

Sinhala-French Language and Culture Contact: A Case Study on Sinhalese Children of Sri Lankan Origin in France

Judith Sumindi Rodrigo

Jean Monnet University, Saint Étienne, France judith.rodrido87@gmail.com

This study examines the language and culture contact among Sinhalese children of Sri Lankan origin residing in France. Its main objective is to draw a sociolinguistic portrait of these children through their language practices and their linguistic representations. Taking the shape of an empirical and qualitative research, the study focuses on two 7-years-olds and the main method of data collection used was thematic drawing followed by an interview upon the drawing. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with family members in order to support the data collected from children. The results uncover a form of “Sinhala-French-English” trilingual speech which illustrates the multilingual skills of our young interviewees. In addition, the study brings to light their social, cognitive and linguistic representations vis-à-vis their bilingual and bicultural context, revealing a sense of imbalance in the face of alterity. The current research encourages other longitudinal or expanded studies to better understand these lesser-known immigrants in France.

Key Words: Language and Culture Contact, Immigration, Bilingual Speech, Representations, Bicultural Identity