A Comparison of Errors in Languages Spoken by Sinhala-English Bilinguals with Post-Stroke Aphasia

I.Dharmaratne[1], A.D.S.Atapattu-Bakmeewewa[1]

[1] *Department of Disability Studies, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya*

Bilinguals are defined as those who use two languages in daily communication. Aphasia as an acquired language disorder virtually affects all languages of the bilingual speaker, often in varying degrees. The Clinical picture of the bilingual aphasic is of great interest to researchers, as the bilingual population of the world continues to increase. Many studies have focused on the language recovery patterns and comparison of language errors in bilingual aphasia in overseas contexts. As a multi- ethnic country, bilingualism continues to grow in Sri Lanka. The knowledge of multiple languages has led to the functional elaboration of all languages known especially in Sinhala-English bilinguals. Yet, there is a severe dearth of bilingual aphasic literature in the Sri Lankan Speech & Language Therapy context. This descriptive cross-sectional study analyzed the language errors in twelve (n=12) Sinhala- English bilinguals with aphasia post stroke in order to determine the more preserved language. It also discussed the determination of language preference of the participants for Speech & Language Therapy (SLT). A language assessment was administered to elicit the required language samples in Sinhala and English including four major linguistic components; discourse/spontaneous speech, confrontational naming, repetition and translation. The test stimuli were adapted from Western Aphasia Battery (Kertesz, 1982) for English and Pre-AphSL (2012) for Sinhala. Data were used to compare and analyze the errors across the two languages. The results showed no significant difference between Sinhala and English language performances. Neologisms, paraphasias, circumlocutions and perseverations were observed in both languages. The study results revealed a significant effect of age at onset on word finding difficulties. Other variables indicated notable trends, yet failed to demonstrate statistical significance.