

Influence of L1 in Code Switching

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Code switching is a bilingual linguistic phenomenon. Code switching between two languages may either be categorized as insertion or alternation. This paper investigates the phenomenon of code switching in Sri Lankan bilinguals whose L1 is Sinhala in contrast with speakers whose L1 is English (or English and Sinhala). The paper attempts to describe the influence of L1 when switching in conversation. The study treats insertion and alternation as two separate manifestations of the same linguistic phenomenon. It also describes attitudes to the phenomenon of code switching in Sri Lanka by its speakers and non-speakers.

The study makes use of a case study approach. Speakers are categorized by their L1 and the study analyzes, if there are differences in the manner of code switching i.e. whether speakers alternate or insert and whether this is due to the influence of L1. The experiment contains samples of spontaneous speech productions of informants who are also interviewed.

The findings of the study will determine the influence or non-influence of the L1 in code switching in bilingual speakers of Sri Lanka. It will also determine whether speakers combine insertion and alternation when switching codes or whether one phenomenon leads to the other in the course of conversation. It will determine if insertion and alternation can separate bilinguals into dominant or balanced groups irrespective of their choice of L1.

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