounds very wrong.

~~The Supreme Buddha understood the **all** worlds.~~

The Supreme Buddha understood **all** the worlds.

~~We must overcome our **all** defilements.~~

We must overcome **all** our defilements.

ADJECTIVES IN -ING AND -ED

[IEG97; AEG85C] Some adjectives end in -ing and -ed. Each form has a different meaning such as bored and boring. For example, suppose there is a book about English grammar.

When we describe the book, we say *it is boring*. When we describe ourselves while reading it, we say *we are bored*. The -ing adjective describes the thing and the -ed adjective describes how somebody feels about the thing. This is an important distinction. If we say *we are bored*, that describes our feeling. If we say *we are boring*, that describes how other people feel when they talk to us. In the examples below the noun or noun phrase being described by the adjective is underlined.

English grammar is very boring. I am bored when I study English grammar.

This example is very interesting. We are interested in hearing the example.

The work is tiring. He is tired from doing this work.

Reading the Dhamma is satisfying. I am satisfied when I read the Dhamma.

BODILY FUNCTIONS

There are many words to use for bodily functions. Some can be used in preaching (marked normal below). Some should never be used (marked vulgar).

Even if they are marked normal, they should not be used to talk about our own body. The only polite way to say that you have to urinate or defecate is to say, “I need to use the bathroom,” “I need to use a washroom,” “I have to use a bathroom,” “I have to use a washroom.” The polite way to ask for details is to say, “Number one or two?” Vomit, throw up, and pass gas are all ok to use to talk about ourselves.

urinate, v.
urine, n.

normal, medical
normal, medical

gas, n.
pass gas, v.

normal
normal

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| pee, n. & v. | normal, childish | wind, bad air | old fashioned |
| number two | informal | faɪt , n. & v. | vulgar |
| pi:s , n. & v. | vulgar, don't use | vomit, n. & v. | normal, medical |
| excrement, n. | normal, formal | throw up, v. | normal |
| defecate, v. | normal | puke, n. & v. | informal |
| poo/poop, n. & v. | informal, childish | barf, hurl, up chuck | very informal |
| number one, n. | informal | | |
| dung, n. | normal, only for animals | | |
| manure, n. | normal, only for animals | | |
| stool, n. | medical | | |
| erəp , n. & v. | vulgar | | |
| ʃi:t , n. & v. | vulgar | | |

COMPARATIVE & SUPERLATIVE

The grammar involved with comparative and superlative is essential for preaching. Every grammar book will have lessons on this topic and you should practice them out loud until you are very confident. If you get them wrong it can easily confuse the meaning. Only a few examples are given here.

~~Her house was so big than his.~~

Her house was bigger than his.

~~The one who practiced generosity has a long lifespan than the one who didn't.~~

The one who practiced generosity has a longer lifespan than the one who didn't.

~~The Supreme Buddha was the great teacher.~~

The Supreme Buddha was the greatest teacher.

As a practice drill, create sentences that use each form.

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| angry | angrier than/more angry than | angriest/most angry |
| arrogant | more arrogant than | most arrogant |
| ashamed | more ashamed than | most ashamed |
| bad | worse than | worst |
| beneficial | more beneficial than | most beneficial |
| comfortable | more comfortable than | most comfortable |
| compassionate | more compassionate than | most compassionate |
| conceited | more conceited than | most conceited |
| dangerous | more dangerous than | most dangerous |
| deluded | more deluded than | most deluded |
| dirty | dirtier than | dirtiest |
| energetic | more energetic than | most energetic |
| fearful | more fearful than | most fearful |
| fragrant | more fragrant than | most fragrant |
| good | better than | best |
| greedy | more greedy than/greedier than | most greedy/greediest |
| happy | more happy than/happier than | most happy/happiest |
| healthy | more healthy than/healthier | most healthy/healthiest |
| heavy | heavier than | heaviest |
| helpful | more helpful than | most helpful |
| hot | hotter than | hottest |
| hungry | more hungry than/hungrier than | most hungry/hungriest |
| jealous | more jealous than | most jealous |
| negligent | more negligent than | most negligent |
| peaceful | more peaceful than | most peaceful |

| | | |
|----------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| proud | prouder than | proudest |
| restless | more restless than | most restless |
| sad | sadder than | saddest |
| safe | safer than | safest |
| smelly | more smelly than/smellier than | most smelly/smelliest |
| strong | stronger than | strongest |
| thirsty | more thirsty than | most thirsty |
| valuable | more valuable than | most valuable |
| wise | wiser than | wisest |

CONFUSING WORDS

assurance or insurance?

If you give someone assurance, then you give them confidence in something. Insurance is a policy to cover accidents or damage to people or things like health insurance or car insurance. In British English you can use assurance to mean insurance but not the other way around. In NA English they are completely different.

The only real assurance we have to be born in a good destination is attaining stream entry.

Even if you have health insurance, you will still get sick and die one day.

perfectly or fully enlightened?

Usually we say that all Arahants are fully enlightened. This is compared to noble disciples who have not yet eradicated all the fetters. Perfectly enlightened is used to refer only to Supreme Buddhas. This is compared to other Arahants who needed the assistance of a teacher, etc.

FAITH

confidence

We can *have confidence* or we can *have confidence in something*.

A faithful disciple should have confidence if she wants to understand the Dhamma.

We must have confidence in the teachings of the Supreme Buddha

We can *develop, increase, or build* our confidence.

He is trying to *develop* confidence in the Dhamma.

When we read the suttas we will *increase* our confidence.

believe

To *believe* something means to accept it as true. To *believe in* something means to have firm conviction in the goodness of something.

We believe in the teachings of the Supreme Buddha.

We believe in the enlightenment of the Supreme Buddha.

We believe what the Supreme Buddha teaches us.

We believe that the Supreme Buddha attained full enlightenment.

MEDITATION

erect

Often you will hear the instruction, “Keep your body erect.” Erect is not such a common word and not so suitable for children. In any case you can never use erect as a verb because it has the meaning “to build.”

Keep your body upright.

Keep your back straight but relaxed.
Keep your head up. Don't let it drop down or you may fall asleep.
~~Erect your body.~~

focus

When the word focus has an object, we always focus **on** something.

Focus your mind.
Focus your mind **on** these wholesome thoughts.
Focus your mind **on** your breath.
Focus your mind **on** the six faculties.
Focus your mind **on** thoughts of loving-kindness.
Focus your mind **on** loving-kindness.

In the examples above you could drop the words *your mind* and still have the same general meaning.

Focus **on** these wholesome thoughts.
Focus **on** your breath.
Focus **on** the six faculties.
Focus **on** thoughts of loving-kindness.
Focus **on** loving-kindness.

Physical objects used for meditation

A mat: The large flat object that may be under your entire body

A cushion, a small cushion: Usually the object under your buttocks

A mattress is only used for sleeping. Generally the word pillow is only used for sleeping, although smaller cushions used under the knees might be called pillows.

breath or breathing?

Breath is the air that comes in and out. Breathing is a noun referring to the action of taking air in and out of the lungs. Breathe is the verb. Be careful with pronunciation: breathing ~breething

breathing in and breathing out
ingoing breath and outgoing breath
Try to breathe quietly so you don't disturb other people.

Examples

Your mind goes here and there. = Your mind wanders here and there.
Your mind will go here and there.
Greed will arise in your mind.
You will have greedy thoughts.
Hate will arise in your mind. = Hatred will arise in your mind.
Thoughts will arise in our minds. It is the nature of the mind.
Don't try to control your breath/breathing. Just observe it.
~~Pay your attention to the breath.~~
Pay attention to the breath/to your breathing.
Place your attention **on** the breath.
Look at your mind.
Place your right hand on your left hand.
Fold your legs. = Cross your legs.
Close your eyes gently. Don't squeeze them tightly.
You should recollect the Supreme Buddha's qualities.
Don't talk to each other.
If you have to use the bathroom, please get up silently and go. You don't need to ask me.

MERIT

[See EEG 82 on how to use *a lot* and *much*]

merit

Merit is uncountable.

Do you like to make ***merit?***

We earned ***much merit*** by reciting suttas.

Sakka performed ***many acts of merit*** previously when he was born as a human.

He made ***a huge quantity of merit*** by practicing meditation.

He made ***a huge amount of merit*** by practicing meditation.

collect/earn/make merit

We ***collect*** merit. = We ***earn*** merit. = We ***make*** merit.

Today you ***collected*** lots of ***merit***.

When you give dana you ***are collecting*** lots of merit.

Because they ***had collected*** lots of merit in their previous life they were born in heaven.

When you practice precepts you ***earn*** a huge quantity of ***merit***.

She enjoys ***making merit***.

We ***make merit*** by doing good things.

do/performance acts of merit

~~The queen performed much merit. = The queen did much merit.~~

The queen performed many acts of merit. = The queen did many acts of merit.

rejoicing in

When we are happy about the merit that someone else has done, we always rejoice ***in*** that merit.

Let us rejoice in all the merit that has been done today.

He rejoiced in the merit that his family collected.

sharing merit

Share can be transitive for the thing being shared, in this case *merit*. The word *merit* must be right after the word *share*. We use the preposition *with* to show the people who receive it.

Now we can share merit.

~~Please share the merit to me.~~

Please share the merit ***with*** me.

power of merit

Through the power of this merit, may you attain Nibbana.

By the power of this merit, may you attain Nibbana.

meritorious

Meritorious can be used to describe *people* who have done acts of merit or the *actions* that lead to merit.

Meritorious lay disciples...

Meritorious children...

Today you did many ***meritorious*** actions by body, speech and mind.

Meritorious deeds lead to happiness.

Actions can also use the “of” construction.

By doing these ***acts of merit*** you have created happiness in your life.

But do not use the “of” construction for people.

~~Lay disciples of merit...~~

You should not use the following constructions unless you are comparing people *with* and *without* merit.

~~Lay disciples with merit...~~

~~Lay disciples who have merit...~~

Passed away

When doing a merit sharing, you may need to know who is dead and who is alive. The most polite way to ask is

Is this person still alive? Are these people still alive?

Has this person passed away?/Have these people passed away?

Warning!

The phrase “*more merit*” is only used as a comparison or to indicate that the quantity of merit has been added to. If you simply want to indicate that a large quantity of merit has been collected say “much merit.”

You will collect ***more merit*** if you offer dāna to the sangha instead of just to an individual.

Yesterday you earned merit and today you earned even ***more merit***. [You added today’s merit to your general collection of merit, therefore you have more today than you did yesterday.]

Examples

Merit is another word for happiness.

NEGATION

[See EEG 76-78] When we want to negate the words *anyone* and *somebody*, we have to change it to the words *no one* and *nobody*.

~~Anyone can’t come here.~~

No one can come here.

~~Anyone can’t put an end to this saṃsara without understanding the Nobel Truths.~~

No one can put an end to this saṃsara without understanding the Nobel Truths.

In English you cannot have two negatives in a phrase.

~~We can’t never say...~~

We can never say...

We can’t ever say...

We can’t say...

In NA English, the phrase “*have not something*” sounds strange, especially in spoken English.

~~He has not a book.~~

He doesn’t have a book.

He hasn’t got a book.

~~If you have not energy, you won’t overcome unwholesome qualities.~~

If you don’t have energy, you won’t overcome unwholesome qualities.

If you haven’t got energy, you won’t overcome unwholesome qualities.

~~We have not any assurance that we will be born in a good destination.~~

We don’t have any assurance that we will be born in a good destination.

We haven’t got any assurance that we will be born in a good destination.

NOBLE DISCIPLES

Examples

If someone becomes a non-returner...

~~Stream-enterer position~~

The state of stream entry
If we follow these instructions we can attain stream entry.

NON-COUNT

Some words are not countable. This means we cannot make them plural or use the indefinite articles *a* and *an*. Suggestions for giving a singular or plural sense are in parentheses.

advice (sg: a piece of advice. pl: a lot of advice)
help (pl: some help, lots of help, a little help)
merit (pl: a lot of merit, lots of merit)
praise (pl: a lot of praise, lots of praise)
violence (sg: an act of violence. pl: many acts of violence, a lot of violence)

Sometimes words that are generally non-count have a special or uncommon usage in the plural form..

food (*foods* has the specific meaning of "types of food")
suffering (the word *sufferings* is unusual, sometimes found in poetry)
pain (generally *pain* is non-count, but you can say "*Someone has lots of pains in their body*" to mean they have pain in their legs, arms, head, etc.)

NOUN/ADJ/ADV

Y It is easy to confuse the different forms of a word. The following is a list of common words and their different forms. They are given as *noun*, *adjective* and *adverb*. Not all nouns have adverb forms. As a practice drill, create sentences that use each form, especially the noun and adjective.

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| ambition, ambitious, ambitiously | health, healthy |
| anger, angry, angrily | heat, hot |
| arrogance, arrogant, arrogantly | help, helpful, helpfully |
| benefit, beneficial, beneficially | hunger, hungry |
| beauty, beautiful, beautifully | jealousy, jealous, jealously |
| comfort, comfortable, comfortably | luxury, luxurious, luxuriously |
| compassion, compassionate, compassionately | magic, magical, magically |
| conceit, conceited, conceitedly | negligence, negligent, negligently |
| danger, dangerous, dangerously | peace, peaceful, peacefully |
| delusion, deluded | pride, proud, proudly |
| dirt, dirty | regret, regretful, regretfully |
| emotion, emotional, emotionally | responsibility, responsible |
| energy, energetic, energetically | restlessness, restless, restlessly |
| enjoyment, enjoyable | sadness, sad, sadly |
| enlightenment, enlightened | safety, safe, safely |
| envy, envious, enviously | shame, ashamed |
| equanimity, equanimous, equanimously | smell, smelly |
| excitement, exciting | strength, strong, strongly |
| fear, fearful, fearfully | success, successful |
| fragrance, fragrant | thirst, thirsty |
| freedom, free, freely | value, valuable |
| friend, friendly | violence, violent, violently |
| generous, generosity, generously | wealth, wealthy |
| greed, greedy, greedily | weight, heavy |
| happiness, happy, happily | wisdom, wise, wisely |

NUMBER

x-fold

When we use the x-fold construction, it is singular:

- the Noble Eightfold Path
- the sixfold base
- the fourfold Sangha

double, triple etc.

If we use *double, triple, etc.* as an adjective, then the thing being described is singular

- the triple gem
- his double layer robe

kinds of, types of

If we say there are so many *kinds of things* or *types of things*, then those things are plural regardless of how we describe them.

- There are four types of clinging.
- What are the ten kinds of wholesome actions.

POSSESSIVE

[See EEG 63] There are two possessive forms in English: (1) the *inflected form* that uses 's or s' on the end of the word and (2) the *of possessive* that uses the word *of* before the word that possesses something. In general we use the inflected form for animate nouns and the *of possessive* for inanimate nouns.

~~Now he is naked because he his the clothes of his friends.~~

Now he is naked because he hid his friend's clothes.

~~This Dhamma and discipline has one taste, salt's taste.~~

This Dhamma and discipline has one taste, the taste of salt.

There are exceptions to this rule. Sometimes we can use both forms. For example, nouns that are a product of human creation can use both, although the *of possessive* sounds better:

This is a benefit of meditation. = This is meditation's benefit.

Examples

The Supreme Buddha understood the real nature ***of this life***.

PRECEPTS

¶ We need to be able to talk about all of the precepts in all of the tenses, along with using the "abstain from" construction. Practice each of the precepts with the patterns below.

1. Don't kill living beings.
2. Don't steal things.
3. Don't commit sexual misconduct.
4. Don't lie. = Don't tell lies.
5. Don't take alcohol and drugs. = Don't use alcohol and drugs.
6. Don't break the precepts.

We use the abstain from construction when giving the precepts and giving using them as commands.

1. Abstain from killing living beings.
2. Abstain from stealing things.
3. Abstain from committing sexual misconduct. = Abstain from sexual misconduct.

4. Abstain from lying. = Abstain from telling lies.
5. Abstain from taking alcohol and drugs. = Abstain from using alcohol and drugs.

“Someone” is singular, so the main verb ends in s.

1. If someone kills living beings, he may be reborn in hell.
2. If someone steals things, he may be reborn in hell.
3. If someone commits sexual misconduct, he may be reborn in hell.
4. If someone lies, he may be reborn in hell. = If someone tells lies, he may be reborn in hell.
5. If someone takes alcohol and drugs, he may be reborn in hell. = If someone uses alcohol and drugs, he may be reborn in hell.
6. If someone breaks the precepts, he may be reborn in hell.

“People” is plural, so the main verb does not end in s.

1. People who kill living beings may be reborn in hell.
2. People who steal things may be reborn in hell.
3. People who commit sexual misconduct may be reborn in hell.
4. People who lie may be reborn in hell. = People who tell lies may be reborn in hell.
5. People who take alcohol and drugs may be reborn in hell. = People who use alcohol and drugs may be reborn in hell.
6. People who break the precepts may be reborn in hell.

1. She never killed living beings.
2. She never stole things.
3. She never committed sexual misconduct.
4. She never lied. = She never told lies.
5. She never took alcohol and drugs. = She never used alcohol and drugs.
6. She never broke the precepts.

1. If we have never killed living beings then we are free from blame.
2. If we have never stolen things then we are free from blame.
3. If we have never committed sexual misconduct then we are free from blame.
4. If we have never lied then we are free from blame. = If we have never told lies then we are free from blame.
5. If we have never taken alcohol and drugs then we are free from blame. = If we have never used alcohol and drugs then we are free from blame.
6. If we have never broken the precepts then we are free from blame.

1. An Arahant will never kill living beings.
2. An Arahant will never steal things.
3. An Arahant will never commit sexual misconduct.
4. An Arahant will never lie. = An Arahant will never tell lies.
5. An Arahant will never take alcohol and drugs. = An Arahant will never use alcohol and drugs.
6. An Arahant will never break the precepts.

take precepts

We *take precepts* when we recite them out loud. Once we have taken them we *observe precepts*, or *follow precepts*. In writing, we can say *undertake precepts*. You will also hear people say protect precepts or practice precepts, but this is not common in non-Buddhist English.

As monks, we *give people the precepts*.

commit or engages?

One of the meanings of commit is “to do,” usually when talking about doing bad things.

When we use the word engages to mean “to do” we usually use the preposition “in”.

Because he ~~**did**~~ sexual misconduct in the past, he was reborn in hell.

Because he **committed** sexual misconduct in the past, he was reborn in hell.

Because she **engaged in** sexual misconduct in the past, she was reborn in hell.

Out of ignorance, that monk committed an offence.

Because of his bad friends, he **engaged in** all sorts of bad behavior.

You can engage in *lying, killing, and stealing* but we usually would just say you *tell lies, kill and steal*. We never say ~~engaged in alcohol and drugs~~. We don't say he ~~committed lying, killing or stealing~~, but we do say *he committed murder and theft* or *he committed a crime*.

You can also commit an act of some sort, such as an *act of violence* or an *act of kindness*. We can say that you *partake of alcohol and drugs*, but this is extremely formal.

Important words

break/broke/broken

drink/drank/drunk

steal/stole/stolen

take/took/taken

tell/told/told

Examples

~~Because of greed he **is telling** lies.~~

Because of greed he tells lies.

He is always telling lies.

If we take something that doesn't belong to us, this precept will be broken.

BETTER: If we take something that doesn't belong to us, we will break this precept.

If he does not understand the law of kamma, he will not be afraid to kill living beings.

QUESTIONS

See also RELATIVE CLAUSES.

Formation

[See IEG 48-49] Making questions in English is very tricky and should be studied deliberately and practiced well. You cannot make questions simply by putting a question word at the beginning of a statement. This is made even more difficult by the similarity of some clauses to questions. See the examples below as well as explanations in grammar books.

Statement: His name is Tom.

~~Question: What his name is?~~

Question: What is his name?

~~Relative clause in a statement: We should learn what is his name.~~

Relative clause in a statement: We should learn what his name is.

~~Relative clause in a question: Do you know what is his name?~~

Relative clause in a question: Do you know what his name is?

Statement: The three things are greed, hatred, and delusion.

~~Question: What the three things are?~~

Question: What are the three things?

~~Relative clause in a statement: We should learn what are the three things.~~

Relative clause in a statement: We should learn what the three things are.

~~Relative clause in a question: Do you know what are the three things?~~

Relative clause in a question: Do you know what the three things are?

~~Why we practice Buddhism?~~

Why do we practice Buddhism?

~~Why we came to this world?~~

Why did we come to this world?

~~Why we should do that?~~

Why should we do that?

Tag Questions

[See IEG 51] Making tag questions (such as “Isn’t it?”) is also very tricky in English. You may want to avoid using them until you have practiced this skill specifically.

REBIRTH

See also WORLDS

rebirth

Rebirth is the phenomenon of being born as a new being in some location.

We have experienced **rebirth** for countless eons.

The Supreme Buddha explained the process of **rebirth** in many ways.

We can also use the phrase “*take rebirth in*” to say that someone was reborn in a specific location. This is somewhat formal, so instead you can simply use the “*be reborn*” construction.

She **took rebirth in** the animal world. = She **was reborn** in the animal world.

reborn

Reborn must be used with a “be” verb. One cannot just “~~reborn somewhere~~” or “~~rebirth somewhere.~~”

If we do good actions we **will be reborn** in a good destination.

He **was reborn** in the human world.

After they **were reborn** in hell, they suffered intense pain.

People who kill their parents **are reborn** in hell.

We **have been reborn** again and again in the lower worlds.

If you continue this bad behavior you are **going to be reborn** in a bad destination.

We are reborn **as** *something or someone* but we are reborn **in** *a world or location*.

He was reborn **as** a dog.

He was reborn **in** the animal realm.

She was reborn **as** a deva.

She was reborn **in** a heavenly world.

She was reborn **as** Queen Mahā Māyā.

She was reborn **in** Devadaha.

born

Like *reborn*, you must use a “be” verb with *born*.

He **was born** in a wealthy family.

Most people **are born** after being in the womb for nine or ten months.

reappear

We can also use reappear to mean reborn. It can never be used in the passive, though. Unlike *reborn*, it does not use the helping verb *be*.

~~They will get reappeared in a bad destination.~~

~~They will be reappeared in hell.~~

They will reappear in a bad destination.

They will reappear in hell.

conceived

Conception is the process of a being entering the mother’s womb, whereas *birth* is the process of exiting the womb. Like *reborn*, you must use a “be” verb.

Once he was **conceived** in his mother’s womb, the family became very poor.

death and dying

When speaking, there is no need to say, “After death, with the breakup of the body...” You can simply say, “after death” or “after he died” or some other simple form.

After death he was reborn in a good destination.

After he died he was reborn in a good destination.

When the king ***died*** everyone was happy.

samsara

In English, the word samsara is sometimes written with a dot over or under the m and sometimes without. You may even see ṅ. In any case it is always pronounced as an “ng” sound.

We must eliminate this craving that keeps us in samsara.

...this craving that binds us to samsara.

Examples

We ***have been born again and again*** in this long round of samsara.

We ***have been born many times*** in this long round of samsara.

As a result of that action...

~~As a result of that action...~~

What is the reason they are reborn in hell?

What is the reason they are reborn as animals?

What did they do in a previous life that caused them to be reborn as ghosts?

What is the reason they are born in a good world?

What is the reason they are born poor?

What is the reason they are born in a wealthy family?

What is the reason they are reborn in a family of beggars?

What was the good action I did in the past that caused me to be reborn so beautiful?

What did I do in the past that lead to my happiness in the present?

REFUGE

There are several ways talk about going for refuge.

go for refuge to

Treat this as a phrasal verb

She made him ***go for refuge to*** the triple gem.

They ***went for refuge to*** the triple gem.

take refuge in

Also a phrasal verb.

He ***took refuge in*** the Triple Gem.

take/give the refuges

The person who *takes* the three refuges is the one who goes for refuge. The person who *gives* the three refuges is the one who leads the reciting. We take the three refuges from someone and we give them *to someone*.

Would you like to ***take*** the Three Refuges?

He ***took*** the three refuges ***from*** her.

He ***gave*** her the three refuges.

She ***gave*** the three refuges ***to*** them.

Warning!

We never call a person who has gone for refuge *a refugee*. We can only call them “*someone who has gone for refuge*,” “*Someone who has taken the refuges*,” or less specifically “*a disciple of the Supreme Buddha*.”

RELATIVE CLAUSES

See also QUESTIONS. In the following examples, the relative clause is in *italics*.

~~This is the way *how beings in hell suffer*.~~

This is the way *that beings in hell suffer*.

This is the way *beings in hell suffer*.

SENSE BASES

Y Practice the following phrases by having someone randomly point to each of the sense organs on their body. The word tangibles is not so common so you may have to explain it as “things we can touch.” The reason we use tangibles is because it has the specific sense of things to be touched, as opposed to forms that are seen. In general, though, we can also touch forms.

1. The eyes see forms
2. The ears hear sounds
3. The nose smells odors
4. The tongue tastes flavors
5. The body touches tangibles
6. The mind thinks thoughts

We can also say “smells” instead of odors, but the phrase “the nose smells smells” sounds a bit odd. The word “tangibles” is uncommon but correct. You can explain tangibles as “things we can touch with the body.”

Because we have two eyes and two ears, we often refer to them in the plural. When talking about the sense bases, though, we can also say, “The eye sees forms, the ear hears sounds.” Whichever you use be sure to make the subject and verb agree.

We always use *with* to say what organ we use to do something. The following phrases are so common that they should probably be memorized as well as the form above.

1. We see forms with our eyes.
2. We hear sounds with our ears.
3. We smell odors with our nose.
4. We taste flavors with our tongue.
5. We touch tangibles with our body
6. We think thoughts with our mind

When talking about positive sense objects, we can use *pleasant*, *delightful*, and *agreeable* for all of them. Specifically we can talk about

beautiful forms
beautiful sounds
good smells
delicious flavors
soft, comfortable tangibles

When talking about negative sense objects, we can use *unpleasant* and *disagreeable* for all of them. Specifically we can talk about

ugly forms
noisy sounds (noise always has a negative sense)
horrible odors, bad smells
rough, hard, uncomfortable tangibles

When making up examples, there seems to be a tendency to talk about “beautiful food.” It’s true that food can be beautiful, but for children it may be better to save food for talking about tastes. Or to be clear that food can be beautiful, delicious and also smell good.

Examples

When we see something, we must guard our eye faculty.

SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

One of the greatest difficulties for non-native English speakers is subject-verb agreement. Try to learn this correctly right away by having someone do on-the-spot corrections while you are speaking. Otherwise incorrect usage will become a habit.

Singular pronouns

[See EEG 79] The following pronouns are all singular, so the present tense verb usually ends in “s”.

everybody
nobody
everyone
everybody

¶ You can practice by making a present tense sentence with one of these pronouns as the subject and then make the exact same sentence with the word *people*. For example:

Everybody wants happiness.
People want happiness.

TEACHING

explained

The object placed directly after the word *explained* is the subject matter that is being talked about.

The Supreme Buddha explained suffering and the cause of suffering.

If we want to talk about the people receiving the teaching, we use the preposition *to*.

The Supreme Buddha explained to us the way to end this cycle of rebirth.

IMPORTANT: People often omit the preposition *to* and it changes the meaning completely. Then it sounds like the people are the thing being explained. See also “taught.”

~~The Supreme Buddha explained us...~~
The Supreme Buddha explained to us...

taught

Unlike the word “explained,” the people being taught can appear as an object directly after the word “taught.” In the following example, “us” is the indirect object and “many ways of making merit” is the direct object.

The Supreme Buddha taught us many ways of collecting merit.

The following two sentences are correct, but the second one conveys more meaning:

The Supreme Buddha taught us. [not other people]
The Supreme Buddha taught many ways of collecting merit. [but we don’t know to whom]

We can also use the preposition “about” with taught. It gives the meaning of teaching the characteristics or qualities of something. In the following examples, teaching “about heaven” would include explaining all of the qualities that make it such a great place.

The Supreme Buddha taught **about** heaven and the way to be reborn in heaven.
The Supreme Buddha taught us **about** heaven and the way to be reborn in heaven.

preached

In normal English usage the word *preached* is only used for the act of giving a sermon or

some kind of moral lecture. It can also refer to the topic in general. When referring to the details of what is being said, it is better to use teach/taught and explain/explained.

One day the Supreme Buddha preached a beautiful sermon.

The Supreme Buddha frequently preached on morality.

~~The Supreme Buddha preached that we should abstain from killing.~~

The Supreme Buddha taught that we should abstain from killing.

As with “explained,” the people hearing the teaching cannot appear directly after the word “preached.”

~~The Supreme Buddha preached us...~~

The Supreme Buddha preached to us about something

exhorted and expounded

The word *exhorted* (pronounced: ig-zort) is common in the written texts but it is not used in ordinary speaking. It means strongly encouraged. *Expounded* is also not so common in spoken English, but you will frequently find it in translations. It means to explain in detail.

Examples

And then he taught the meaning using a verse.

And then he taught the meaning with a verse.

The Supreme Buddha explained the real nature of this life.

TENSES

When talking about the Supreme Buddha’s qualities, try to use the present tense.

~~The Blessed One was the one and only teacher...~~

The Blessed One is the one and only teacher...

When telling a story, avoid using the present continuous. Either use the simple present or simple past.

~~The Blessed One is saying...~~

The Blessed One says..

The Blessed One said...

TIME

Examples

~~After tens and thousands of years...~~

After tens of thousands of years...

TRANSITION PHRASES

Now lets look at the next factor.

Now lets think about the next factor.

~~Let’s pay attention to the third factor.~~

And then the Supreme Buddha told the monks ...

And then the Supreme Buddha taught the next factor.

After some time, the Buddha went to Savatti.

WORLDS

See also REBIRTH

asuras

You will sometimes see *asuras* translated as *titans*. *Titans* refers to beings from Greek mythology that are very similar to asuras. Nowadays most people don't know the word titans so we can just use *asuras* untranslated.

beings

We can say *hell beings*, *human beings* and *heavenly/divine beings*, but not ~~ghost beings~~, ~~animal beings~~, ~~deva beings~~, and ~~asura beings~~.

hell or the hell?

When we are talking about hell in general, we don't use the word "the."

He was reborn in hell.

What actions will lead to rebirth in hell?

We can use an article when we use "the hell realms."

The Supreme Buddha understood everything about ***the hell realms***.

We can also use an article when we are talking about a specific hell.

Next, the wardens of hell throw him into ***the Great Hell***. MN130.16

realms

We can say *the hell realms*, *the ghost realm*, *the human realm*, *the animal realm*, and *the heavenly realms*. Note that some are usually plural and some are usually singular. The word *world* is more common than *realm*.

Examples

This is the way beings in hell suffer.

This is how beings in hell suffer.

~~This is the way how beings in hell suffer.~~

Miscellaneous Phrases

Whether the Supreme Buddha appears in this world ***or not***, this Dhamma is true. Sometimes we don't think about whether an action is good for us or not.

~~We should learn to talk the truth.~~

We should learn to speak the truth.

Miscellaneous verb-preposition matches

These are some common verbs with their usage. Other verbs are explained in other parts of this document, for example *say* and *tell*.

search for sth

abstain from sth

associate with smb or sth

believe in sth

believe smb

give sth to smb

play with smb

take care of smb

care for smb or sth (can mean "like someone" or "look after someone")

care about sth or smb

useful for smb or sth

kind to smb

talk about sth

Some verbs are transitive for one object and use a preposition for the other.

explain sth to smb
preach sth to smb
remove sth from sth

Some verbs are transitive and should not use a preposition to indicate the object

~~achieve to sth~~
achieve sth

Miscellaneous Pronunciation

bath or bathe?

The noun *bath* is pronounced with a short a sound like the word bat. The verb *bathe* (bathing, bathed) is pronounced with a long a sound like the word bay. This is easily confused because the phrase *take a bath* is used like a verb but the word *bath* here is still a noun.

blessed, learned etc.

Some past participles are pronounced differently when they are used as adjectives. Instead of ending with a simple “d” sound, they end with “ed” as a separate syllable. For example:

He blessed them. (used as a verb, pronounced as one syllable)
The Blessed One (used as an adjective, pronounced as two syllable: bless-ed)
We learned the Dhamma. (used as a verb, pronounced as one syllable)
He was a learned monk. (used as an adjective, pronounced as two syllable: learn-ed)
He was an aged monk. (used as an adjective, pronounced as two syllable: age-ed)

renounce or renunciation and pronounce or pronunciation?

When we *renounce* something, we are practicing *renunciation*. *Renounce* is a verb and *renunciation* is a noun. There is a slight but important difference in how they are pronounced. *Renounce* contains the word “noun” and *renunciation* has the word “nun”: renounce or renunciation. The words *pronounce* and *pronunciation* follow the exact same pattern.

It is not easy to ***renounce*** sensual pleasures.
We must try to cultivate thoughts of ***renunciation***.

Renounce is a regular verb, so the past tense is *renounced*.

difficult sounds

ST, SCH words

⚠ When words begin with ST, and SCH there is a tendency to put an “i” sound first. This is incorrect. Practice with the examples below: stanza not istanza

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| streams not istreams | stop not istop |
| school not ischool | steals not isteals |
| start not istart | strives not istrives |

Silent W

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| sword ~ sord | knowledge ~ nau-ledge |
| answer ~ ans-er | |

S and SH

When words have both a simple S and a SH sound, it is easy to mix them up

cessation ~ se-say-shun
dispensation ~ dis-pen-say-shun
sensual ~ sen-shual

Some times the letter “s” is pronounced as “sh” sure ~ shure

sugar ~ shu-gar
surely ~ shure-ly
issue~ ish-ue

General

escape ~ es-kape not ek-scape
explain ~ ek-splain not esplain
question ~ quest-chun not ques-shun
heir, h is silent, pronounced like air that we breathe.
ancient, hard c like the word chin
castle, t is silent
sexual ~ sek-shual

Miscellaneous Words

abandon or abstain?

Abandon can be used in active or passive voice. Usually we abandon things, qualities, or gerunds (present participles that end in -ing such as stealing)

We should try to abandon anger.

When we practice metta bhavana, anger will be abandoned.

We should not abandon meditation.

Usually we abstain *from* things, especially gerunds (present participles that end in -ing such as stealing). It cannot be used in the passive.

I undertake the precept of abstaining from killing living beings.

~~Killing living beings will be abstained.~~

arise, arose, arisen

The words “arise, arose, arisen” are easily confused and mispronounced but they are essential words that must be used correctly every single time. Especially the word “arisen” is often mispronounced as if it were simply “arise” plus “n”. In English phonetics we would say that “arise” has a long “i” and “arisen” has a short “i”. Memorize and repeat the correct usage and pronunciation until you always get it right.

You cannot “~~arise something~~” but “something can arise.”

Pleasant feeling arises.

Do not confuse any of these forms with the word “arouse” which is transitive.

We must try to arouse thoughts of good will in our mind.

His anger was aroused by their bad behavior.

ask

When indicating the person who is being asked a question, simply put the person immediately following the word ask. The only time we use *from* with *ask* is when we ask for *something from somewhere*.

They asked the ghost a question.

~~They asked a question from the ghost.~~

He asked for a book from the library.

attention

In the phrase “pay attention” you cannot say “~~pay your attention.~~”

benefit

Benefit can be a verb or a noun.

This will benefit you for a long time. [verb]

This will be a benefit for you for a long time. [noun]

He benefited from the meditation. [verb]

~~This will be a benefited for you.~~

call

Never say “~~call as;~~” “~~called as;~~” or “~~called by.~~” There are other verbs that do used these prepositions. See below.

~~...which we can call as mental suffering.~~

...which we can call mental suffering.

~~This is called as mental suffering.~~

This is called mental suffering.

alternatively: This is known as mental suffering.

alternatively: This is referred to as mental suffering.

This is what the Supreme Buddha called “birth.”

~~That is what is called by the divine eye.~~

That is what is called the divine eye.

catch up with

No matter how fast Angulimala ran, he could not catch up with/to the Supreme Buddha.

compassion

We have compassion **for** people or we have compassion **towards** people.

He had no compassion for the beings in this world.

Now let us cultivation compassion for all the living beings in this asapuwa.

It is easy to have compassion towards someone who is suffering.

cut off his head

When you want to say that someone’s head is removed by cutting you can say

They cut off his head

His head was cut off.

You have to use *off*.

~~They cut his head.~~

You cannot talk about the neck.

~~They cut his neck.~~

~~They cut off his neck.~~

discuss

Discuss is transitive so it must always have an object. But it never uses the word *about*.

~~Now we are going to discuss.~~

Now we are going to have a discussion.

~~Now we are going to discuss about the Dhamma.~~

Now we are going to discuss the Dhamma.

even though

Even though you cover this whole park with coins, still I will not sell it to you.

Even though he listened to the Dhamma, he did not practice it.

example

When someone has good qualities that we want to imitate, we try to follow their example.

We should **follow** the **example** of the great arahants.

BUT: We should **imitate** the good **qualities** of the great arahants.

hit

The verb hit is transitive and does not need a preposition to indicate the object.

~~The rock hit to his head.~~

The rock hit his head.

hunger and thirst

We have hunger and thirst but we are hungry and thirsty. Hunger and thirst are nouns and hungry and thirsty are adjectives. We usually try to *satisfy hunger*, but we *quench our thirst*.

No matter how many of my children I eat, my hunger will not be satisfied.

My hunger does not go away.

She is still hungry after eating all of her children.

~~I will not be satisfied with hunger.~~

~~My hunger is not fulfilled.~~

~~My hunger is not vanished.~~

jealous

He was very jealous **of** the Buddha.

He was very jealous **of** the Buddha's honor and gain.

kind

We are kind *to* people.

Tissa was very kind to Matta.

lifespan

“Lifespan” is the average oldest age that someone is likely to reach before they die. It is different from the word “age” which simply refers to how many years someone has been alive. If we want to say that someone did something for the whole time he was alive, we can say “*his whole life*” but not “~~*his whole lifespan.*~~”

...the lifespan of humans will increase to 80,000 years. [not *years old*]

~~Even the lifespan of devas is impermanent.~~

Even the lifespan of devas is limited.

mindful

Mindfulness is a noun, mindful is an adjective, mindfully is an adverb.

We must try to develop our mindfulness.

We must always be mindful when we are eating.

He ate mindfully.

He ate with full mindfulness. [*with full mindfulness* is an adverb phrase describing how he ate]

Fully mindful, he passed away [*fully mindful* is an adverb phrase describing how he passed away]

name something after

When we name something after someone, we give it that person's name.

Please name this park after me.

ordain

We use the regular verb ordain to say that someone becomes a monk or a nun. It is both transitive and intransitive. For the transitive sense, we can also say “make someone a monk/nun”

He ordained as a monk.

Then Jinadattā Theri ordained Isidassi.

The Buddha asked Venerable Sariputta to make Rahula a monk.

person and people

The normal plural form of *person* is *people*. The word *persons* is usually only found in legal writing, although it is found in some Dhamma expressions such as “the four pairs of persons.” But in conversation we would say “four pairs of people.”

~~What kind of persons tell lies?~~

What kind of people tell lies?

period

When talking about events that happened when the Supreme Buddha was alive, do not use the word “period.” It sounds very technical.

~~In the Supreme Buddha’s time period...~~

~~In the period of the Supreme Buddha...~~

Better to simply memorize the following phrase and use it every time.

In the time of the Supreme Buddha...

If you specifically want to indicate the time when he was alive compared with the time after his death, you can also say

When the Supreme Buddha was alive...

If you want to give lots of information, you can also say something like

When the Supreme Buddha was living in Sāvattī with 500 monks...

prince and princess

prince – male, singular

princes – male, plural

princess – female, singular

princesses – female, plural

Princes (pl.) and princess (sg.) sound very similar. Princes (pl.) ends with a “z” sound and princess (sg.) ends with an “s” sound.

qualities

In English, the word *qualities* is neutral and can mean either good or bad things. So the sentence, “The Buddha had many qualities,” is grammatically correct but it does not indicate that he had *good* qualities. Just that he had some kind of qualities. This is a more descriptive sentence:

The Supreme Buddha had many good/excellent/great qualities.

remind or remember?

When we *remind* someone, we tell them something they may have forgotten. When we *remember* something we commit it to memory or we recall it.

~~We should always remind the Supreme Buddha’s good qualities.~~

We should always remember the Supreme Buddha’s good qualities.

~~He remembered me to bring the book.~~

He reminded me to bring the book.

respect

When we use respect as a verb, it is transitive and therefore does not need a preposition to before the object. It means that we have a feeling of honor towards someone or something, not that we bow down.

~~He respected to the monks.~~

He respected the monks.

However, in preaching the phrase “pay respect to someone” has the specific meaning of physically bowing down to someone. In this case the verb is actually pay but it can only be separated from the word respect by a possessive pronoun.

He paid respect to the Buddha.

He paid his respects to the Buddha.

In normal language, though, when we *pay our respects to someone*, it means that we make a polite visit to them.

say or tell?

[See EEG 49 for the difference between say and tell. See IEG 46–47 for reported

speech]

Any advanced learner's dictionary or grammar book will have a detailed explanation on the difference between say and tell. Review that explanation often. Never use the preposition *to* with tell. The person being told usually appears directly after the word *tell*.

~~We try not to tell bad things.~~

We try not to say bad things.

The Supreme Buddha told the monks about her previous birth.

~~They told to the villagers to make intoxicating drinks.~~

They told the villagers to make intoxicating drinks.

~~They told to some monks about the situation.~~

They told some monks about the situation.

~~This sutta says about confidence.~~

This sutta explains what confidence is.

~~I would like to say to you about the Four Noble Truths.~~

I would like to tell you about the Four Noble Truths.

scold and blame

Scold can be used in a general sense to mean that someone is being corrected for doing something bad. Blame is used to attribute *specific* fault for a bad result. Don't use prepositions for either word.

~~If we do bad things our parents will scold at us.~~

If we do bad things our parents will scold us.

~~If monks disrobe, they never blame to the Supreme Buddha.~~

If monks disrobe, they never blame the Supreme Buddha. [It is not the Buddha's fault that they disrobed, it was their own fault.]

Noble disciples never blame the stars or planets for their misfortunes.

shave and shave off

The object of the verb *shave* can be the place from where hair was removed or the hair itself.

He shaved his head.

He shaved his beard.

The object of the phrasal verb *shave off* must be the thing removed, usually the hair.

~~He shaved off his head.~~ [this means he removed his head]

He shaved off his hair and beard.

When talking about shaving, *hair* refers to what grows on the top of the head and *beard* refers to what grows on the face. It is true that the beard is also made of hair, often called facial hair to be specific.

sleep

He went to sleep. = He fell asleep. = He went to bed.

While he was sleeping...

~~..fall into a sleep.~~

suffering

"Suffering" is uncountable and usually does not use an indefinite article. It is possible to find suffering used in the plural, but it is not so common in spoken language.

~~If you have a physical suffering...~~

If you have physical suffering...

~~There are many sufferings in the world.~~

There are many kinds of suffering in the world.

But compare:

If you have a physical pain...

Suffering cannot be used as an adjective.

~~He had many suffering feelings.~~

He had many painful feelings.

treat

When we “*treat someone*” it usually means that we give them medicine to overcome an illness. If we want to say that we take care of someone in a good way we should say we “*treat them well.*”

vanish

Vanish is intransitive and cannot be used in the passive. So you cannot ~~vanish something.~~

~~His pleasant mind was vanished.~~

His pleasant mind vanished.

~~He vanished her happiness.~~

He destroyed her happiness.

Her happiness vanished when she heard the news.

~~Our unwholesome thoughts are vanished when we think of the Buddha.~~

Our unwholesome thoughts vanish when we think of the Buddha.

Appendix A: Quick Tips

Quick tips for preaching

- Never start a sermon by saying that your English is not very good. *Never, ever.* It only embarrasses the listeners, makes them uncomfortable, and causes doubt to arise in their minds.
- Never say, “I will try to explain.” Just explain.
- Don’t keep asking the listeners, “Do you understand me? Can you understand me? Can you understand what I am saying?” Instead, quiz them on what you have said. If you really want to ask if they understand the Dhamma you just taught and not your English, you can say, “Does that make sense?” But don’t ask more than one or two times per talk otherwise it is disturbing.
- Try to talk about reality using “we” instead of “you.” For example, “We have many defilements in our mind.”
- Try to give examples using “you.” “Suppose you have a favorite toy...”
- Tell stories in direct speech.
- When telling a long story, from time to time do a quick review to remind the audience how the story got to that point. Otherwise the audience may get confused, especially if you have made some grammar mistakes.
- When telling a complicated story, try to use names (or titles or occupations) instead of pronouns. For example, instead of, “And then he burned his fields,” say, “And then the robber burned Sumangala’s fields.” This is especially important if you tend to confuse the words he and she.
- When you see “...” in the English text, it is equivalent to a peyalla. When reading it out loud, you either need to fill in with the original text. Or you can say something like “and so on.”

Appendix B: Difficult Areas

Grammar

The following are areas that most non-native English speakers need to spend extra effort. Most grammar books will have sections dedicated to them. Try to practice out loud with someone who can correct you.

Forming questions: Making questions in English is very tricky. Spend time practicing exercises in a grammar book *out loud* with someone to correct you.

Tag questions: In some languages like Sinhala there is a single tag question that can be used for all sentences. In English the formation of tag questions is very tricky. It usually involves

a negation and a change in the verb. Spend time practicing exercises in a grammar book *out loud* with someone to correct you.

Subject verb agreement: This is usually not so tricky in English and most students will know the correct form when it is pointed out. But it is probably the single most common grammatical mistake of non-native speakers. And it is hard to overcome bad habits practiced over a long time. Although these errors rarely affect the meaning, they really stick out to native speakers. Have someone correct you on-the-spot during practice time.

Pronunciation

There are only a small number of pronunciation areas that are difficult for native Sinhala speakers using English. Otherwise pronunciation is *rarely* a problem. Even in the case of these areas the listener usually won't have a problem understanding.

TH: There are two ways that "th" is pronounced and neither of them occur in Sinhala. You need to learn them directly from someone who can say them correctly. Your dictionary may use the symbols ð and Θ for the two different sounds. You should memorize these symbols if your dictionary uses them. The Θ th sound is only made with air passing between the tongue and teeth. The ð th is made in the same place but with a buzzing sound.

W or V: These two letters have distinct sounds in English. The W sound is made only with the lips and no contact with the teeth. The V sound is made with the upper teeth touching the lower lips.

P and F: PH is the same as F. Otherwise, P and F are different sounds.

S and SH: These are different sounds in English although they may be written in a variety of ways. Generally the letter s alone is never pronounced as a *sh* sound, except in a few words such as *sure, sugar, surely, issue*. Pay careful attention when both sounds appear in the same word, such as *cessation, dispensation, sensual*.

Appendix C: Encouragement

Most Sinhala speakers have very good English pronunciation. Don't spend time learning things like phonetics. Focus on the items mentioned in Appendix B, but otherwise just learn individual words as you need them.

Although it is easy to make grammar mistakes in English, many of the common ones won't affect the meaning.

Most native English speakers interested in the Dhamma are used to listening to non-native English speakers. There is even a wide variety of accents among native speakers, so their ears are trained to listen carefully. In fact, the more educated people are, the worse your English can be. Don't be shy. People sincerely appreciate your teaching.

Don't learn English just by reading the suttas. Learn by listening to spoken English as much as possible. When you do read suttas in English, read the Sinhala first and then keep it open next to the English. Instead of looking up all the words you don't know in the dictionary, try to find the meaning by looking at the Sinhala.

Appendix D: Language Resources

Grammar Books

An excellent resource for difficult grammar is the following series from Cambridge University Press:

Essential English Grammar

Intermediate English Grammar, second edition.

Advanced English Grammar

Whenever possible, sections in this document refer you to units in this series using the abbreviations EEG, IEG, and AEG followed by the unit number. Unit numbers correspond to the editions listed above and may be different in earlier or later editions.

An excellent resource for advanced students is *Practical English Usage* by Michael Swan, Oxford University Press.

Dictionaries

Every preaching monk should have access to an advanced learner's dictionary. Ordinary dictionaries don't give explanations of how to use the words. They usually just give the meaning. A learner's dictionary will also give you important information such as if a verb is transitive or intransitive and if a noun is count or non-count. The following are excellent resources:

- *Collins Cobuild Advanced Dictionary of American English*, ISBN-13 978-1-4240-0363-1
- *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, A.S. Hornby, Oxford University Press, ISBN-13 978-0-19-4316651(paperback)