

## **HINDI - SINHALA SYLLABIFICATION WITH REFERENCE TO SANSKRIT LOANWORDS: A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS**

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Syllables are groups of sounds. A syllable consists of a vowel sound (V), which may be preceded or followed by a consonant (C), or by a cluster of consonants (CC or CCC). Hindi and Sinhala are Indo-Aryan languages that inherit features from each other. The vocabulary of these two languages consists primarily of Sanskrit loaned words, and similar Sanskrit loaned words are found in both languages. In the present study, one of the acoustic units of speech, the syllable, is used to develop a continuous Hindi and Sinhala speech recognition system. The objective of the present study is to present the necessary knowledge to reduce the common errors made by Sinhala speakers learning Hindi as a second language due to the influence of the mother language in pronouncing Hindi. The data were collected through structured interviews with Hindi and Sinhala native speakers, and the collected data was analyzed based on phonological theories. Results are presented from an experiment conducted to see how native speakers of Hindi and Sinhala syllabify various intervocalic consonant clusters. The results showed a preference for Vowel-Consonant/Vowel syllabification for two-consonant clusters and a Vowel/Consonant-two Consonants/Vowel preference for three-consonant clusters in Hindi, while in Sinhala, both Vowel and Consonant denote syllabicity, but only Vowel is storable as a phonemic element of the structure. Sinhala syllables have three generalized phonetic structures: Consonant/Vowel, Vowel, and three Consonants. These results emphasized that when it comes to syllabification in the context of Sanskrit loaned words, Hindi and Sinhala follow different rules, and it can be concluded that words that are pronounced as two or three syllables in Sinhala are pronounced as one syllable in Hindi and always have fewer syllables in Hindi than in Sinhala in the pronunciation of Sanskrit loaned words.

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