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THE ACQUISITION OF THE ENGLISH VOLITIVE AND INVOLITIVE
ALTERNATIONS BY SRI LANKAN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS



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Abstract

Research on second language acquisition has expanded enormously since its inception. The application of newer findings from the studies of SLA to educational concerns has both informed and sustained long standing debates about the role of the learner's consciousness in the SLA process, and about the nature of the learner's input needs and requirements. This piece of research was focused on identifying volitive and involitive alternations used by Sri Lankan second language learners in English. In other words, study was aimed to see how Sri Lankan second language learners express their intentional and unintentional actions in English and their difficulty level in expressing volitive and involitive actions. Languages use a variety of strategies to encode the presence or absence of volition cross-linguistically. Most frequently, an intentional meaning is ascribed to volitive verbs and an unintentional meaning to involitive verbs. Sinhala verbs fall into two stem classes, the volitive and involitive. Subjects of volitives are almost invariably nominative and subjects of involitives occur in nominative, accusative, dative, or the postpositional case "atij". Verbs of volition in English are not expressly marked and verbs of involition do not appear in English language as in Sinhala. Some languages handle this with affixes, while others have complex structural consequences of volitional and involition encoding. Thus, Sri Lankan second language learners faces difficulties in expressing involitive actions in English. Alternations were found and questionnaires, interviews and test papers were used as tools. Four subject related professionals were interviewed. There were 252 students in the sample and they were given the test paper with difficulty level in proficiency judgments scale and the questionnaire. Participants were given 46 sentences to express in English and around 11000 sentences provided by participants

were analyzed by the researcher. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in analyzing data. At the end of analysis, there were only a few number of alternations provided by participants and it was proven that hypothesis made by the researcher is correct. Hence, this research would provide an insight in to recognizing and overcoming morpho-syntactic and morpho-semantic problems in enabling one to master second language.

Key word: - volitive, involitive, cross-linguistic, second language, morpho-syntactic, morpho-semantic