

Features of Sri Lankan English or Learner Errors? An Investigative Study of the Attitudinal Behaviour of English Speakers in Sri Lanka

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The significance of the concepts of ‘language standards’ and ‘standard languages’ can be understood through the way in which language ideologies have affected the society’s perception of institutionalized varieties of English in Outer and Expanding Circles, where English used in Outer and Expanding Circles are considered, specially by the speakers of the varieties themselves, to be different and ‘inferior’ to the ‘Standard’ English varieties of the Inner Circle countries. For example, some speakers of non-native English varieties vehemently refuse to believe the existence of unique phonological, morphological and syntactic features of non-native English varieties which are capable of representing distinctive features of a particular linguistic community and stipulate these features to be L2 learner errors. Therefore, a major research area of New Englishes has been to establish a clear distinction between learner errors and unique features of New Englishes for the purpose of language codification and this phenomenon is observed with regard to Sri Lankan English as well. However, given that these features of New Englishes originated as errors due to analogy or overextension of existing patterns during the second/foreign language acquisition period, and have now gained grammatical stability and acceptability through stabilization and conventionalization within the speech community, the significance of the attitudinal behaviour of the society in determining the acceptability of a feature as an error or a unique feature is highlighted. Therefore, this research will attempt to investigate the attitudes of English speakers in Sri Lanka with regard to established features of Sri Lankan English and certain debatable features which are still categorized under learner error but are now slowly gaining acceptability within the Sri Lankan English speaking community. The research will utilize data acquired through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to investigate the attitudinal behaviour of Sri Lanka speakers regarding unique features of Sri Lankan English to examine the language ideologies that are perpetuating within the Sri Lankan community.

Keywords: Learner Errors, Unique Features, Sri Lankan English, Attitudinal Behaviour

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