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UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA

SRI LANKA

Focus Sentences in Child Language

The Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Degree of M. phil (Linguistics)

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ABSTRACT

This work is based on a research I conducted for my M.phil in University of Kelaniya. The aim of this research is to provide an introduction to child language acquisition and analyses an important sentence structure, namely focus sentences (emphatic sentences with emphatic meaning) in Sinhala child language, based on some concepts of GB theory. This thesis consists of six chapters including a conclusion. Data collection is also provided at the end of the book.

Because I selected four children covering the whole language acquisition period, there may be slight differences between the counterparts of words in my data collection. But I did not consider such morphological difference in this research. Only their syntactic context is concentrated upon.

Chapter one consists of an approach to the study. Here I introduce briefly the aims, purpose, background, methodology of the study and justification.

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Second chapter deals with language acquisition. In this chapter I pay my special attention on linguistic theory and child language. As an approach to the study, here I discuss the principle of structure dependency, which was acquired by children at the very

beginning of their acquisition process. Brief descriptions of the organization of grammar and structures of language are included.

Third chapter deals with focus formations of child language and contains a description of Sinhala syntax. In this chapter I introduce three kinds of focus formations identified by me in my study.

Forth chapter contains a description of gradual growth of focus sentences in child language. It also discusses some significant formations such as over generalization and extra element addition, related to child focus sentences.

Chapter five analyses data on the basis of sub concepts of GB such as control theory, pro drop nature, alpha movement, theta criterion, binding theory and subjacency.

Chapter six is the conclusion of the study.

I expect this thesis would reveal few factors which would be helpful in research on syntax in language acquisition.