

The Effect of a Military Environment on Second Language Acquisition: A Study Based on Officer Cadets of the BSc Degree at Sri Lanka Military Academy

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Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is considered to be a complex psychological and physical process. It is undeniably a daunting task for the trainees to gain language competence while coping with culture shock when undergoing their basic military training. This investigation was based on the Officer Cadets of BSc in Military Studies some of whom had been unable to meet the expected language standards during their training. This research paper aimed at investigating the effect of a military environment on their SLA. It explored the sociolinguistic and cultural aspects, such as communication, the availability of time for studies, the effect of corrective training measures (punishments), other training related activities, available support for English in academic enhancement and culture shock. The study further explored how far Edward Thorndike's Laws of Learning Theory applied within the existing military environment and examined the applicability of Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory and Knowles Andragogy within the teaching and learning process. Data was mainly collected from 50 Officer Cadets using a questionnaire. Interviews and informal discussions were also held with the target group and the academic staff. The study found that the military training background had a negative impact on their SLA and affected the laws of Learning Theory such as readiness, exercise, effect, recency, intensity and primacy. Furthermore, it revealed that a considerable number of Officer Cadets had failed in achieving the required language standards due to a variety of linguistic and military culture related problems. Hence, the study recommends implementing two main streams in achieving the required SLA standards of the Officer Cadets; either by conducting the English curriculum in a non-military background or by making certain adjustments to the current academic and training curriculums reinforced by the concepts of Andragogy and Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory.

Key words: Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Officer Cadets, Sri Lanka Military Academy, Principles of Learning, Andragogy