

An analysis of the effectiveness of using L1 (Sinhala) to teach L2 (English)

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As English has become one of the major requirements at present, the majority of undergraduates reading for their degree in Sinhala, try hard to learn English. While teaching the first year undergraduates, the researcher realized that the level of English proficiency varies among the undergraduates. In this context, this study examines whether it is effective to use L1 (first language) as a teaching method in the English class, which will facilitate the level of comprehension of L2 (second language) reading passages.

According to some educationists, the usage of L1 in ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms is inappropriate, as it lessens the exposure to L2. However, since the level of their L2 proficiency varies, the majority of the undergraduates fail to participate in L2 reading lessons. Thus this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of using L1 to create an interactive ESL classroom.

This research focuses on the response of 40 first year Social Science undergraduates in the University of Kelaniya. They have similar proficiency in terms of their L2 which was determined through a pre-test. The sample was divided into two groups consisting of 20 each. One group was taught with exclusive use of L2, while the other group was taught with both L1 and L2. After the intervention, they were given a questionnaire to find out their response to determine the effectiveness of using L1 to teach L2 with regard to reading comprehension.

The results of the study will help develop more effective teaching/learning practices by considering the role played by L1 in an ESL classroom.

Keywords: L1, L2, ESL (English as a Second Language), Reading Comprehension