A Study of Incentives to Use the Bilingual Features and the English Language on Name Boards

P. S. Manthrirathna

Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

sachimanthri@gmail.com

The use of English as L_1 and code-mixing between Sinhala and English are common linguistic behaviors in public discourse in Sri Lanka. The majority of name boards of business establishments, educational institutions, healthcare centers, departments and ministries, hotels and restaurants, cinema and theatre halls etc. in Sri Lanka too provide apt instances in this respect. However, the language used on name boards has been rarely examined in the linguistic field. Therefore, this research will throw light on both previous and current linguistic researches as this study fills this theoretical gap. The major objective of the study is to examine the incentives for using these language behaviours on name boards. It further discovered the attitudes of society towards these language variations and the effects of these language behaviours on Sinhala/Tamil and English languages as the minor objectives. The study area was Kandy municipality. For data collection, 115 individuals were selected as the sample. The relevant primary data was collected through interviews, a questionnaire and observations. The previous research articles, scholarly articles, books and the internet were the secondary data sources of the research. The final result of the research depicts a variety of reasons for following these two major language phenomena on name boards; due to the modern trend, blind imitation, globalization, multi racial identity of Sri Lanka, tourism, lack of Sinhala equivalents for several lexical items etc. With regard to the minor objectives, the majority, who states the use of English and bilingual features on name boards is 'good', suggests there are various social and learning advantages in this language phenomenon. The rest, who disagrees with this opinion and those who mention the use of these language features on name boards affects the purity of native languages suggest, the name boards should be displayed in all three languages. Finally, the study reveals that the language used on name boards is merely utilized as a business oriented strategy of attracting people although it affects Sinhala,Tamil and English languages violating each and every language rule.

Keywords: attitudes; code-mixing; language usage; social impact