

# ERROR ANALYSIS OF CASE FORMATION IN SINHALA SPOKEN BY TAMILS - APPLIED LINGUISTICS APPROACH

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## Abstract

*This study aims to identify the types of morphological errors in case formation in Sinhala spoken by Tamils. Generally, many scholars have done contrastive studies of Tamil and Sinhala in Sri Lanka but an error analysis of Sinhala spoken by Tamils has not been done yet. Error analysis is crucial for evaluating language application. In this way, the data for this study was collected from specific speaking activities done by randomly samples of 50 students who are learning Sinhala and direct observation of the Sinhala conversation of Tamils by using recording materials. A mixed methods approach was used to analyze the necessary data. This study has classified the types of errors based on the surface structure taxonomy of errors namely, substitution, omission, addition and word ordering. Through this approach, ten sub-types of errors have been identified. Further, the findings related to the types of errors have been compared with causes of those errors. Finally, this study has revealed the actual errors made by Tamil natives in speaking Sinhala. Thus, preparing appropriate teaching and learning material that can support Tamils who wish to learn Sinhala can be considered an outcome of this research.*

Key words: Error analysis, Speaking Sinhala of Tamils, Errors in case formation, applied linguistics

## Introduction

Language is a powerful tool to promote harmony among people living in a society. Thus one of the best approaches to build harmony is encouraging people to learn the languages of the communities with whom they share a territory or a country. Sri Lanka is home to multilingual, multiethnic and multicultural populations. But in the absence of bilingual skills among her people, two communities in the island, namely the Sinhala and Tamil face communication problems which affect their social and political spheres. Learning a second national language is important to create national harmony and social integration. So it is essential to provide good language education to build unity in the country in the further.

Error analysis is helpful in evaluating the language application. Contrastive analysis introduced by the American structural linguists aimed at alleviating problems that arise when a person learns an additional language. It is assumed that learners make language errors due to interference of the first language. It is claimed that learner error can be predicted by contrastive analyze of the language concerned.

However, empirical research in the period of the nineties revealed that most errors could not be attributed to the differences between the first language and the second language. The development of linguistic theory and the experiment of language learning suggested that it is an active and creative strategy. Learners acquire the underlying rules of a language and produce utterances accordingly. Incomplete learning inevitably causes language errors. This understanding affected contrastive analysis and error analysis gradually took the upper hand. Therefore, the aim of error analysis is to understand the inter language of learners to improve their internalized language system.

In Sri Lanka, both Sinhala and Tamil languages are the official and national languages while English is the link language. The 13th and 16th amendments to the constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (1978) respectively recognize the right to language as a fundamental right. Therefore Sinhala and Tamil have existed side by side for long years, though they belong to two separate language families. The origin of the Sinhala language is ultimately derives from Indo-Aryan speech which is divided into two phases of evolution. One is from an old Indo-Aryan speech (C.2000-800 B.C.) which is represented by Sanskrit language used in central India and other one is a middle Indo-Aryan speech (C.800 B.C-400 A.D.) which is represented by Pali, the language of Buddhist scriptures (Imtiyaz, A. R. M, 2010).

On the other hand, Tamil language belongs to the Dravidian family. There are almost half million speakers of Tamil in Sri Lanka who speak several Tamil dialects, of which Jaffna Tamil represents a major variety. Other varieties include Estate Tamil largely centered in the upcountry which is also called the Indian Tamil variety, the east coast varieties with the population centers of Trincomalee and Baticaloa, and the Muslim Tamil variety. (Suseendirarajha.S, 1970,1973).

The ethnic conflict between Tamil and Sinhala communities limited the younger generations' understanding of each other's language. This situation can be identified as one of the lines that separate the two societies. Thus, in Sri Lanka, Tamil people should learn Sinhala and Sinhala people should learn Tamil as their second language not only to become skillful multilingual but also as a way of promoting social harmony.

### **Morphological Errors**

This study has mentioned the errors in case formation included under morphological errors. Morphology is a branch of structural linguistics analysis. This is the dominant sub-discipline within linguistics concerned with analyzing the construction of words. A word is considered to be made of smaller unites

called morphemes that can carry a meaning or a grammatical function. Theories of morphology capture the grammatical knowledge of the speaker about the structure of words. There are two types of morphemes. Free morpheme and bound morpheme. A free morpheme can stand by itself as a single word and bound morpheme cannot normally stand alone. Bound morphemes consist of a root morpheme and other affixes. Every language has its unique structure. The number of morphemes of a certain word in one language may differ from its equivalent in another language. Likewise, the morphological system of Sinhala differs from the morphological system of Tamil when it comes to tense formations, plural formations, use of articles and the use of pronouns.

The focus of this research is the morphological errors that Tamil who learn Sinhala make case formation. Specifically, the case formation patterns of morphological errors have been analyzed here. Thus, this research study will be very useful to develop the teaching and learning materials that can aid Tamil who learn the Sinhala language. It may create new language learning habits in the acquisition of Sinhala as a second language.

In this study, morphological errors in case formation have been identified by conducting speaking activities and via the direct observation method using the recording material and a mixed methods which includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches has been used for data collection. Morphological errors have been analyzed on the basis of types of errors in the description. Generally, errors are classified as error of substitution where an inappropriate element is substituted for the correct element; when it comes to errors of omission an element that must be present is omitted; errors of addition mean the presence of elements that should not be present; errors of selection denotes the wrong of a wrong item in place of the right one; and in errors of ordering correct elements are wrongly sequenced. The systematic analysis process is made on the basis of classification/ type of errors. They usually state at what linguistic level the error has been committed. By applying this classification to the identified errors a matrix for the categorization of errors can be found.

## **Findings**

### **Morphological Errors in the Case Formation**

In an inflectional language, the functions of a noun are expressed by the use of bound suffixes known as case markers/case endings/ case morphs. Both Sinhala and Tamil have distinctive case suffixes. Due to differences of the case formation at deeper level, morphological errors are identified through the errors made by second language speakers. Mainly three types of errors in speaking are identified in the analysis they are substitution, omission and addition and these types of case errors have sub categories related to the morphological errors made by second language speakers. The following types of substitution are applied by them.

### Sub-types of substitution in case formation

**Nominative case form (Ncf) instead of Genitive case form (Gcf):** Tamil speakers use nominative case markers in place of genitive case form wrongly. ([ $\emptyset$ ] morph instead of [-e] and [-ge] morph)

**Dative case form (Dcf) instead of Nominative case form:** In the speech of Tamils, replacing nominatives with dative case markers. ([-tə] morph instead of [ $\emptyset$ ] morph)

**Nominative case form instead of dative case form:** In the identified case errors, there are nominative case usages occurred in place of dative case formations. ([ $\emptyset$ ] morph instead of [-tə] morph)

**Nominative case form instead of Ablative case form (Ablcf):** Tamil speakers apply Nominative form in place of ablative case formations in their speech of Sinhala language. ([ $\emptyset$ ] morph instead of [-en] morph)

**Genitive case form instead of Ablative case form:** Tamil speakers apply genitive case markers where ablative case formations are required. ([-wəl] morph instead of [-wəlin] morph)

**Accusative case form (Accf) instead of dative case form:** Native speakers of Tamil in speaking Sinhala use accusative case markers in places of where dative formations are considered correct. ([-və] morph instead of [-tə])

**Dative case form instead of genitive case form:** In the identified case errors, they use dative case makers in place of genitive case formation. ([-tə] morph instead of [-ge:] )

Substitution types of identified errors are tabulated with some examples below,

Table – 01 Sub-types of substitution in the case formation

No	Type of substitution	Identified error	Correct form and meaning
a)	Ncf instead of Gcf	1. amma eya pavula 2. amma namə 3. mamə namə	1. amma eyage pavule <i>Mother in her family</i> 2. amməge namə <i>Mother's name</i> 3. mage namə <i>my name</i>
b)	Dcf instead of Ncf	1. maṭə kəmati kəəmə piṭṭu 2. maṭə siṅhala dannəva 3. maṭə danne nə 4. maṭə roṭi kannə aasai	1. mamə kəmati kəəmə piṭṭu <i>I like piṭṭu</i> 2. mamə siṅhala dannəva <i>I know Sinhala</i> 3. mamə danne nə <i>I don't know</i> 4. mamə roṭi kannə aasai <i>I like to have roṭi</i>

c)	Ncf instead of Dcf	1. giyaa passe	1. giyaaṭə passé <i>after (I) went</i>
d)	Ncf instead of Ablef	1. Jane:laya	1. Janclayen <i>Through the window</i>
e)	Gef instead of Ablef	1. Kurullo kumburuwal piyaambaa giya	1. Kurullo kumburuwalin piyaambaa giya <i>Birds flew from the fields</i>
f)	Accf instead of Dcf	1. duva ballavə gahannə eppaa	1. duva ballaṭə gahannə eppaa <i>Daughter, Do not hit the dog.</i>
g)	Dcf instead of Gef	1. maṭə vayasa	1. mage: vayasa <i>My age</i>

### Sub -types of Omission in the case formation

Omission of Ablative case form: When the Tamil speakers participated in a conversation in Sinhala language; they omitted a particular morph of ablative case formation. (-ekka morph is omitted )

Omission of a required part in between the morph of dative case formation: In the Sinhala speech of Tamils, omission of the important segment of the particular morpheme has been observed. (-an part has been omitted in the morph of [-lanṭə] )

- c) Omission of dative case form
- d) Omission of genitive case form
- e) Omission of ablative case form

These three types are merged with substitution types of a, c and d because some morphological errors may have been omitted or substituted.

Omission types of identified errors are tabulated with some examples below,

**Table – 02 Sub-types of Omission in the case formation**

No	Type of Omission	Identified error	Correct form
a)	Omission of Abcf	1. oyaa amma enno	1. oyaa ammatekkə enno <i>You come with mother</i>
b)	Omission of Dcf	1. demahalaṭə	1. demahallanṭə <i>To parents</i>

### Sub -type of Addition in case formation

a. Addition of dative case form to the nominative case form: Tamil speakers add extra morph in an unwanted place. ([-ṭə] extra morph has been added) Addition types of identified errors are tabulated with some examples below

**Table – 03 Sub-types of Addition in the case formation**

No	Type of Addition	Identified error	Correct form
a)	Addition of Dcf in Ncf	1. gedaraṭə yanəva 2. maṭə dannəva	1. gedara yanəva <i>(I) go home</i> 2. mamə dannəva <i>I know</i>

### A short view of cause of errors

In 1974 Heidy Dulay and Marina Burt made a similar experiment with 145 Spanish students of English. They found two kinds of errors; one occurs due to the influence of the structure of the mother tongue that is now called inter lingual errors and the second is made due to the development of a second language that is called intra lingual errors (Corder, P, 1982). According to their experiment, the following chart shows the causes of errors in case formation among Tamils who speak Sinhala.

Table-4 Cause of errors

Cause of errors	Identified errors	Total
Inter lingual error (Mother tongue influence)	Table- 01- a) 3,b) 1,2,3,4, c) 1, f) 1 Table-03 a) 1,2	09
Intra lingual error (lack of knowledge)	Table- 01-a) 1,2, d) 1,e) 1, g) 1 Table-02- a) 1, b) 1	07

### Figure-01 Criterion of the Types of Morphological Errors in the case formation

Figure -01 describes the number of errors in case formation Tamils speaks Sinhala. Based on this figure, the percentage of Types of Morphological Errors in the case formation is taken. The learners at the speaking level of Sinhala language have made 70% of substitution, 20% of omission, 10% of addition and 0% of wrong ordering. Pie chart is given below.

Types of Morphological Errors in the case formation	Number of Error types
Substitution	7
Omission	2
Addition	1
Wrong Ordering	0

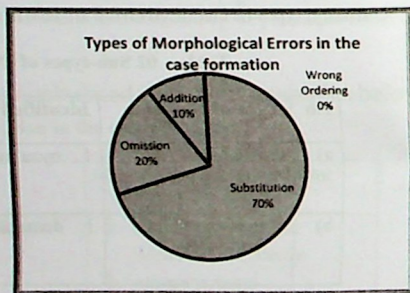


Figure 1

### Conclusion

There are mainly three types of morphological errors in case formation that have been identified in this analysis. They are substitution, omission and addition and there are sub-types of categorization in each and every main type of errors. The following have been identified as major substitution types of morphological errors in case formation, Nominative case form instead of genitive case form, dative case form instead of nominative case form, nominative case form instead of dative case form, nominative case form instead of ablative case form, genitive case form instead of ablative case form, accusative case form instead of dative case form, dative case form instead of genitive case form have been found in the categorization. In the addition

types, the addition of dative case form to the nominative case form has been found. In the omission types of morphological errors, omission of ablative case form, and omission of a wanted part in between the morph of dative case formation have been found in the Sinhala spoken by Tamil natives. According to the Statistical analysis, 70% of substitutions, 20% of omissions and 10% of additions types of errors occur in the case formations of Tamils who speak Sinhala.

According to the short view of the causes of errors, most of the case errors in Sinhala spoken by Tamils are made by the influence of the mother tongue.

Theoretically, a study of learners' errors is a part of the systematic study of the learners' language which is itself necessary to an understanding of the process of second language acquisition. It is necessary to have such knowledge to make any well-founded proposals for the development and improvement of the materials, and techniques used in the teaching of Sinhala language. This error analysis can be of assistance in identifying actual types of errors in case formation in Sinhala spoken by Tamils.

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