

First Language Influence of Second Language Users of English in Writing

B.A.Ajantha Niroshani

University of Western Sydney, Australia

Abstract

This paper examines the influence of first language [L1-Sinhala] among Sri Lankan tertiary education users of English as a second language in the learning context of Visual and Performing Arts. Developing functional writing skills is an essential requirement of the learning program. Students are exposed to specific text types and genres to demonstrate their writing. This paper presents examples of student writing: personal recount in their first year of undergraduate study.

Twenty-three student personal recounts are presented in the target language [English] and their first language [L1 – Sinhala]. These work samples are deconstructed and annotated based on structural features and language features of the text type: personal recount.

The results of the analysis display the difficulties and challenges the students experience in processing their thoughts from L1[Sinhala to L2 (English)] and producing a piece of writing in the target language. These writing samples reveal errors in sentence formation, subject-verb-agreement, tenses, grammar rules, spelling and punctuation.

Keywords: Genre analysis, text type, personal recount, text structure, language features