

Pronoun System: Reference Tracking and Translation

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss the issues of the pronoun system in Sinhala discourse and their relevance to the Sinhalese-English translations. It is apparent that a well formed pronoun hierarchy is found in Sinhala discourse. Though it is thoroughly defined in the field of Sinhalese Linguistics, it is a practical issue for translators when rendering Sinhala texts to English. This phenomenon again depicts the inter-relationships between language and society. In Sinhalese pronoun system, there can be seen both regional and social variations. The pronoun system of Sinhalese proves the social stratification (Trudgill 1983) of Sinhalese Linguistic society. The social hierarchy is clearly visible in the pronoun hierarchy in Sinhalese language. Again the pronoun system of Sinhalese basically works according to the human relationships. This can be analyzed within the framework of Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, which identifies the link between language and thinking of the native speakers. It suggests that Sinhalese people habitually perceive their environment in a rather different way from English speaker who have some problems in appreciating the normal Sinhalese distinction. However, it does not imply that the translation between Sinhala and English is a feasible exercise. The paper will discuss the semantics and pronouns; which can be categorized as natural vs. social pronouns. There are pronoun stereotypes in Sinhalese and they also raise translation problems. And this paper also focuses upon the pronominal gender system and related translation problems.

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