

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROSPECTS OF POWER AND PRESTIGE FOR SRI LANKAN ENGLISH IN SRI LANKA: THE PERSPECTIVE OF UNDERGRADUATES

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The Anglo-European world dominance over the last three centuries has accorded English with unparalleled power and prestige. The shift of power dynamics from British Raj to American new imperialism had virtually no impact on the power or the prestige of English. As the linguistic representative of Anglo-European hegemony, the preservation of the sanctity of English tongue became a high priority. However, with ruptures in hegemonic core and changes in the global political landscape, high temples of English too have come under threat. Hence, the notion of world Englishes came into being in the late 20th century. Sri Lankan English is one such emergent variety that accommodates unique features of English found in Sri Lankan usage. To win recognition as legitimate and fully fledged varieties, even among their own speech communities, these new varieties have the uphill task of effecting a paradigm shift that facilitates breadth of vision to look beyond the horizons of established varieties. With this backdrop in mind, a research was carried out among hundred university undergraduates to ascertain whether they believed that Sri Lankan English will acquire the acceptance and prestige of a standard language in Sri Lankan society. A questionnaire with open ended and close questions were used to gather the data. The results reveal that despite their willingness to acknowledge Sri Lankan variety as their own, they are skeptical of the possibility of Sri Lankan English becoming the most prestigious variety of English in Sri Lanka.

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