SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROBLEMS OF NATIVE SINHALA SPEAKERS IN ACQUIRING JAPANESE PRONUNCIATIONS

KANO MITSURU

In teaching a second language if the teacher does not know the learner's native language, the teacher can't predict the learner's errors and can't teach effectively. These days, the number of learners of the Japanese language is increasing in Sri Lanka. However, no work has been done on what kind of problems Sinhala speakers have in learning Japanese in terms of contrastive linguistics. In this article, I focus on investigating the problems that might arise when the native speakers of Sinhala learn Japanese pronuciations.

- I. Vowels
- 1.1 The vowels of Sinhala and Japanese are given as follows 2:

Sinhala							Japanese			
1	i:			u	u		ī	i:	u	u
e	e:	0	(a:)	0	0.1		e	e:	0	0:
ie	æ	a	a:					a	a:	

1.2 Sinhala has short vowel vs. long vowel contrasts, as illustrated below:

[iri]	'lines'	3	[i:ri]	"sow".
[ekə]	'one'	1	[e:kə]	'that one'.
[pæ1]	'huts'	12	[pæ:1]	'a kind of measure'.
(barə)	'weight'	10	[ba:rə]	'vows'.

Also in Japanese vowels contrast in length:

[ojisan]	'uncle'	o.	[oji:saN]	'grandfather'.
[obasan]	'aunt	4	[oba:saN]	'grandmother'.
[okur]	'put'	1	[o:ktu]	'much'_

Since the duration of a long vowel is longer than twice that of a short vowel in both languages, it is not difficult for Sinhala speakers to pronounce Japanese long vowels.

1.3 Since the change of a → p takes place in a medial or final open syllable in Sinhala, Sinhala speakers tend to use fol in place of fal in Japanese: