

M.A. THESIS IN LINGUISTICS

THE INFLUENCE OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS' WRITING

(The studies based on grade 10 &11 Sinhalese students learning English as a second language in Niyagama Division)

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Abstract

English is one of the second languages in Sri Lanka. It is taught as a compulsory subject in the school curriculum. Other than its necessity to learn English as an obligatory subject, there are more reasons such as 'social superiority' connected with the language 'English' as Sri Lanka was once under the emperor of British whose native language is English. Other than this, people learn English for various purposes. Beside these notions related to 'English' language, still there are loopholes in learning English in Sri Lanka. One of the problems that second language teachers encounter is improper writing which is influenced by the first language. This could be clearly seen in the writing of second language learners of English in Niyagama Division whose first language is Sinhalese. In order to find how the first language has influenced and reasons for such influences, the research was conducted by selecting four schools in Niyagama division. Through the collected information from instruments and questionnaires, how the first language has affected the structure of writing; orthography, words, sentences and meanings are discussed and the reasons such as social back ground, learning environment and the attitudes are discussed. In the same way, it was found that 'overgeneralization' of elements in the second language also affects to make errors in second language writing. These findings are expected to be helpful for teachers of English in Sri Lanka in order to help their students to avoid such errors while writing in English.