Learning a Foreign Language Structurally

Similar to the First Language:

Case study – Japanese   learners

whose   first language is Sinhala

by

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ABSTRACT

Even though both Sinhala and the Japanese have structural similarities in morphology and syntax, Sinhalese students still make errors when learning Japanese.

The goal of this research was to investigate the similarities and the differences between Sinhala and Japanese language. Sinhala has two types of grammar; written and spoken Sinhala. This study is limited to verbs of spoken Sinhala. In Japanese, both written and spoken forms are alike. This research has been done to examine why the students find it difficult to learn Japanese even when the syntactical structures are equal in both languages.

A multi-method form of research was utilized to carry out the research. This included Questionnaires, Discussions, Interviews, Observation on speeches in practical lessons and at speech contests, viva and some Practical lessons were also conducted using the comparative method.

The result of my research shows that some grammatical forms of Japanese are completely similar to that of spoken Sinhala, while a range of grammatical forms seem to be similar on the surface. At the same time, some of the grammatical forms are used only in Japanese, but not in the spoken Sinhala language. Some grammar patterns differ according to culture too.

My conclusion suggests that, teachers need to use a variety of teaching methods. Therefore it is strongly recommended to use the comparative method to explain the similarities and the differences of the two languages. Additional work such as use of situational videos will help to explain the cultural background of Japan. Japanese language teachers should use visual aids and audio conversations by Japanese natives to explain various situations. And also helping the learners to memorize the grammar pattern and giving them many exercises will result in decreasing the number of errors.