

When to Teach What: A Study of Natural Order of L2 Morpheme Acquisition

Mahishi Ranaweera

It would be a relief for ESL teachers anywhere in the world to be knowledgeable about the order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes of their students, especially in designing syllabus and in assessment. Morpheme order studies help language teachers in determining the acquisition order of morphemes by the students and thereby design a more learner-centered curriculum. Being the first of its kind in ESL research in Sri Lanka, the rationale behind this study is to find out whether adult ESL learners in Sri Lanka produce grammatical morphemes as predicted by the morpheme order studies and thereby use the findings to assist curriculum design. The production of English morphemes was observed in the writing of 35 Sri Lankan adult ESL learners in a university setting. Essays written by ESL learners in Sri Lanka were analyzed for determining the acquisition of grammatical morphemes. The results showed an order of morpheme production close to the order of acquisition of English grammatical morphemes by ESL learners with diverse L1 backgrounds in previous research. The findings are discussed in terms of the pedagogical implications for curriculum design, lesson material preparation and suggestions for future research in this field.