

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

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Bilinguals are defined as those who use two languages in daily communication. Aphasia as an acquired language disorder affects virtually 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. 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 on bilingual aphasic literature in the Sri Lankan Speech & Language Therapy context. The descriptive cross-sectional study analyzed the language errors in twelve (n=12) Sinhala-English bilinguals with post stroke aphasia 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. The data used to compare and analyze the errors across the two languages. The study results revealed a significant effect of age at onset on word finding difficulties. Neologisms, paraphasias, circumlocutions and perseverations were observed in both the languages. Other variables indicated notable trends, yet failed to demonstrate statistical significance. The study provides a foundation for studies on bilingual aphasia within the Sri Lankan context. Understanding differences in language performances is vital for Speech and Language Therapists for designing intervention programs. It is recommended that, future studies should focus on an 'in-depth', longitudinal analysis of language errors in Sinhala-English bilingual clients with aphasia.

Key Words: Aphasia, Bilingualism, Sinhala- English bilinguals, Language errors, more preserved language