

The Role of Mother Tongue in Learning English in Junior Secondary Class

S.L.A.J.C. Anuradhi^{a*} G.H.D.J.P Gurunada^b, D.P. Withanage^c
Pasdunrara National School of Education^{ab}
University of Sri Jayewardenepura^c

The role of mother tongue in second language achievement has been the topic of much debate and controversy. Along the way of learning English, the learner's use of mother tongue can influence their achievement in the target language. Throughout the history of English language teaching and second language achievement, the role of mother tongue has been a significant issue. An important body of literature has explored this phenomenon from teachers' perspectives, and an adequate number of studies have explored the phenomenon from the students' perspectives. However, there are less studies on the relationship between medium of instructions and students' performance. This paper explores and discusses the effectiveness of using the mother tongue in learning English by evaluating the efficiency in learning English grammar by the students who are exposed to English only versus the students who are exposed to learning English grammar in their mother tongue. The study was conducted on a sample of 50 students at junior secondary class of Grade 8. Data were collected using a questionnaire to check their preferences regarding the help of mother tongue in learning English. T-tests were used to compare two scores of independent groups and the results revealed that there is a significant difference between pre- and post-tests in the two groups. With the above results, it is obvious that junior secondary level students in Sri Lanka need the help of their mother tongue to understand English lessons. Most students who followed the lessons only in English had difficulty in clarifying their doubts which led to a loss of interest in the lesson. Most students could not grasp most of the lesson as well. Therefore, it is suggested that junior secondary students must be provided with the help of their mother tongue in learning English.

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