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## LANGUAGISM EXPERIENCED BY THE UNDERGRADUATES OF UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA AS A RESULT OF THE USAGE OF SINHALA REGIONAL DIALECTS

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### ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the manner in which students, who speak regional dialects, are discriminated in the university. The language used in media is recognized to be the standard form of Sinhala, as a result of the authority held with regards to politics in the capital. This has belittled the positions occupied by the dialects of Sinhala. The authority maintained by the majority of the country not to annex words from “a patois” to the vernacular dialect is conspicuous. The majority has the power to amend the language vested upon them. Hence anyone with a dialectic parlance is subjected to discrimination. The inclination of the majority to pursue the fanatical thought that a regional dialect curtails upward mobility creates this partiality. The ones, who are judged, discriminated and stigmatized i.e. the ones who use regional dialects of Sinhala, have to acclimatize to the "standard" way of speaking Sinhala since the generality of people celebrate status quo. The hegemonic power exercised by the majority has misshapen the identity of the oppressed by creating stereotype. Yet the languages are inter-dependent and none can sustain without the other. This aforementioned reliance cherishes the language by adding more words to the language. This research was designed to gather feedback of the university undergraduates about their opinion towards lampooning due to the regional dialects they use in speech. Data was analyzed by conducting interviews from twenty random undergraduates. The blatancy of the discrimination faced by undergraduates due to regional dialects was ensured during the interviews. The languagism of the undergraduates is not only perceived within the university premises, but also in social media. Encouraging and educating the undergraduates about other regional dialects that prevail in the country could be recommended to minimize this predicament which has not been addressed yet locally.

**Keywords:** Authority, dialect, discrimination, undergraduates, vernacular language