1.44 Development of English Writing Skills among Sinhalese Adult Learners.

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ABSTRACT

The Study of the development of second language writing skills among undergraduates at Gampaha Wickramarachchi Ayurveda Institute is of considerable pedagogical significance. The study aimed at investigating the effect of using model-texts for development of organizational and stylistic competencies of these L2 learners. Through a questionnaire distributed among the 89 subjects, three sets of learners were identified: those with sufficient linguistic input from 5 years of age onwards (Group X), those with sufficient linguistic input only after 15 years (Group Y) and those without sufficient linguistic input at any age (Group Z). The same writing course which included over fifteen writing lessons was administered to all the subjects: during the course of teaching, organizational and stylistic elements were highlighted through model-texts. A pre-test and a post-test were conducted to determine the effect of teaching: marks were given separately for each competence on the basis of a pre-determined five point scale: to ensure reliability, an independent examiner also graded the writings and the reliability was 0.91.

One-way ANOVA performed on pre-test scores confirmed the group variability with significant p values < 0.05 for both organizational and stylistic competencies: mean values of groups X,Y and Z were 14.42, 8.13 and 2.30 (organizational) and 9.58, 6.78 and 2.10 (stylistic) respectively. This suggests that L2 writing competence depends upon the linguistic input of the learners. Dependent paired sample t-test performed on pre and post test scores indicated that only group x and Y learners had benefited from the teaching, with regard to each competence. This suggests that the model texts used in teaching will develop the writing competence of those who have had sufficient linguistic input.

In pedagogical context, this type of writing course should, therefore, be administered only to those with sufficient linguistic input. The study also suggests that linguistic input of the learner is an indicator of L2 writing performances: it can be used to group the learners, as an alternation to traditional placement tests. A simple computer-based device can be designed so that the learner himself can enter his data of linguistic input and identify his group.