

Abstract 31

A Study on Common Morphosyntactic Errors in English Made by Sri Lankan Second Language Learners

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Syntax is the rules with which words are combined to create sentences. Morphology is the study of morphemes which are the smallest significant units of grammar. The Second language learners of Sri Lanka face major difficulties in these vital areas of English language due to confusions with grammatical errors caused by being unaware of morphosyntactic rules. The main objectives of the research are to identify the common morphosyntactic errors, to trace out the causes of the aforesaid errors in English language among second language learners of Sri Lanka and to provide suggestions for reducing such errors in English language among secondary school students. The research is designed to carry out both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. A questionnaire survey was given to thirty randomly selected Government school students of the Advanced Level grade to identify the morphosyntactic errors they make in English. Results of the study revealed that concord in auxiliaries; SVO pattern, articles, prepositions and tenses are the major types of syntactic errors, whereas affixation and compound related errors, conversion related errors are the major types of morphological errors. The survey concludes that syntactic and morphological errors have been caused by confusing and ineffective teaching methods of English for second language learners. These areas should be given their rightful place in language learning. The findings of this study demonstrate the utility of employing systematic and the most effective strategies for teaching syntactic and morphological structures of English language. Thus, it is important to state that the writers of English textbooks for second language learners should include teaching methods that could be easily understood by students in the writing of English textbooks.

Key words: Grammar, Morphology, Second Language, Syntax, Systematic Strategies