

Social discrimination through language: A study on the discriminative usage of Sinhala

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Language is a medium of human communication and it is used for different purposes. One of them is discrimination. Language discrimination refers to an unfair treatment through language found in any society. This may be categorized into several concepts such as ethnic discrimination, political discrimination, religious discrimination or environmental discrimination. It is manipulated in the style of speech, such as accent, lexicon or syntax, used by an individual and does not include discrimination based on individual's appearance. This situation can be seen in all human languages. Sri Lanka is a multilingual (Sinhala, Tamil, English), multiethnic (Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim), and multi-religions (Buddhist, Hindus, Islam) country. Sri Lanka was also governed by the European (Portuguese, Dutch, English) rulers since 17th century to middle of the 20th century. As a result of that Sinhalese culture has undergone many changes. This social environment is reflected on Discriminative lexicon of Sinhala language. The aim of this study is to examine the present condition of the Sinhala Discriminative Lexicon and to see how that affects society, culture environment and politics. This problem is examined under the sociolinguistic theory and data have been collected through the day today conversation of the Sinhala speakers. It is found that Sinhala speakers use discriminative language referring to some social groups or individuals in different contexts.

Keywords: Discriminative lexicon, Semantics, Sinhala language, Sociolinguistics, Communication