

## **1.21 Relationship between formal grammar instruction and development of second language competence: a preliminary study**

Dissanayake S.A.R.R.P.  
Gampaha Wickramarachchi Ayurveda Institute, University of Kelaniya

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### **ABSTRACT**

Second language learning involves the development of a mental system of grammar, which enables the learner to communicate. In formal teaching, grammar rules are presented to the learner to facilitate the formation of this mental system. The general assumption is that these rules will be readily available for automatic language production in communication.

A preliminary study was designed to assess the relationship between these rules presented in instructional settings and the development of grammatical competence. Thirty learners studying English as a second language in BAMS course of Gampaha Wickramarachchi Ayurveda Institute were randomly divided into two groups: experimental and control. Each group received three learning sessions: in the experimental group, the learners received formal instruction on the rules of reporting sentences, while the control group was only exposed to reading materials and activities where these grammar forms had been used. A pre-test, a post-test and a delayed post-test were conducted for each group.

According to the comparison of pre and post test scores, a significant improvement ( $p < 0.05$ ) could be found only in the experimental group. However, the delayed post-test did not show significant improvement in any group.

The results suggest that formal grammar instruction will have only an immediate effect on development of grammatical competence. This is possibly because the grammar rules presented in formal instruction have not been successfully incorporated into the long term memory of the learner.

However, the study sample included only thirty students and therefore, we are not able to draw firm generalizations purely on the basis of these findings. Further studies can be designed to test the hypothesis that formal grammar instruction can have only an immediate effect.

**Key Words:** Formal grammar instruction, Grammatical competence,