

M.A.THESIS IN LINGUISTICS

**ERRORS DONE BY SECOND
LANGUAGE LEARNERS WHEN
CONSTRUCTING SIMPLE SENTENCES**

(A study based on the usage of simple present/past tense and
present/past continuous tense of grade 7 students)

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Abstract

The M.A in Linguistics is a post graduate program offered by the University of Kalaniya that consists of a written examination and a dissertation to evaluate the students.

As the grammar plays an important role in expressing ideas effectively using any language, it is important to give a good knowledge in grammar for the students. Therefore I thought to select a problem related to grammar for my dissertation. The research area that I selected was the errors done by second language learners in constructing simple sentences.

With the purpose of limiting the research area, it was selected to study how students use simple present tense, simple past tense, present continuous tense and past continuous tense when constructing simple sentences.

The selected group was a grade 7 class of a 1AB school in Kalaniya zone. Grade 7 has six parallel classes and 7D class was the selected sample that consisted of 38 students. Students are in different levels vary from the students who cannot read and write in English to the students who can build up simple sentence accurately.

From the diagnostics test mistakes done by the students were identified and data collecting tools like questionnaire, interviews, examining record books were used to collect data related to the background of the students. Data was gathered and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively to identify the reasons for the problem.

From the findings it was identified that the main reasons for the students' mistakes are less exposure to language and fewer opportunities to produce the language. Since the students are from Sinhala speaking families and the majority of parents is not educated, they have no support from the household environment to learn English. This situation has caused them to obtain low marks for the exams and ultimately obtaining low marks has resulted them to consider English as the least interesting subject in the curriculum.

Using the literature review and the data gathered from experienced teachers, solutions were proposed and recommendation were presented to minimize the problem.

Finally few proposed solutions were implemented in the class room as the time permitted and progress could be observed.