

# ETHNOGRAPHY OF SPEAKING IN A SPEECH COMMUNITY IN GAMPAHA DISTRICT

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## I. ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to examine language use rather than language structure associated with particular modes of speaking, topics, and message forms during specific settings and activities in a heterogenous speech community. The specific objectives were to analyze speech styles; to examine speech acts and events and to interpret modes of social interaction.

A multi method form of research was adopted which included observation of speech acts and events in formal and informal settings; observer participation in interviews and viva vocal, lectures and observer placement in a private institution. The study was extended to observations on media communication and included selected texts, genre and advertisement analysis.

The study has documented and described some situations which people come together, and share a common language in discourse and social interaction. The interaction order included speech acts, speech events, service encounters, meetings, interviews, casual domestic and official conversations, platform events (scenarios) and celebrative occasions.

In all verbal communication, a unique design, a model or a formula which involves a speaker (S) hearer (H) an utterance (U) a shared language (SL) and a context (C) are linked.

### **The general findings of the study are:**

1. There are extensive resources and opportunities in the speech community for a researcher to conduct a study on ethnography of speaking.
2. All speech acts and speech events have been context sensitive.
3. In unofficial casual and routine communication forms, the standard form of language used is the modern mixed Sinhala language.
4. The use of English in official communication is promoted in private sector enterprises.
5. In official, academic, professional and religious communication, a higher level of the standard language form is in practice.

**The special findings are:**

1. Code shifting and mixing by adulterating Sinhala with English is extensively practiced in informal communication among the young age groups and in some electronic mass media channels.
2. A definite formula/scheme/agenda is being strictly adhered to, in the conduction of official, public and religious discourse procedures. A more simplified form of this scheme is visible in ordinary commercial settings. It is being disrupted and negated in large commercial enterprises like the supermarkets due to technical applications like advertising, labeling and price markings on objects for sale.
3. For greetings welcomes and farewells a range of linguistic forms of the greeting a:ubovæn is being used.
4. A reverend pattern of speech embedded with special words, terms and expressions quite different from that of the standard Sinhala form is practiced by laymen when communicating with the clergy.
5. Some special features like the infrequent or the non use of personal pronouns in Sinhala vocal communication (speech acts and speech events) have been identified.
6. In the study of texts and genre apart from the imaginative metaphoric use of the language, emphasis has been on the freedom of the writer in describing the effects of the communicators during speech events and in the contextualization of the setting. The features of cohesion and collocation in Viragaya and Gamperaliya were identified.