

### **1.23 An Analysis of Syntactic Errors of the Undergraduates Who Study English as a Second Language**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The system of rules and categories that underlies sentence formation is called syntax. As Corder (1973: 167) noted: "Errors provide feedback to the teacher on effectiveness of the teaching material, teaching techniques and show what part of the syllabus has been inadequately learned or taught." In Error Analysis, samples of learner language are collected and errors are identified, described and classified according to their hypothesized reasons.

In the Faculty of Commerce and Management of the University of Kelaniya, the first year students study English as a Second Language and they follow a course titled "English for Business Communication", which is compulsory to complete their degree. With fourteen years of experience in English language teaching, the researcher has noticed that there are some individual variances in sources of errors, indicated by students' performance in English language learning. Also it has been observed that the knowledge in syntax is crucial in their examinations and assignments. Therefore the analysis of errors of ESL students in the Faculty of Commerce and Management would be useful and worthwhile.

The paper focuses on the syntactic errors of about 40 randomly selected first year Commerce and Management students and they were given a questionnaire to find out their difficulties in syntax of English language. The necessary data will be obtained by analyzing the students' errors in their written work. The descriptive method will be used and statistical analysis will follow to identify the sources of errors. At the conclusion of this investigation, remedial measures will be discussed, and some suggestions for teaching ESL will be proposed in this context.