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Usage of dental -/n/ (න) and retroflex -/ɳ/ (ණ) in Sinhalese orthography and word meaning

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Spoken form is the basic nature of a language. Written form of a language has been used by man to transmit his knowledge and experiences to the next generation. Phonetically produced sounds are converted into a visualized form through writing. Usage of correct letters is known as orthography which is considered as most important part in writing. Correct grapheme has to be used in writing otherwise it may cause to meaning difference in Sinhalese. The aim of this research is to identify the usage of dental letter -/n/ (න) and retroflex letter -/ɳ/ (ණ) in written form of Sinhala language. Research question is how to identify the definite meaning of the words where dental -/n/ (න) and retroflex -/ɳ/ (ණ) have been used. As the methodology of this research phonetically similar Sinhalese words with dental -/n/ and retroflex -/ɳ/ have been collected. As the secondary resources dictionaries, grammar books and magazines were used to collect data. Then etymology of the collected words has been analyzed. As the result of this research I could identify even though both of these letters are pronounced in almost same manner, contrast in meaning can be seen according to the etymology of the word. In order to use dental and retroflex letters to convey the correct meaning and to distinct the meaning difference of the literary words used in Sinhala language, it is important to have a clear understanding about the etymology of the borrowed words.

Keywords: *etymology of the word, definite meaning of the words, dental letter -/n/ (න), orthography, retroflex letter -/ɳ/ (ණ)*