

**“Kuppi”, “koku” and “kaakko”: an exploration of the linguistic and ideological significance of contemporary campus slang**

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**Abstract**

Universities and university students have long been a fertile source of slang, which can be defined as an informal variety of language comprising words and expressions used by a particular social group. Research in campus slang has a long history (see for example Mcphee 1927, Kannerstein 1967, Olesen and Whittaker 1968, Kutner and Brogan 1974, Hancock 1990, Murray 1991, Hummon 1994, Thorne 2005, Preece 2009, Adamo 2013). Many of these studies present word lists and linguistic analyses of these unique lexical items that reflect the academic, social, and personal experiences of student life. Studies of campus slang conducted in American and British universities also indicate several similarities as well as significant differences in the spread and functions of campus slang in Sri Lanka. This, along with the fact that the slang of Sri Lankan university students has not been the focus of much research, provided the rationale for the current study. Examples of slang were obtained from multiple participants at a university in the western province to develop an initial wordlist. A linguistic analysis of each term was then conducted by identifying their morphological features and semantic categories. Reflexive texts written by selected student participants were also obtained to analyse their experiences of encountering, learning and using campus slang. The analysis of this overall data was located in the theoretical framework of linguistic ideology, or the linguistic behaviours that not only characterise a particular social group but also language practices that aim to legitimise dominant political powers. The study concludes that there are significant ideological implications in the usage, function and spread of the slang of the sociopolitically complex discourse community of Sri Lankan university students.

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