

**Linguistic Competence of Using English Tenses by Tertiary Level  
Students in Sri Lanka: Special Focus on the Undergraduates at Uva  
Wellassa University**

**J. M. P. V. K. Jayasundara**  
**Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka**  
*jayasundarajmpvk@gmail.com*

Currently, English reigns supreme in all aspects of the societies in most of the countries worldwide. In Sri Lanka also English has now become the most extensively learnt second language as a result of global influence. The present study intends to explore the linguistic competence of using English tenses by undergraduates in the writing and speaking performances in their academic environment. Hence, the study has focused on the performance of 100 undergraduates who are currently following different Degree Programmes at Uva Wellassa University. Consequently, written assignments and oral tests have been used as research instruments in order to investigate the linguistic competence of using English tenses in their academic environment. In addition to that, the statistical software, 'Minitab 14' was manipulated for analytical purposes. However, the findings of the research revealed that most of the undergraduates are in need of more competence in using English tenses, especially in the Simple Present Tense as they frequently commit errors in the use of 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form. Further, students lack the ability to use passive forms correctly. Besides, selecting the proper tense has become another major difficulty that they face in their academic performances in both writing and speaking. Therefore, the study attempts to enlighten English teachers islandwide about the fields where undergraduates have difficulties in using English as a second language while emphasizing the requirement of making students better equipped with the knowledge of English. Accordingly, the findings are significant in developing innovative approaches to teach English, especially in tertiary level education in the Sri Lankan context. Moreover, future researchers will be benefited with the results explored through this research.

***Key words:*** *Tenses, English, Undergraduates, Linguistic, Competence*