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# */t/ before /th/ or /th/ before /t/:* Assessing the trajectory of Sinhala speech sound and phonology development

To make clinical decisions about a client's speech skills, a speech and language therapist requires an in-depth understanding of the trajectory of typical speech sound and phonology development in children. In order to ascertain whether the speech sound 'errors' observed are developmentally appropriate for the child's age, delayed or disordered, requires a comparison with established norms for speech sound development and typical phonological processes. At present, clinicians depend on a combination of established norms for English (Grunwell, 1982) and their own clinical experiences to determine a child's speech sound competence. While there is some preliminary data by Wickremasinghe and Rajapakse (1999), there are no clearly established speech and phonology norms for Sinhala.

The purpose of this pilot study was to establish preliminary speech and phonology norms for Sinhala. A 'Sinhala Speech and Phonology Assessment' was devised and administered to 30 children aged between 2 –9 years from two geographical locations (Colombo and Gampaha). Analysis of the data indicates a trend towards Sinhala-speaking children acquiring most speech sounds earlier than suggested within the norms for English. The findings also display evidence of both similar and dissimilar typical phonological processes compared to phonological processes in English.

The implications of these early findings for the proposed larger study and for service delivery are discussed.

**References:**

Grunwell, P. (1982) Clinical Phonology. Croom Helm Publishers, London.

Wickremasinghe, D. and Rajapakse, R. M. W. (1999) 'Basha Upargeneya'. Darshaka Publishers, Kelaniya.