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A Study on the Use of English and Sanskrit Borrowings in Contemporary Sinhalese

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English and Sanskrit occupy significant places among the languages that have influenced the Sinhalese language. English and Sanskrit words have entered the lexicon of the Sinhalese language as both borrowings and derivative words. This study is concerned on the use of English and Sanskrit borrowings in contemporary Sinhalese. Data was collected by observing the use of English and Sanskrit borrowings in both spoken and written sources representing contemporary Sinhalese. The words directly borrowed from a different language without altering its form are known as borrowings. Borrowing Sanskrit words into Sinhalese has its history stretching at least up to Polonnaru era and most of those words are still being used in written Sinhalese. English can be considered the language with the biggest impact on contemporary Sinhalese. However, as opposed to those of Sanskrit, English borrowings are mostly used in spoken Sinhalese. The usage suggests that Sanskrit borrowings are preferred in written Sinhalese whereas English borrowings are preferred in spoken Sinhalese. As far as the Sinhalese language of the early eras is concerned, Sanskrit borrowings were used as an attempt to show one's erudition. Though this appears valid to a certain extent in contemporary Sinhalese, the major reason behind the use of Sanskrit borrowings in contemporary written Sinhalese appears to be spontaneity. The use of English borrowings in speech is also a matter of showing one's erudition and social status. In addition, as the case of Sanskrit borrowings, spontaneity can also be pointed out as a major reason for the use of English borrowings in spoken Sinhalese.

Key words: contemporary Sinhalese, English, borrowings, Sanskrit, spontaneity