

A Comparative Study on the Sound Systems of Hindi and Sinhala Languages

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All languages in the world are mainly based on verbal sounds that are symbolized through letters. Thus, an interconnection between the sound system and the alphabet can be found in any language. According to the International Phonetic Alphabet, there are about hundred and seven verbal sounds which have been identified in all the languages worldwide. Each language uses a minimum of twenty-three to a maximum of sixty sounds. Therefore, when comparing the phonetics of two different languages, there can be sounds that are shared and different sounds that are unique to each language. Hindi and Sinhala are two languages that belong to the same language family, the Indo-European language family, with common roots derived from Sanskrit. There are both similarities and a considerable number of differences between the phonetics of the Hindi and Sinhala languages. This paper attempts to identify the similarities and differences of the sound systems of Hindi and Sinhala languages. The objective of this research is the creation of a platform of discussion to minimize the errors and mistakes by students who learn either Hindi or Sinhala as a foreign language. This research was done through literature reviews based on Hindi and Sinhala linguistics. It was identified that there are verbal sounds that are common to both languages and differences such as the employment of nasal vowels, two open-mid vowels, two velar fricative sounds and two retroflex flap sounds in Hindi which are not found in the Sinhala sound system. This study is important because it enhances the learning and teaching methodologies of Hindi as a foreign language in Sri Lanka while supporting the Hindi speakers who learn Sinhala as a foreign language.

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