

THE *KADUWA* OF TODAY: SRI LANKAN ENGLISH – ITS ACCEPTANCE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS VARIATION

M. C. Nandula Perera¹

In Sri Lanka, English has long been a language of authority granting access to the higher classes of society. Hence it is referred to by the colloquial appellation *kaduwa*, meaning ‘the sword’. However the English that is spoken in Sri Lanka today is not the same as the English that was introduced by the British colonizers since the year 1796. At present, there is an observable tendency to deviate from the “British” standards of speaking English and to use a variety of English which is identified as ‘Sri Lankan English’. Nevertheless, this tendency is not always regarded in a positive light. The research was conducted to explore the acceptance, the attitudes towards grammatical accuracy and lexicography of Sri Lankan English among undergraduates and graduates of the University of Kelaniya. The study was conducted as a quantitative analysis of the data gathered through a questionnaire survey including 50 participants. The findings were compared with responses from the older users of English. Hence it reveals the levels of acceptance of Sri Lankan English among the youth and the older generation. The study shows a number of language traits that are regarded as acceptable and unacceptable by Sri Lankan English speakers belonging to two different generations. The results reveal that both the younger generation and the older generation hold a more permissible attitude towards the use of English. Although the older users of the language might not necessarily use words that belong to the language of the youth, they are aware of their meanings. This can be attributed to the increased acceptance and the popularity of Sri Lankan English. Nevertheless, it is seen that interlocutors welcome additions to the spoken language but not necessarily to the written language. They display less willingness to bend certain rigid rules, especially grammar rules and rules governing the pronunciation of words.

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¹ Department of English