ABSTRACT

The present study is a comparative analysis of word order in Sinhala and English.

The main objective of the study is to understand the different properties of the two languages in respect of word order which introduces the Sinhala learner of English (hereafter the L2 learner), the comparative concepts of two languages (Sinhala and English) so as to facilitate them to acquire English.

In the methodology of the study, the word order of both languages has been analyzed separately and compared. The data for spoken Sinhala presented here is drawn from several native speakers. Being a non-native speaker of English, the researcher of this survey has drawn the data for English from native samples. At the end of some sentences the names of those who have cited them, have been quoted.

The thesis is divided into six chapters.

The ‘Introduction’ deals with a brief account of Sinhala, one of the two official languages the other being Tamil and the mother tongue of the majority (about 70%) in Sri Lanka is an Indo Aryan language spoken mainly in Sri Lanka.

According to Katre (1964: 5) the term Indo-Aryan represents the language stream brought in by the invading Aryans towards the beginning or early half of the second millennium B.C into India.

Sinhala has two main varieties: literary and spoken which differ from each other in important ways. Literary Sinhala is the language of virtually all written materials not just literature in the specific sense. It is characteristically written and read, on those relatively rare occasions when it is heard, it is generally read aloud from a previously prepared text. Spoken Sinhala, setting aside some formal sub-varieties heard primarily in lectures and seminars, is basically the language used by everyone at all social and educational levels, for all face to face
discourse and it is this colloquial variety of Sinhala that is mostly represented in the present study.

The introduction also brings in English, the language of Britain, Ireland, North America, Australia and other countries. According to Krisnaswami (2008: 1) out of the 1.5 billion who know English, about 337 million use it as their first language (L1); about 350 million use it as a second (L2) language.

In a country like Sri Lanka, English is used as the second (L2) language. In the ‘introduction’ the research problem, aims and objectives of the study, hypothesis, data, scope and methodology are also highlighted. It also discusses the significance of the comparative study of word order in Sinhala and English and finally brings out the organization of the thesis.

**Chapter One** deals with the theoretical framework of the study and defines the concept of word order. The word order is a topic, which comes under the grammar of a particular language. Grammar is the rule of any language. Therefore, this chapter illustrates the close affinity of word order and grammar. It is largely accepted that the word order universals of Greenberg are pioneering in the study of word order in a language. Hence, some of the Greenberg’s word order universals which have utmost relevance to the present study are discussed as the theoretical base.

**Chapter Two** is a survey of literature related to the research. The purpose of this literature survey is to identify the information relevant to the topic and documentation of a comprehensive review of the published and unpublished work in the area of specific interest to the researcher.

However, there is hardly any research on the comparison of word order in Sinhala and English though some books and articles do discuss their grammar. Some of the books and studies along with articles and also
unpublished thesis which have utmost bearings on the present study have been discussed briefly.

**Chapter Three** titled ‘Word order in English’ is an elucidation of word order in English at the phrase level, clause level and the sentence level. The word order is not confined to the order of subject, object and verb in a sentence. Hence, this chapter based on the Quirk’s detail classification discussed in “A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language” (1985) investigates the word order in English at various levels such as at the phrase level, clause level and also at the sentence level and concludes that though the word order in English is considered to be very rigid particularly at the phrase level, there are some peculiarities. The SVO order is not fixed even at the clause level and also at the sentence level as well. Therefore, English language cannot be considered a language with a very rigid word order.

**Chapter Four** titled ‘Word order in Sinhala’ expounds the word order in Sinhala at various levels. According to Greenberg (1966:73-113) there are three principal word order types of languages:  
Type 1. VSO (Verb, Subject and object)  
Type 2. SVO (Subject, verb and object)  
Type 3. SOV (Subject, object and verb)  
This chapter highlights that though Sinhala provides evidence for being classified as type 3, there are word order variations particularly at the clause level of the language.

**Chapter Five** is a contrastive study, which gives a detailed elucidation of the similarities and differences in word order in Sinhala and English at the phrase level, clause level and the sentence level. It illuminates how these similarities and dissimilarities in word order contribute to the second language transfer.
Chapter Six being the concluding chapter summarizes the whole study by way of conclusions. Before summing up, it highlights the two general problems that need to be addressed while attempting to identify the word order characteristics of Sinhala and English. The first one is that the identifying of the basic word order for which the language may have more than one word order. This is more applicable to spoken Sinhala, a language with many various constituent orders particularly at the clause level as well as at the sentence level.

The second is of identifying instances of particular construction of the two languages respectively.

The main conclusion is that though Sinhala is considered a SOV (Subject+Object+Verb) language and English a SVO (Subject+Verb+Object) language both share common properties. The word order of both the languages is fixed at the phrase level whereas at the sentence level there is a flexibility.

However, the word order in Sinhala at the sentence level is more flexible than that of English.

Finally, this chapter discusses the pedagogical implications and further research possibilities in the field of word order.