

Linguistic Borrowing in a Changing World: A Contrastive Analysis of English Loan Words in Sinhala and German

Neelakshi Chandrasena Premawardhena¹

The impact of English as a donor language is reflected in many languages across the world today. However, the extent of language change caused by English loan words varies according to each language. This paper focuses on the role of English as a donor language in linguistic borrowing with examples derived from modern Sinhala and German. The study was conducted by analysing written and spoken varieties of the two languages with data available from corpora for Sinhala and German. Since linguistic borrowing is a major cause for language change, it is attempted to discuss what structural changes have occurred in the two languages due to English loan words. Furthermore, the impact of loan words is a significant area of study in foreign or second language teaching. Thus it is also expected that this study would enlighten teachers and students of German and Sinhala as a second or foreign language as a contrastive study of this nature has not been conducted so far.

The results of the analysis show that the major impact on Sinhala has been on the spoken variety while Literary Sinhala still prefers to use loan words from Sanskrit. Major structural changes have occurred in phonetics, phonology, morphology and semantics of modern Sinhala due to English loan words. In German both spoken and written varieties have been affected by the expansion of the existing vocabulary with a large number of English loan words although they bear no significant impact on the structure of the language apart from phonetics and morphology. The advancement of technology has been the one of the major reasons for linguistic borrowing in both languages. English has thus caused language change across the globe and will continue to be one of the major forces in linguistic borrowing.

Key words: linguistic borrowing, loan words, language change, German, Sinhala

¹ Department of Modern Languages, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka