

Representation of Language Policy in Oral Interactions between Doctors and Patients in a State Hospital

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Language is not only a communicative tool but also an integral part of an individual's identity. Respect for human rights entails recognising a person's right to use their language. Accordingly, Sri Lanka being a multi-lingual state, declared both Sinhala and Tamil as official languages to create the integrity of the country. Moreover, the state implements language policy to protect the language of the minority, thus abiding to offer their service to the public in the client's language. Yet, implementing circulars is not successful without its practices. Hence, it is in this light that the current study concentrates on the language policies and practices in oral interactions between doctors and patients in Out Patient Department (OPD) in a state hospital to investigate to what extent the language policy is practiced in the oral interactions. Accordingly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five doctors, ten Tamil-speaking patients and five Sinhala-speaking patients using random sampling in OPD in the Teaching Hospital Karapitiya. After conducting interviews, the data were critically reviewed, and the themes were identified to analyse the gathered data using Thematic Analysis. The encountered major findings of the study are 1) Utilising Sinhala as the medium of describing and inquiring the medical symptoms, 2) Official language examination for professional qualifications, 3) No necessity of the Tamil language during the doctors' carrier in teaching hospital Karapitiya, 4) Having insufficient knowledge regarding the language policy. Based on these findings, it can be unfolded that the expected official language policy is not practised in the oral interactions between doctors and patients in the Out Patient Department. In comparison, doctors and patients can perceive language in oral interaction.

Keywords: Doctors and Patients, Hospital, Language Policy, OPD, Oral Interaction