

Hierarchical Position of Imperative Forms in Sinhalese

Rev. Morakandegoda Ariyawansa Thero (B.A. Pera., M.A. Pune)
Senior lecturer, Department of Sinhalese, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka
ariyawansamora@gmail.com

Sinhalese culture has a long and continuous history, deep rooted traditions and highly differentiated social norms (Meegaskumbura 1990). Some of them are reflected in the language in its address forms, commands and requests. This paper will mainly base on the imperative forms and usages of theirs. Here the historical and sociolinguistic background (Paranavitana 1956), hierarchical structure of superior, equal, and inferior usages, polite : impolite and formal: informal distinction are included for the discussion (Meegaskumbura 1990). The formal - power base vs. informal - solidarity relationship is also a main category of imperative usages. The formal usage which is socially more acceptable indicates some kind of distance between the speaker and addressee. But the informal usage shows close solidarity. It gives a close picture on sociolinguistic condition of the imperative forms. It is interesting to mention that the hierarchical usages of different morphemes are used with the same semantic value. Sri Lankan society is broadly divided into two groups, secular/layman (gihi) and mendicant/ clergy (pævidi) (Geiger 1938, Meegaskumbura 1990). According to this situation the Sinhalese language shows very significant usages among Indo-Aryan languages. Two separate sets of verbal and nominal forms are used traditionally in Sinhalese. The religion Buddhism is the main factor for this differentiation of address forms. The Sinhalese speaker cannot use similar form for Buddha, monks, kings, elders and younger ones if the words have same meaning. They should be changed according to the social status of the addressee as well as the speaker. There are some imperative forms which are completely different from phonologically and morphologically but similar in meaning. Those words are used for Buddha and Buddhist monks when Sinhalese people address them.

Key Words: Equal, Hierarchy, Inferior, Mendicant, Secular, Solidarity, Superior