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First Language Interference in the Usage of English as the Second Language in Sri Lanka

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The English Language is considered as the second language in Sri Lanka and it plays the role of the linking language as well. Therefore, Sri Lankan citizens give a priority to learn English well. Though Sri Lankan English learners are good at writing English, sometimes when they speak English, they use the Sinhalese structure involuntarily. Not only in speaking, but in writing as well, some people use the Sinhalese structure. When Sinhalese people speak in English, their speech differs from that of native speakers because of the mother tongue interference. Not only through borrowing English words, but also in the manner that sentences are made by the Sinhalese who are well educated in English, the interference is notably high. Hence the research focuses on exploring first language interference in the usage of English as the second language in Sri Lanka. The research was conducted by interviewing Sri Lankans who learn English as a second language. Secondary data were gathered from books and internet. The sentence structure in English is completely different from the sentence structure in Sinhalese and through this study, problems which arise through differences in language structures and their influence on learning English Language are discussed. Thus, this research draws attention towards the ways in which mother tongue interfere in the usage of English Language as the second language in Sri Lanka.

Key words: borrowing, direct translation, mother tongue, second language, word order

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