

An Analysis of Motivations for Code-mixing Sinhala into English among Undergraduates

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Code-mixing is indubitably an inevitable linguistic behaviour in most bilingual/multilingual contexts, which refers to the mixing of two or more languages in speech. The prime objective of this paper was to discern the motivations for code-mixing Sinhala into English among hundred undergraduates from the Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya. The students were selected using simple random sampling while the survey technique was employed to gather data of this study. Three psycholinguistic motivations - filling the lexical gaps which arise due to language deficits and non-availability of English terms and the relative ease of accessibility - were acknowledged as reasons for code-mixing by over 50% of the respondents. However, the medium-of-learning effect was not identified as a motivation for code-mixing by most of the respondents. On the other hand, majority of respondents engaged in code-mixing as they were susceptible to the interlocutor's language proficiency. Conversely, most students code-mixed neither to arrest others' attention nor to display their affiliations to the "elite class." Nevertheless, displaying affability and gaining peer recognition were identified as motivations for code-mixing by more than 50% of the selected undergraduates. One of the significant finding of the study was that the participants anticipated being the cynosure of any given setting by code-mixing English into Sinhala, not vice versa. It was also found that one's smattering knowledge of Sinhala was considered a "mark of pride" whilst limited proficiency in English was greatly ridiculed. Accordingly, the overall findings of the study gave perceptive insights into the students' attitudes towards the Sinhala and English languages.

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