Relationships among L1 Deficiency, L2 Acquisition, Language Anxiety and Learner Performance among Undergraduates at the University of Sri Jayawardhana Pura

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Language anxiety is a psychological construct which had been identified as an affective factor in language acquisition. It can either have a facilitating or a debilitating effect on language learning and performance. This paper investigated the relationship between L1(first language) deficiency and L2 (second language) acquisition and language anxiety and whether these conditions have an impact on learner performance. There is a long standing debate among three groups of scholars in the field of language anxiety (Horwitz et al. Sparks et al., and MacIntyre et al.) on the issue of L1 skill, language anxiety and l2 achievement. Scholars argue whether language anxiety is caused by the unique process of L2 learning or whether it is a consequence of first language deficiencies. Subjects of the study were 300 undergraduates from three faculties of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka. Data gathered through a questionnaire were both quantitatively and qualitatively analysed to reach the conclusions. Separate analysis were carried out to measure L1 deficiency, L2 difficulty level and L2 performance and the correlations among these three variables were calculated.The findings suggest that the relationship between L1 deficiency and L2 acquisition and language anxiety is very significant and that there is a negative correlation between language anxiety and learner performance. Subjects who have experienced L1 deficiency indicated higher levels of difficulty in acquiring English as a second language. The study has strong pedagogical implications because it proves that language anxiety affects second language acquisition and learner performance at undergraduate level and suggests possible strategies both for learners and language teacher to deal with it. Since this is the first study on this particular area to be carried out in Sri Lanka, as no published research could be found, conclusions reached at in this study are significant.

Key words: *Language Anxiety, L1 Deficiency, Learner Performance.*