

## **Word Order Freezing: A Case in Point in German and Sinhala**

**Pathirana B A P M L<sup>1</sup>, Dissanayaka D M H C<sup>2</sup>**

Department of Languages, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

mahindapp@gmail.com

Word order freezing is a phenomenon by which information structure overtakes grammatical structure. In this situation, order of words in a certain configuration of a sentence cannot be put otherwise without changing the semantic of that particular sentence. Languages with case marking and agreement are said to experience the freezing effect very often. Languages harbour certain structures of sentence building where argument-identifying mechanisms such as case marking allow an unambiguous presentation of meaning. But, when a sentence lacks information like grammatical case, differentiating elements of the sentence from each other it becomes problematic.

In the current paper, it is expected to contrastively investigate freezing in German and Sinhala and illustrate the phenomena in detail, while extending the results to teaching of German as a foreign language to Sinhala-speaking students. The study adopts comparative (contrastive) method, which uses secondary data from the languages under investigation for analysis.

German, an Indo-European language is extremely case marked. At the same time, it allows a great deal of freedom in word order. But, where German uses certain cases with similar properties both in nominative and accusative, it is forced to freeze the word order. Sinhala, on the other hand, is an Indo-Aryan language, with a very high Diglossic division. In terms of the freedom of the word order, Sinhala surpasses any other. But, the freedom in order is found only in the spoken variety. The written form is as rigid as any other fixed word order language. The study found that the diglossia and its varied syntactic manifest in Sinhala play a significant role in terms of word order freezing. The written variety, with a fixed word order, also entertains a high degree of case marking whereas the case marking is minimum in the spoken form, which is extremely flexible. In spite of that, freezing in the word order is seen in both varieties.

**Key words:** *Word order freezing, Syntax, Case-marking, Diglossia, German as foreign language*