

The pronunciation and reading difficulties faced by the Sinhalese students when learning Hindi as a foreign language

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Both Sinhala and Hindi languages originated from Sanskrit language. As a result, there are so many similarities between Hindi and Sinhala. Sinhalese students learn Hindi as a foreign language. When they learn Hindi, they face so many difficulties in writing, reading, speaking and understanding. In this research, the pronunciation and reading difficulties faced by the students when learning Hindi are discussed. Sometimes, one letter has two different pronunciations. So, the students find it difficult to select the correct pronunciation. When speaking Sinhala, there is no difference between the soft and hard consonants (alpaprana and mahaprana). So, the students speak Hindi without differentiating between the soft and hard consonants. But in Hindi, it must be emphasized, otherwise there may be difficulty in finding the meaning. This can be identified as a major pronunciation difficulty faced by the Sinhala speaking students when learning Hindi as a foreign language. In Hindi language, most of the words end with vowelless consonants. But in writing, this vowel lessness cannot be shown. So, the students get confused when reading Hindi, because in Sinhala if the vowelless consonants are used, they are shown with a special symbol. In Hindi, when 'ha' consonant is used, the letter before 'ha' changes. It is also a difficulty faced by Sinhala students who are learning Hindi. In Hindi, some special consonants are being used which are not found in Sinhala. So, the students find it difficult to pronounce these consonants. By identifying these major difficulties which are faced by the Sinhala students, it will be easy to teach and learn Hindi as a foreign language. Primary and secondary data had been collected to compile this research.

Keywords: Pronunciation, Foreign language, Reading, Consonants, Hindi language