THE EFFECT OF EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION ON THE USE OF INDEFINITE AND DEFINITE ARTICLES BY ESL LEARNERS

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The English article system presents many problems for non-native speakers of English, particularly when they do not have an equivalent structure in their first language. Researchers have employed different approaches to the teaching of articles in order to overcome this problem. This study investigates the effectiveness of using explicit instruction on the use of indefinite and definite articles by Sri Lankan ESL learners. The research questions addressed in the study were "Which of the articles is most difficult to the Sri Lankan ESL students? And the reasons for its difficulty", "Does explicit instruction help to overcome the overuse and underuse of indefinite and the definite articles by Sri Lankan ESL students?" The study embraced a quantitative methodology and was conducted with a group forty secondary school ESL learners having different proficiency levels. Same cloze type pretest and a posttest were administered to collect data. A control group and an experimental group were assigned based on the marks of the pretest. The experimental group received four interventions, each of which represented a form-function and usage framework. The control group received no intervention. After the intervention, the posttest was administered to every participant during class time under the same conditions. By encouraging the students to address the specific rules of using indefinite and definite articles in English, the researcher was able to improve students' understanding of this difficult area and guide them to a more accurate usage of the English article system. This study will contribute to the underdeveloped area of research related to pedagogy and its effectiveness in addressing the errors made by ESL learners in the use of articles. In addition, the study would enable academic researchers, language teachers, and linguists to build a further discussion on explicit instruction as an effort to minimize the errors made by ESL students.

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