

## **‘Error’ in Sri Lankan English**

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**Abstract** - The variety of Standard English spoken in Sri Lanka is different from American and British English which are generally considered to be ‘the conventional standard varieties’ of English. It transcends what is known as code-mixing, for it generates composite meanings of its own, and handles local realities effectively. Presently, scholars have attempted to claim Standard Sri Lankan English as a separate, recognized standard of English, but this is contested by hegemonic forces that adhere to conventional norms and standards regarding the language. Consequently, Sri Lankan English is often discarded as a bunch of ‘errors’, and hence, what constitutes an ‘error’ and what does not in Sri Lankan English becomes a contentious, timely question. This study has attempted to trace what is regarded as an ‘error’ in Sri Lankan English, through observations, questionnaires, and interviews with first and second-language speakers of English. It incorporated students from several faculties and a few teachers at the Department of English Language Teaching, University of Peradeniya. How individuals in the university context perceived the notion of ‘error’ (in terms of pronunciation, the use of Tamil/ Sinhala expressions, etc.) was observed in depth. In conclusion, it was recognized that ‘error’ and ‘standard’ in Sri Lankan English are both contextual phenomena. Another finding of the research was the fact that deviations from conventional standards are localized to such an extent that, they are no longer recognized by the majority of speakers as ‘errors’. Central to this study were the theoretical views of Arjuna Parakrama and Manique Gunasekara.

**Keywords:** Sri Lankan English, Standard, Error