

First Language Interference In Second Language Speaking

N.M.A.D.W.C.Gunarathne

Lecture in English at SLIATE , Sri Lanka dulinigunarathne@ymail.com

English language has been playing the role of the second language in Sri Lanka since the British imperialists came to Sri Lanka in 1815. Since then English language has taken significant place in Sri Lankan society because of its role as the second language. Moreover, it has become a medium of communication in both private sector and government sector in providing a wide range of employments and it has become the language of not only the upper class but also upper middle class. Therefore learning and teaching English Language in Sri Lanka have been given priority. However, a problem encountered in the field of English is that although the second language learners are fluent in writing, why the learners cannot achieve native like speech in speaking the English as a second Language. Hence the research focuses on exploring the reason for the above issue. A survey was done taking 120 students whose first language is Sinhala with the intention of identifying the errors made by the second language learners in speaking English as a second language. In order to accumulate the necessary data, both quantitative and qualitative methods are used. Questionnaires, interviews have been done under these methods and in addition to that each student is supposed to make a speech of 3 minutes which is recorded for analyzing the changes of phonology of each language. The results reveal that the learner's first language interferes when they speak the second language which can also be defined as mother tongue interference or phonetic interference. Moreover the data manifest that the interference occurs where the learner find difficulty to pronounce the sounds of English Language. Thereby these sounds are often replaced by similar sounds in Sinhala sound system. What is more to remark is that this mispronunciation also causes semantic errors and it will be a barrier to the communication. Extending the research further, it is also found that "Age" is a cause for the interference and plays a crucial role in learning a second language. The research draws the attention of the responsible authorities and academics that facilitate teaching and learning English as a second language in Sri Lanka.

Key Words: Second Language, First Language, Speaking, Interference, Age