

Abstract 04

Awareness and the Attitudes towards Sri Lankan English among Undergraduates

Dinali Ariyasinghe

English Language Teaching Unit, University of Kelaniya

dinali.aiesec.cn@gmail.com

This study examines dialects 1-3 based on the pronunciation of the back vowels in the typology of Sri Lankan English (SLE) by Siromi Fernando (2006) across the selected phonemes /ei/, /z/, /θ/, /ʒ/ and /ou/. The methodology included online questionnaires/interviews and voice recordings of 50 undergraduates, mean age 22 years, from diverse disciplines in universities and institutes in Sri Lanka and abroad. 05 of the participants were case studies. The findings identified that a fairly large undergraduate population declare that the variety of English they speak is either Standard British English or American English thus belonging to dialect 3. But analysis of the podcasts evidenced that in the selected pronunciation areas examined SLE characteristics are indicated. In the usage of identified morphological processes too they retained SLE characteristics. Analyzing the Likert scale measurements for awareness and the attitude towards the variety it was clearly visible that both of the aforementioned factors distinctly differ according to the discipline the undergraduates follow at the universities. The attitude towards speaking SLE in undergraduates especially from Sciences, unless they are exposed to the background of Social Sciences or Humanities, was negative. Their belief of the inadequacy of SLE for communication with native speakers was the cause for their negativity. Further there was a lack of awareness in this population that SLE is a standard variety of English. On the contrary, the students who are from Social Sciences or Humanities backgrounds were aware and were proud to use Standard Sri Lankan English. Conclusively it can be stated that dialect 3 is becoming more powerful and influential among the Sri Lankan undergraduate populations. Moreover, it can be recommended to introduce SLE as a standard variety in undergraduate English programs, especially for the undergraduates are from Science backgrounds, in order to increase their confidence.

Keywords: awareness, attitudes, Sri Lankan English, undergraduates