

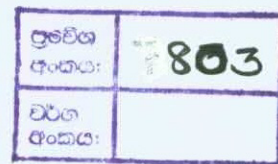
Pronunciation Difficulties of Officer Cadets of General Sir John Kotelawala Defense University When Making Presentations in English



by

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis is to identify pronunciation difficulties of undergraduate officer cadets at General Sir John Kotelawala Defense University (KDU), to discover causes for such difficulties, and to propose solutions for them to overcome such difficulties. The methodology adopted was that of sociolinguistic research in which both analytical and empirical methods were applied. Accordingly, it was identified that Standard Sri Lankan English (SSLE) pronunciation was the most appropriate one to be taught in Sri Lanka, and through further studies phonological and pronunciation features of SSLE were identified. Based on the same, a pronunciation model for officer cadets was selected from the immediate military community and pronunciation features thereof were examined for compatibility with those of SSLE. Primary data gathered from 125 officer cadets were studied through sociolinguistic research methods. Their oral presentations were transcribed into phonetics, their segmental and supra segmental features were collated, analyzed and compared with already identified features of SSLE and with those of the selected model — Both the sample group and ‘standard speakers’ were audio taped and the data were transcribed using software for close transcription of recorded data — Accordingly, the study identified pronunciation difficulties of the informants in their usage of vowels, diphthongs and consonants and some at the supra segmental level. Six areas of vowel confusion such as those among the back rounded vowels /o/, /oo/ and /ɔ/, /ɔɔ/, between /ɪ/ and /e/ etc., nine areas of mixing up of vowel length, and the non-usage of reduced vowels in function words and weak syllables; several difficulties in the usage of diphthongs, i.e. the usage of /ei/ and /əʊ/ in words like ‘go’ as [gəʊ], and ‘today’ as [tʊdeɪ], which are no longer used in SSLE, the usage of /j/

in /eʌ/ and /ɪə/ with the longer version of the second vowel therein, e.g. ‘fear’ pronounced as [fɪjəə]; eight areas of consonant confusion, i.e. mixing up voiced and voiceless consonants, and confusion among /s/, /z/ and /ʃ/, between /p/ and /f/, between /n/, /ŋ/ etc. have been identified along with their causes such as L1 influence, differences between L1 and L2 in their orthographic conventions, phonemic and syllabic structures, misconceptions about ‘superior’ varieties such as British Standard English. In the light of these findings, the study proposes a three dimensional approach to help officer cadets overcome pronunciation difficulties, which addresses issues related to their knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Key Words:

Sri Lankan English, SLE phonology, English pronunciation difficulties, ELT, NVE, Military English