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### First Language Interference: “Like” as in /wæni/

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Utilization of prepositions, among the learners of English as the second language, has been a much debated and researched topic in the field of linguistics. Abundant linguistic research is conducted upon the quotidian English prepositions and the interference of the first language (L1) in the usage of English prepositions by its learners. However, it seemed that “like” is a less attended yet a tendentious preposition in relation to its usage among the learners of the Sri Lankan ESL context. The focus of this research is to determine whether ESL learners use the preposition “like” by directly translating it from its seemingly equivalent /wæni/ in Sinhala; to calculate the rate of such users who learn English as the L2 in a tertiary level educational institution; to analyze whether such direct translation is a learner mistake or an error. Two methodologies were employed in this research. One was an Error Analysis of the written compositions in English done by 37 undergraduates whose L1 is Sinhala. The second was a group interview with the same 37 undergraduates in order to gather and compare the data with the first methodology to distinguish between the ones who make mistakes and errors in the use of the preposition “like”. The results disclose that fifty percent of the ESL learners erroneously adopt the L1 syntactic structure in using the preposition “like” in English, as a direct translation of the syntactic structure of their L1. This paper therefore confers the need of correcting the error committed by the ESL learners and the worth of bringing forward topics of further research related to the aspect discussed.

**Key words:** Direct Translation, Error Analysis, L1 Interference, Prepositions, Syntactic Structures