Abstract

This study investigates the predictive value of language in differentiating truthful language from deceptive language. Sri-Lankan Englishspeakers participated in the three levels of the study; the survey, the spoken component (Interview) and the written component. Both the interview and the written component were based on a laboratory experiment which acted as the stimulus material for the participants to lie or to tell the truth later in the interview and the written statements. The nine criteria examined were pauses in speech, interrogatives, short utterances, long utterances, negative emotion words, speech and language errors, emphasis, vague qualifiers and non-committal verbs. The results of the study showed that eight variables out of nine such as pauses in speech, interrogatives, short utterances, negative emotion words, speech and language errors, emphasis, vague qualifiers and non-committal verbs were used more in deceptive language than truthful language. But long utterances were more prevalent in truthful language. Pause in speech was seen as the best indicator of deception with 50% occurrence in deceptive language and 13% occurrence in truthful language. In the comparison between the speech component and the written statements it was evident that there were discrepancies between truthful and deceptive language as there was 55% changes and 62% missing facts in deceptive language in comparison to truthful language.