

Abstract 05

Impact of Gender and Identity on Learning English as a Second Language

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Second language learning has become a socially valued vital learning process as it has the influencing potential to form, manipulate and change the social individual identities towards the positive recognition. In Sri Lankan social system while Sinhala and Tamil languages have been recognized as first languages of most people, English functions as the second or target language. Through a gradual social transformation English has become the most prestigious language in the society and the competence in English is required as the most obligatory qualification for a person to be recognized in the society. The research focuses on identifying and analysing how and to which extent the social factors such as gender differences, cultural diversities, disparities between the social classes and specifically the identities of the individuals influence on learning English as the second language. Within the data collection process both the primary and secondary data collection methods have been utilized and within the primary data collection method, a questionnaire has been designed and given to a sample group of 50 respondents from University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Through this analytical sociolinguistic research the relationship between identity and learning English as a second language, the impact that identity practices on person's capability and accessibility to the English language learning process have been taken into consideration. Accordingly it has been identified that English language competency level of urban respondents is higher than rural respondents and the rural identity of the individuals has an influential and discouraging impact on their English language learning process. Depending on the gender differences, the language performance, the language competency levels of the respondents tend to differ in relation to the four language skills and it has been brought forth that the competency level of the female respondents is higher than the male respondents. A higher percentage of individuals believe and accept the vitality of English in higher education and it has been recognized as a supportive channel which enhance Individuals' capabilities and identities in achieving their future goals despite the existing social discriminations.

Key words: English, Gender, Identity, Social Elevation, Social Discrimination, Second Language