



EXPLORING CULTURAL NUANCES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONG ADULT ESL LEARNERS IN SRI LANKA.

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Abstract : This research explores and analyzes the cultural subtleties, communication abilities, and linguistic intricacy of Adult English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in Sri Lanka. This study utilizes a mixed method approach analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data. The research of specific cultural nuances within Sri Lanka serves to illuminate the significant impact that they have on the participants' English communication and language skills. Consequently, the research will draw attention to the importance of accommodating diverse learning styles, particularly emphasizing the preference for active and participatory modes of learning. Moreover, the comprehensive analysis conducted will uncover variations within subgroups and how it influences the language dynamics while shedding light on the intricate interplay between communication skills and language proficiency. The implications derived from these findings will be extended to the realm of pedagogy and to diverse disciplines, highlighting the significance of standardized approaches when addressing cultural challenges.

Key Words: *ESL Learning, Cultural Nuances, Communicative Competence, Language Proficiency, Pedagogical Strategies, Subgroup Variations, Intercultural Communication, Cross-Cultural Interaction, Adult Learners, Correlation*

Introduction

Today's modern, globalized, digitized world, is characterized by an unprecedented number of distinct nations and cultures. Consequently, it has become and already has become crucial to possess the language skills that are relevant to the current era which has a connection with society and culture. This is particularly significant for adults who yearn to establish effective communication channels and gain access to valuable information and interact with individuals belonging to diverse communities. "Language can be essentially defined as the single most powerful form of communication among different groups of individuals in the world. It mostly functions as a unifying force among different ethnic and religious groups but has also led to contentions/ conflicts in many parts of the world where wars have been waged and new boundaries have been created based on linguistic diversity" (Walisundara and Hettiarachchi, 2016)

In the current global landscape, nations' foundational identities are intricately woven with ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, making it crucial to prioritize the rights and freedoms of diverse linguistic communities. The current sociopolitical milieu emphasizes the need for bilingualism, trilingual, multilingualism, and multi-ethnicity within language policy and practice, reflecting the diverse linguistic fabric of nations.

Considering the increasing interconnections of cultures, economies, and societies worldwide, there is a growing demand for individuals who possess multilingual skills. Acquiring a second language encompasses more than just mastering phonetics and vocabulary; it also entails the capacity to engage in meaningful communication with people from diverse nationalities. In the context of Sri Lanka, ESL learners encounter the challenge of not only grasping the linguistic aspects of English but also navigating through various social contexts. Sri Lanka, with its rich diversity and vibrant cultural tapestry, provides an ideal environment for ESL students to develop their understanding and proficiency in English

Hence, conducting research in the field of English language education for second language learners is intriguing as it sheds light on the impact of culture on the acquisition of skills of English by adult learners. In the context of Sri Lanka, adult learners of ESL are required to rapidly memorize the language, which holds significant importance in both the educational system and society as a whole.

Moreover, Sri Lanka is a country characterized by its diverse communities and languages. Recognizing the significance of English proficiency in facilitating communication with individuals from other nations and fostering international Relationships, as well as accessing career opportunities and engaging with various global communities, are crucial for the people of Sri Lanka. English, with its regional variations, is an element of the linguistic ecosystem and is linguistically important to many people. Although English was scheduled to remain the official language until 1956, when it was abolished, it was clear that English fluency remained the preserve of government and business (Liyanage, 2021). Significant changes in language policies occurred after the nation gained independence.

Furthermore, it is imperative for citizens to effectively utilize English for international trade, diplomatic interactions with other governments, and cultural exchanges with people from around the globe. Additionally, Sri Lankan adults who aspire to pursue better career opportunities or secure improved jobs are well aware of the indispensability of English proficiency for their success. Consequently, adult English learning programs have been strengthened, enabling students to enhance their language skills and meet the demands of the contemporary world.

In Sri Lanka, where there are numerous communities and languages, adults learning English must be able to connect with people from different backgrounds. Despite the importance of cross-cultural communication, there is limited research on how Sri Lankan adults learning English interact with individuals from diverse communities.

Significance

The significance extends beyond the boundaries of language classrooms, encompassing international trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchanges. English proficiency, once a symbol of privilege, has now become a democratized tool for career advancement and global participation. However, the sociocultural context of Sri Lanka adds a unique dimension to this journey, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of how adult learners navigate the complexities of cross-cultural communication.

Nevertheless, the study also highlights the need for ESL programs and classes to support individuals with different needs challenges, and backgrounds. Simultaneously, the study aims to demonstrate that

proficiency in English can help individuals respect and take responsibility for their unique society, both locally and globally.

Research Problem

"How do cultural nuances within the context of Sri Lanka influence the intricate relationship between communication competence and language proficiency among adult ESL learners?" The study is specifically focused on adult ESL learners who are learning English as a second language. While many studies have explored language learning across different age groups, this research recognizes that adults face unique challenges when learning a new language.

Research Objectives

1. To examine specific cultural nuances within Sri Lanka that influence communicative competence and language proficiency among adult ESL learners.
2. To assess the effectiveness of different pedagogical strategies in addressing cultural challenges and enhancing both communicative competence and language proficiency.
3. To explore variations within specific subgroups of ESL learners to understand how these dynamics impact the relationship between communicative competence and language proficiency.

Research Questions

1. What are the distinctive cultural nuances that influence communicative competence and language proficiency among adult ESL learners in Sri Lanka?
2. How effective are different pedagogical strategies in addressing cultural challenges and enhancing communicative competence and language proficiency?
3. What variations exist within subgroups of ESL learners, and how do these dynamics impact the relationship between communicative competence and language proficiency?

Conceptual Framework

The following diagram presents the conceptual elements that the research follows and the visual representation of alignment of theories and concepts and their relationship with the variables. This conceptual framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how cultural nuances within Sri Lanka influence the communicative competence and language proficiency of adult ESL learners. This framework guides the research to look into the complex bond between the cultural factors, language learning dynamics, and pedagogical interventions, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of total English language education process.



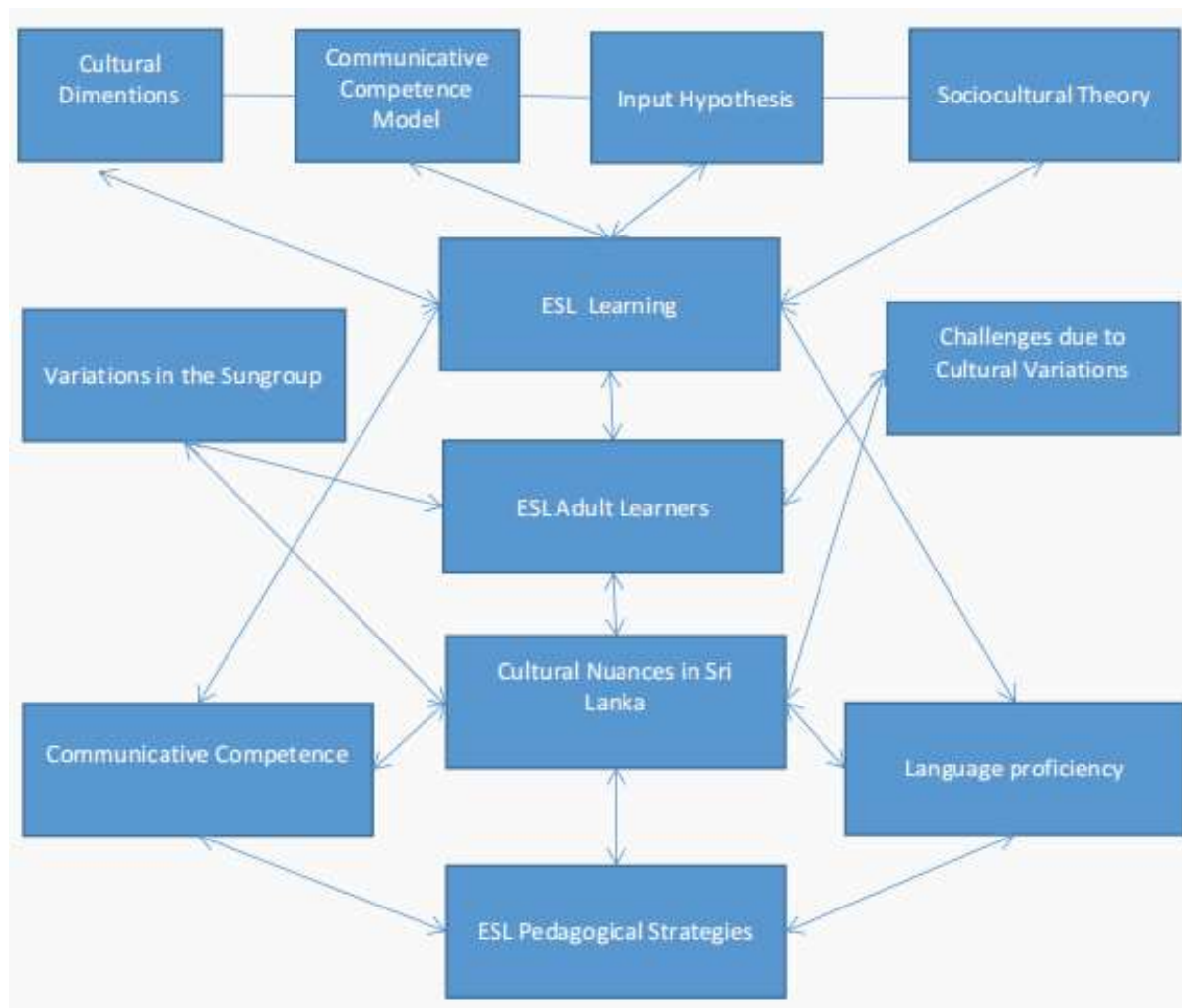


figure 1 : conceptual framework

Literature Review

Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the significance of cultural acquisition in psychological development, highlighting the influence of cultural heritage as a defining characteristic of a culture. Within a culture, cultural products or artifacts encompass a diverse range of objects and concepts that are created by individuals. These products include both tangible items like tools and intangible elements such as language, beliefs, arts, and knowledge. By utilizing this framework, the present study aims to elucidate the interrelationship between intercultural competence and language competence, specifically within the context of Sri Lanka.

Additionally, Halland's (1976) theory on high- and low-context cultures provides a valuable conceptual framework for comprehending communication dynamics within the context of this study. According to Hall, context-rich cultures heavily rely on communication, with much of the meaning embedded in context, relationships, and cultural understanding. Conversely, low-context cultures prioritize direct communication and place less emphasis on contextual cues. By employing this framework to examine the language and speaking abilities of adult ESL learners in Sri Lanka, we can explore how cultural factors within this highly contextualized culture influence language acquisition.

The Social Interaction Framework (SIF) proposed by Byram (1997). Byram (1997) proposed this framework as a comprehensive framework that goes beyond language skills. This framework expands the analysis beyond linguistic proficiency and highlights the importance of intercultural competence. The Social Interaction Framework is organized around various components, including attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness, which provide a comprehensive perspective to evaluate learners' ability to navigate and succeed in intercultural communication. Essentially, it enables a detailed examination of how

cultural nuances impact not only language skills but also the broader range of intercultural interactions among adult ESL learners in Sri Lanka.

The Natural Approach Theory (1983), which pertains to the examination of the natural language acquisition process in children, serves as a fundamental basis for comprehending the learning process of adult ESL learners. By recognizing the significance of establishing a learning environment that reflects the natural language acquisition process, it underscores the importance of providing immersive and communicative language experiences for adult learners as well.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1986) emphasizes the pivotal role of comprehensible input in language learning. This theory assists in illustrating how exposure to various reading materials, interactive language activities, and real-world communication scenarios aligns with the Input Hypothesis. By affording learners the opportunity to engage with authentic language input tailored to their proficiency levels, this research study contributes to the enhancement of their language proficiency and communicative competence.

Methodology

A Mixed-Method research Approach was used from the beginning. A Questionnaire Survey and Telephone Interviews were used to collect both quantitative data and qualitative data to study the research problem in greater depth. The instruments were gathering both qualitative and quantitative data, and the mixed methods design aligns with the "Convergent Design." In the convergent design, both qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently using the online questionnaire and the telephone interviews, and the results are integrated during the analysis phase to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This approach allows for triangulation of data from different sources to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

The research context is Sri Lanka and the participants were selected using "Purposive Sample", who are able to offer diversity. Sample Size: Initially, 200 participants were the intended sample size for this investigation. The online questionnaire was able to receive 101 responses while the telephone interviews were conducted with another 50 participants, and all together the study was able to gather data from 151 participants. All participants were provided with informed consent forms detailing the nature of the study, its objectives, and the expected time commitment.

To ensure the validity and the reliability of the data, a pilot test was initiated and triangulation was done using the mixed method. The researcher reached the participants using online systems and shared the online questionnaire and for the telephone interviews the participants were sent a mail and allocated a time and a date. Both the instruments are structured and the interviews lasted 10 to 15 minutes only.

Quantitative data was analyzed using Excel and JASP while the qualitative data was analyzed using the Thematic Analysis. Graphics, descriptive statistics and correlations tables were used as well.

Findings

Following are the basic findings of the online questionnaire and the interviews.

Table1 - demographic profile

Descriptive Statistics - Demographic Profile

	Valid	Mode
Age	101	2.000
Gender	101	2.000
First Language	100	2.000
Education	100	1.000
Geographical Location	100	3.000
English Proficiency Level	100	3.000
Confidence Level	100	2.000
experienced challenges in understanding cultural	99	1.000
Face Difficulties with Communicating with Individual from Different		
Backgrounds in English	100	3.000
cultural awareness is important for effective language communication	100	3.000

Descriptive Statistics - Demographic Profile

	Valid Mode	
"Cultural nuances significantly impact language learning."	100	1.000
"Effective communication involves understanding cultural differences."	100	1.000
"The teaching methods used in my English language classes effectively address cultural challenges."	100	3.000

Note. Not all values are available for *Nominal Text* variables

Table 2: different types of cultural nuances

Cultural Nuance	Percentage
Customs related to gift-giving or hospitality	33%
Varied styles of humor	47%
Social norms related to personal space	49%
Cultural variations in expressing agreement or disagreement	53%
Differences in addressing or greeting people	57%
Differences in non-verbal communication	57%
Cultural nuances in written communication	41%

Table 3: pedagogical strategies

Method	Percentage
Intercultural activities and discussions	67%
Use of diverse reading materials representing different cultures	47%
Cultural awareness workshops or seminars	41%
Collaborative projects with peers from diverse backgrounds	55%
Watching movies from different cultures	1%
other	1%

Table 4 : telephone interview descriptive statistics
Descriptive Statistics - Telephone Interviews

	Missing	Mode	Median	Mean	Sum
Like Learning English	0	50.000	50.000	50.000	50
Don't Like learning English	0	0.000	0.000	0.000	0
Like Group Learning	0	38.000	38.000	38.000	38
Like Individual Learning	0	12.000	12.000	12.000	12
Prefer to learn with students from different backgrounds	0	42.000	42.000	42.000	42
Not prefer to learn with students from different backgrounds	0	8.000	8.000	8.000	8
Need emphasis on Pedagogical Strategies	0	39.000	39.000	39.000	39
No need of emphasis on Pedagogical Strategies	0	11.000	11.000	11.000	11

^a the mode is computed assuming that variables are discreet.

Analysis

The research focuses the impact of Sri Lankan culture on the communication practices of adult ESL learners, noting a range of attitudes towards the importance of cultural awareness from crucial to unimportant.

The primary objective of the consideration was to look at different social subtleties that influence communication abilities and proficiency abilities. The research moreover inspected particular social components inside Sri Lanka, uncovering a few impacts on English communication aptitudes and English capability among adult learners. Comprehending different nonverbal cues, varied styles of humor, cultural norms related to personal space, differences in addressing or greeting, agreements, disagreements basically found useful for improving communicative competence all around. It concludes that social subtleties play a critical part in the improvement of comprehensive communication aptitudes among grown-up ESL learners in Sri Lanka.

Nonetheless, it is imperative to consolidate these subtleties into ESL instruction to cultivate social mindfulness and successful language learning procedure. The discoveries highlight the unobtrusive complexity of social variations and its significance in language procurement over proficiency abilities.

Based on the second objective of the study about the pedagogical strategies, intercultural exercises, collaborative projects, use of diverse reading materials with diverse colleagues were especially prevalent and it highlight the significance of commonsense involvement in progressing intercultural communication abilities. This helps the drift towards dynamic learning strategies and emphasizes the significance of consolidating distinctive points of view.

Moreover, the participants highlighted there is a need to emphasize the cultural nuances within the pedagogical strategies and to incorporate more interactive activities, technology to show the world, English workshops including intercultural communication, cultural sensitivity training, use of multicultural literature to the learning procedure to enhance the language dynamics. However, future examinations ought to investigate the particular execution and long-term impacts of these procedures, in this manner contributing to the headway of language procurement. In rundown, the discoveries substantiate the appropriation of a multidisciplinary, experiential integration to expand social competence among grown-up ESL learners in Sri Lanka.

The research participants concurred that cultural nuances incredibly influence language learning which highlights the significance of tending to social perspectives in ESL education. Learners significantly bolster intercultural exercises and discussions to make strides in ESL communicative competence and proficiency capability in a socially differing foundation and different benefits were mentioned, counting language skills, social affectability, and mental benefits. And, the acknowledgment of progressed learning encounters, collaboration aptitudes, openings for social trade, and real-world application of language skills. Furthermore, benefits recognized included making strides in social mindfulness, strides in language abilities, and

progressed communication aptitudes. Also, the recognized benefits include increased social affectability, moved forward cross-cultural communication, and a more extensive run of language utilization. Hence, the findings also emphasize the centrality of utilizing experiential learning, collaborative ventures, and the extent of perusing materials to cultivate intercultural communication aptitudes.

The objective concerning the Variety inside subgroups of ESL learners demonstrated that communicative competence and language capability level played an imperative part too. Higher levels of capability are related to certainty level, transcendent language utilization and a more profound appreciation of the literature of diverse societies and reflect a more profound understanding of the unobtrusive employments of language. Usually steady with the thought that language aptitudes go past fundamental communication abilities and impact an individual's capacity to get social subtleties in composing. Higher instruction and capabilities are related to the situation, tall communication abilities, and English capability. The participants' perusing fabric inclinations were impacted by their capability level. More capable understudies delighted in investigating diversity in writing, centering on more profound understanding. Less capable understudies prioritized fundamental language abilities for ordinary communication, finding social subtleties befuddling. English language skills play a critical part in different settings such as proficient communication, multicultural occasions, travel, instruction, and cross-social understanding.

Table 5 : contingency correlation level of the variables

Contingency Coefficient			
Variable 1	Proficiency Level	Face Difficulties	Confidence Level
Variable 2			
Age	0.215	0.100	0.225
Education	0.270	0.237	0.336
First Language	0.209	0.184	0.105
Location	0.201	0.207	0.204

The above table demonstrates the correlation levels between the variables which were analyzed. It is obvious that no strong positive relationship between English proficiency level, difficulties faced when communicating in English with individuals from different backgrounds, and level of confidence in English communication with age, first language, education and geographic location but commonly observed relationships are weakly positive and moderately positive.

This suggests that although demographic factors such may have some influence on English proficiency, communication complexity, and confidence levels, they are not only indicating other factors, such as individual learning experiences, cultural exposure, and personal characteristics, may affect English. Therefore, to better understand and address challenges in English language communication and improve confidence levels, a more comprehensive approach that considers various individual and contextual factors beyond demographics is necessary. This analysis helps is promoting effective language learning strategies, cultural awareness training, and fostering environments that promote confidence and proficiency in English communication across diverse contexts. A comprehensive approach that considers various individual contexts to improve reliability is therefore necessary to better understand and address ESL journey within the context of Sri Lanka.

Nevertheless, attitudes of English were esteemed in completely different settings, highlighting the significance of moving forward in cross-cultural communication. Certainty in English was emphatically connected to communicative competence and language proficiency, adjusting with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural hypothesis. Moreover, the varieties in sexual orientation may have a less coordinated effect on communicative competence and dialect capability, also ethnicity, and geographical area, but they cannot be ignored. The instructive foundation impacts profoundly on one's ESL travel.

To conclude, the above analysis based on the findings illustrates that social subtleties play a crucial role in the relationship between communication aptitudes and dialect capability among adult ESL learners within the Sri Lankan setting.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal has been to unravel the fascinating interplay between communicative competence and language proficiency among adult ESL learners in the above-mentioned context. The findings assist the proven hypothesis that *“Cultural nuances significantly affect the communicative competence and the language proficiency among the adult ESL learners in the context of Sri Lanka, but there is a need to incorporate pedagogical strategies which include cultural varieties to assist the learners in improving the dynamics of English language”*. As the study approaches the conclusion, the attention is fixed on weaving together the last findings of the investigation, drawing meaningful conclusions from the empirical data, and reflecting on the broader impact of the study.

This research extends beyond the confines of academia and the impact of this study is on a variety of fields, highlighting how the discoveries address voids, challenge established beliefs, and provide valuable insights. Additionally, the research explores the tangible consequences for language professionals, policymakers, educators, and society at large. The research has a variety of implications listed as follows;

- The value of Tailored Pedagogical Approaches
- Encouragement of Interactive Learning
- Training in cultural sensitivity.
- Curriculum Development
- Including Multicultural Perspectives:
- Including culture to enhance the professional training
- Workshops and training for educators to advance their careers.

As the chapter gazes into the future of research in this field, what remains to be uncovered? What mysteries and unexplored possibilities still lie ahead? As the study offers suggestions for future study, it eagerly welcomes scholars and researchers to keep delving into the intricate connections between communicative proficiency, language mastery, and cultural intricacies as listed below.

- Investigating the effectiveness of various pedagogical approaches.
- Analyze comparative educational data to understand how different teaching methods and intercultural learning experiences impact different disciplines.
- Conducting longitudinal studies to track the language learning progress.
- Further exploration into variations within specific subgroups of ESL learners,.
- Develop intervention strategies for ESL learners with limited language proficiency, focusing on practical communication skills.
- Integrate cultural studies into ESL classes to develop cultural skills.
- Examine the impact of English language proficiency on various employment sectors in Sri Lanka.
- Comparative Analyses and Case Studies using Correlation Analyses of the Variations and dynamics of language learning.

As not everything is perfect, no research is without limits, and in the spirit of discernment, research explicitly acknowledges and discusses limitations that may affect the findings as follows.

- Limited generalization
- Potential reporting bias
- Limited time
- Examining a diverse group with different educational experiences could provide a different perspective.
- A detailed analysis of a specific occupation could provide a tailored view.

As this research study ends, it invites the reader to reflect on the journey that it has taken, the knowledge the readers have gained, and the paths yet to be explored. Together, they can bridge the fields of academic research and practical application by contributing to the ongoing dialogue in the realm of ESL learning and its pedagogy and intercultural communication not on within the context of Sri Lanka, but also all over the world.

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