

In depth analysis of Sri Lankan students’ acquisition of Chinese tone “sandhi” – In special reference to Chinese special 3rd year students in University of Kelaniya

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Abstract

The present research study has been undertaken to obtain a thorough understanding of the acquisition of Chinese tone “sandhi” among the Chinese language special 3rd year students studying in University of Kelaniya. Mandarin Chinese is known as a tonal language. A tonal language is a language in which the same series of sounds can represent different meanings depending on the pitch variation of the word. There are four main tones and one neutral tone in Mandarin Chinese. In addition to tones, there are specific rules that cause Mandarin tones to change in certain situations. These rules are called “tone sandhi”. According to foreign learners of Chinese language, understanding the mandarin tone system is considered to be one of the most challenging areas. The purpose of this study is to investigate the acquisition of 3rd tone “sandhi”, “sandhi” of Chinese character 一 (yī, one), and the “sandhi” of Chinese character 不 (bù, not) among the Chinese language special 3rd-year students. The study has been mainly focused on identifying the pronunciation errors made by students when pronouncing mandarin tone “sandhi”. In addition, it also investigates students’ basic knowledge regarding the rules of tone “sandhi” and observes students’ attitudes towards learning mandarin tones and tone “sandhi”. The required data has been collected through two methods. A questionnaire has been given to the selected participants in order to obtain information regarding students’ basic knowledge about Chinese tone “sandhi” and information regarding their personal attitudes towards learning Chinese tone “sandhi”. In addition, a pronunciation test has been given in pursuance of identifying the pronunciation errors. The voice clips of the students are being compared with native speakers’ voice clips using voice analysis software. In conclusion, the identified pronunciation errors of students will be discussed and the reasons behind the occurrence of certain errors will be explained. Finally, reasonable recommendations will be suggested to minimize the mistakes.

Keywords - Acquisition, Chinese tone sandhi, Pronunciation errors, Sri Lankan students

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