

Evaluating the Role of “Speak English Our Way” in ELT in Sri Lanka

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Abstract - The ‘Speak English Our Way’ (SEOW) enterprise launched in 2009 to promote ‘English as a life skill’ in schools, can be considered a milestone in the English language education in Sri Lanka since it aimed at an “indigenized”, “Sri Lankanized” and “legitimized” English to be disseminated within the Sri Lankan system of education, in response to the elitist ideology of English that oppresses the underprivileged classes. Within this background, the objective of this study was to critically evaluate the role of the SEOW enterprise in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Sri Lanka. For the purpose of the research, the method of systematic literature review was utilized. It was discovered through content analysis of literature that considerable support for the SEOW programme can be garnered within the World Englishes Linguistic Imperialism frameworks. However, criticism is also levelled at the SEOW enterprise because a.) SEOW is seen as an attempt to promote a substandard variety of English within the field of ELT, and; b.) the SEOW initiative is understood to be influenced heavily by the nationalist discourse. In the light of these findings, the study highlights the importance of engaging with worldviews, motivations and aspirations of stakeholders such as students and teachers that go often unnoticed and considers the SEOW enterprise as an attempt to create a new standard in lieu of the old in a context where *all* standards are deceptive.

Keywords: Speak English Our Way, Evaluation, ELT.