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DISSERTATION

IMPACT OF USING THE FIRST LANGUAGE IN ADULT
SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM AT BEGINNER'S
LEVEL: EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

Submitted by

P.B.S.L.Pushpa Kumara

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Abstract

The role of first language (L1) in the second language (L2) classroom is an increasingly important area that requires more research. Second language acquisition (SLA) researchers investigate the role of L1 and teacher perceptions of L1 use in the L2 classroom. However, research that examines the impact of using L1 in the L2 classroom is limited. The present study, therefore, sets out to investigate the impact of using L1 in a limited manner in adult L2 classroom at beginner's level in the hope of suggesting L1 as an integral part of a pedagogy that is appropriate for the Sri Lankan SLA context.

The study employs positivist research paradigm to investigate the impact of using L1 in the L2 classroom. After conducting a pre-test, sixty learners learning English as a second language were selected and randomly assigned into two groups namely experimental and control groups. A grammar course was administered for four months to each group alike except that the experimental group learners were given basic instructions on form and function/s of each grammatical item using their first language. The control group learners were taught the same grammar course without using their first language. At the end of the course, a post-test was held to determine the improvements. Statistical analysis of improvement marks suggests that the experimental group learners who learned the selected grammatical items using their L1 in a limited manner have improved their grammatical competency significantly better than the control group learners.

Findings of the study encourage language teachers to challenge the traditional assumption that target language can and should be taught in the target language only. Instead, findings of the study encourage language teachers to judiciously use learners' first language to facilitate SLA and allow learners to make strategic use of their first language to acquire the second language.

Keywords: *first language, second language, second language acquisition, adult learners and beginner level learners*