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THE EFFECT OF ESP MODULE INSTRUCTIONS FOR BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN A SRI LANKAN UNIVERSITY

KONARA MUDIYANSELAGE DISSANAYAKE

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
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KESAN MODUL PENGAJARAN BAHASA INGGERIS UNTUK TUJUAN SPESIFIK KE ATAS PELAJAR PENGURUSAN PERNIAGAAN DI SEBUAH UNIVERSITI DI SRI LANKA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meninjau kesan instruksi Pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris Bertujuan (ESP) dalam konteks pengajian tinggi di Sri Lanka. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menilai keberkesanan modul instruksi ESP yang baharu. Reka bentuk kajian kuasi-eksperimen digunakan dalam kajian ini sebagai kaedah utama dalam penyelidikan. Sebagai tambahan kepada data kuantitatif, data kualitatif juga digunakan untuk menyokong dapatan kajian dan triangulasi data. Data kuantitatif dikumpul melalui soal selidik, ujian pra dan pasca. Data kualitatif dikumpul melalui soal selidik terbuka dan temu bual berstruktur. Sampel yang digunakan adalah seramai 60 pelajar prasiswazah dari Fakulti Pengurusan Perniagaan dan Kewangan di sebuah universiti di Sri Lanka. Kajian modul ESP memberi pandangan yang bernilai dalam pembangunan kurikulum ESP yang berkesan dengan mengambil kira keperluan pelajar. Integrasi kemahiran, padanan tata bahasa dengan wacana kandungan, mengenal pasti keperluan pelajar secara praktikal, mengisi jurang dalam silibus sedia ada, dan penggunaan teknologi merupakan maklumat baharu yang diperoleh. Dapatan kajian kuantitatif dan kualitatif menampakkan peningkatan dalam kompetensi bertutur dan mendengar. Kompetensi membaca dan menulis tidak menampakkan peningkatan hasil penggunaan modul ESP yang baharu. Kajian juga menunjukkan yang modul ESP sedia ada tidak dapat memenuhi keperluan pelajar dan beberapa perubahan telah dicadangkan untuk memastikan kejayaan penggunaan kurikulum ESP ini dari aspek kualiti, kepentingan dan keutuhan. Implikasi kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa modul ESP perlu dibaiki dan direka bentuk semula bagi memenuhi kepelbagaian keperluan pelajar, seiring dengan keperluan kemahiran bahasa yang diperlukan oleh bidang tersebut dan pihak industri.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the effect of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) module instructions within the context of higher education in Sri Lanka. The main objective of this study is to test the effect of new ESP course module instructions. A quasi-experimental research design has been employed in the study as the main method of inquiry. In addition to quantitative data, qualitative data have also been gathered to support the findings and the triangulation of data. Quantitative data was collected using questionnaires, pre and posttest. Qualitative data was gathered through open ended questionnaires and semi structured interviews. The samples were 60 undergraduates of the Faculty of Business Studies and Finance from a university in Sri Lanka. The findings of the ESP course module practice provide valuable insights in designing effective ESP curriculums to meet the learners' needs. Integration of skills, matching grammar with content discourse, identifying micro and critical practical learner needs, designing separate ESP grammar unit, filling gap in the existing syllabus, and use of new technology are the new insights found. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data reiterate improvement of speaking and listening competencies. Reading and writing competencies did not show improvement as a result of new ESP module instructions. The findings also indicate that the existing ESP curriculum do not meet the actual needs of the ESP learners and therefore some changes are suggested for a successful application of the ESP curriculum in terms of quality, relevance and validity. This study implicates that the ESP courses are to be revised and redesigned to cater to the multiple needs of the learners in parallel to the language needs of the main stream content subjects and industry.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A/L	Advanced Level
BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration
BSF	Business Studies and Finance
CALL	Cognitive Academic Language Learning
CALL	Cognitive Academic Language Learning
CBI	Content Based Instructions
CNP	Communicative Need processor
CNP	Communicative Need Processor
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EBE	English for Business and Economics
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EGAP	English for General Academic Purposes
EGP	English for General Purposes
ELT	English Language Teaching
ELTU	English Language Teaching Unit
EOP	English for Occupational Purposes
EOP	English for Occupational Purposes
ESAP	English for Specific Academic Purposes
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
ESS	English for Social Sciences
EST	English for Science and Technology
ETC	English for Technical Communication

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ETC	English for Technical Communication
GPA	Grade Point Average
HETC	Higher Education for Twenty First Century
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IRQUE	Improving Relevance and Quality of University Education
LSP	Language for Specific Purpose
LSP	Language for Specific Purposes
OEQ	Open Ended questionnaire
OL	Ordinary level
TBL	Task Based Learning
TBL	Task Based Learning
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UGC	University Grant Commission
UTEL	University Test of English Language

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

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1.0 Introduction

Teaching and learning English for higher education has become a popular topic that has been circulated in scholarly forums for higher education during the last decade. A new market is formed by the Revolution of Information Technology which requires new knowledge workers for the new century (Gill, 2002). Varied projects are underway to teach English to undergraduates to transform them into employable global knowledge workers in the knowledge based new labour market economy.

The programme 'Higher Education for Twenty First Century' (HETC) on Improving Relevance and Quality of University Education (IRQUE) is one such project implemented by the Ministry of Higher Education, Sri Lanka. It is noteworthy here that this research is also funded under the patronage of the same project.

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Teaching English for higher education to fulfill the language needs of undergraduates has deserved much attention of the government. This idea has long been emphasized by Malalasekara (1969) on the requirement of English for the undergraduates to maintain the quality of education in the Sri Lankan context.

This chapter presents a brief account of historical evolution of the education of Sri Lanka in order to strengthen the study with background of the study. In this chapter, the context of the study provides the study with necessary information about the location where the study was carried out. Also this chapter focuses on the issues that lead to research problems of the study. The rationale of the study highlights timely need of conducting studies of this nature. Objectives, research questions and hypothesis of the study have been given special attention within the chapter since they pave the way for the correct direction for the study. Under theoretical framework discussion is developed on relevant theories and approaches employed for the study. Under the significance of the study, prospective beneficiaries are encompassed. Finally, the overview of the study gives a bird's eye view of the chapters of the study.

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1.1 Background of the Study

A brief account of historical evolution of Sri Lankan education is necessary to understand the background of the present study. Sri Lanka has a long history of education based on monasteries (Rahula, 1956; Gin, 2004; Adikari and Palihapitiya, 2009). Like all other cultural aspects, tradition of education which revolves around Buddhist monasteries diffused to Sri Lanka from the Indian civilization. In ancient

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Indian society, education had been centered around monasteries (Gin, 2004) (Kumar, 2002; Gin, ibid) (Sharma, 2001). World famous Indian Eastern monastery universities Thakshila, Nalnada, Wickramashila , Jagathdala and Odanthapuri had an impact on moulding the education system of ancient Sri Lanka (Adikari and Palihapitiya, 2009). The country started its literary tradition with the arrival of delegation from India during the third –century BCE (Coperahewa, 2009). Society transformed from primary agrarian society to a literate historical civilization between 500 and 250 B.C.E. (Gin, 2004). Still the monastery education of Sri Lanka is run in parallel to public education and two traditional monasteries, Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara and were upgraded to national universities with the country's independence in 1948.

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With the collapse of this age-old great literary tradition in 1815, modern standard British model of public system of education was established towards the last quarter of nineteenth century (Silva, 1990). The year 1836 marks the beginning of the modern standard system of British school education. Free education through vernacular languages, Sinhala and Tamil, marks the next era in the arena of Sri Lankan education system. Free Education Bill which was enacted in 1940s was based on the concept of right to free education from basic to university (Little, 2011). From 1980s onwards, the government policy is to make Sri Lankan education as one of the most accessible in the developing world (Little, 2011).

Varied changes occurred in the history of language policy and medium of education after the arrival of colonial powers to Sri Lanka. English was the medium of education in missionary schools run by Christian Missionaries. In addition,

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Swabhasa or Vernacular Primary Schools made used of indigenous languages such as Sinhala and Tamil as the medium of instructions. Some were bilingual schools and teachers taught in English and vernaculars. Moreover, there was a separate segment of schools whose medium of instruction was monolingual. Meantime, attempts were made to provide education through national languages under Official Language Policy introduced in 1956. Towards the beginning of 1950s, state policies were formed to teach English in schools as the compulsory second language from primary grade three onwards irrespective of medium of instruction, either Sinhala or Tamil (Kurian, 2007, Hayes, 2005, Silva, 1990). With the introduction of the Open Economic Policy by the government in 1977, there arose the need to learn English for education and other professional needs.

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Modern Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural society with linguistic diversity. Sri Lanka claims for achievements of high level rate of literacy, educational enrollment and equality of educational opportunities **(**Little, 2011). The population composed of three ethnic groups Sinhalese, Muslims and Tamils. While Sinhala is the language of majority, Tamil is the language of Tamils and Muslims. Sri Lankans belong to three sub cultures, Sinhalese speak Sinhala as their mother tongue while Tamils and Muslims speak Tamil as their first language. English has a multi-dimensional role to play in the present day of Sri Lankan society. The government gives priority to English and it is being practiced as a language to connect between Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslim communities in Sri Lanka. Although Sinhala and Tamil are the official languages spoken by 74 percent and 18 percent of the population respectively, the government prefers to employ English speaking officers for official purposes and 10

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percent of the middle class Sri Lankans can converse well in English (Kurian, 2007) beside speaking Sinhala and Tamil .

The medium of education from primary to secondary is done in the vernacular languages in the government schools of Sri Lanka. While Sinhala is the medium of communication for majority of students, Tamil is the medium of minority ethnic groups. Meantime, International schools, found in all main cities in the country, offer primary and secondary education in English medium. International schools are a new sector of education growing in Sri Lanka. During the post – economic liberalization a large number of international schools emerged (Little and Evans, 2005) and these schools are growing faster in Sri Lanka (Imam, 2005). Gamage (2002) and Imam (2005) view this trend as a repeat of colonial period which serves interest of privileged segment of the society. However, now there is a tendency in most of the higher educational institutions including private ones to offer their courses in English medium to meet challenges in the local and global labour market. Learning English opens avenues to reap advantages in the science, art, politics, professions and management worlds (Tietze, 2004). Almost all the faculties of universities conduct their degree courses in English medium, except for a few arts based courses in some faculties.

It is the aim of universities in Sri Lanka to produce graduates with skills, experience and ample knowledge to compete with international counterparts in the face of globalization (Munasinghe and Jayawardena, 1999). In response to the changes and demand for English in the regional and global knowledge market, Sri Lankan universities opt to offer undergraduate and postgraduate courses in English

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medium including IT skill. All the newly established universities offer degree courses in English medium. The Ministry of Higher Education in Sri Lanka has implemented programs to develop quality and relevance of higher education while giving special attention to develop English and IT skills among the undergraduates.

The university system underwent many changes with the granting of universal franchise in 1931, free education in 1945, the political changes in 1956 and the introduction of university education in Sinhala and Tamil Languages in 1959 (Samaranayake , 2011). Commencement of teaching of English as a second language and medium of instruction in Sri Lankan universities can be traced during 1960s with the opening doors of universities to common masses. Universities started intensive English courses to teach English to undergraduates who entered the universities with poor or little knowledge of English (Silva, 1990). Many Sri Lankan universities have made it compulsory to learn English as a partial requirement of the degree courses irrespective of the medium of instruction at primary and secondary level school education.

Every university has established its own language unit, department or sub section to cater to the English language need of the undergraduates who have done their secondary education in indigenous languages, either in Sinhala or Tamil. Standards of the English courses vary since curriculum and course materials are prepared by respective universities. Sri Lankan Universities and technical colleges have developed their own regulations to promote study of English (Silva, 1990). However, attempts are being made to introduce common standard to university English courses. Introduction of UTEL (University Test of English Language) band

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score is one such effort to synchronize the teaching of English in universities. Basically, there are compulsory and optional courses of study among the English courses in universities. Universities in Sri Lanka, such as Sri Jayawardhanapura, Peradeniya and Open university focus on learning English and offer optional and compulsory English courses for the benefit of art, commerce, medicine, engineering and agriculture students at various levels under different names (Silva, 1990).

1.1.1 The Context of the Study

The university which serves as the context of this study was set up in 1996. It is one of the newly established universities located in the North Western Province of the country. The university was established after a gazette notification with four faculties namely Applied Sciences, Agriculture, Fisheries and Nutrition and Business Studies and Finance. The medium of instruction is English in these faculties and they offer special and general degree courses.

Students are enrolled into the faculties on merit basis every year from all corners of the country by the University Grants Commission (UGC) which is the main governing body of Sri Lankan universities. The students belong to rural, semi urban and urban communities of three ethnic groups. As in the case of arts faculties, the majority of them belong to rural folks of the country (Perera, 2013). Students are expected to follow lectures in English medium after entering into national universities irrespective of their Sinhala or Tamil medium primary and secondary education.

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The English language Teaching Unit (ELTU) which offers English courses to undergraduates is a service unit that directly comes under the purview of the Vice Chancellor. The English Unit offers compulsory and optional English courses for the benefit of the undergraduates. The English curriculum differs from faculty to faculty depending on the subject area. The students are expected to have good English proficiency for them to follow the degree courses in English.

This language unit encompasses lecturers and visiting instructors to teach English. It is well equipped and has a separate small library and language laboratory. The unit conducts language extension programmes in addition to the internal ongoing compulsory courses. It is equipped with adequate human and material resources to meet the demand of the service. The service of English Unit is obtained by different departments and faculties when needs arise.

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The Faculty of Business Studies and Finance (BSF) has four departments and the population of students belong to all academic years is approximately one thousand. This is the faculty that forms the basis of this study. English Language Teaching Unit of the university provides the students of this faculty with necessary English language skills for them to follow the English medium lectures. The English unit has a separate curriculum for the faculty. The lecturers follow different pedagogies and approaches to assist the development of student's proficiency in English as a second language and medium of instruction. The students of the faculty are expected to follow several compulsory and optional English courses within their sojourn at the university. This is shown in figure 1.1

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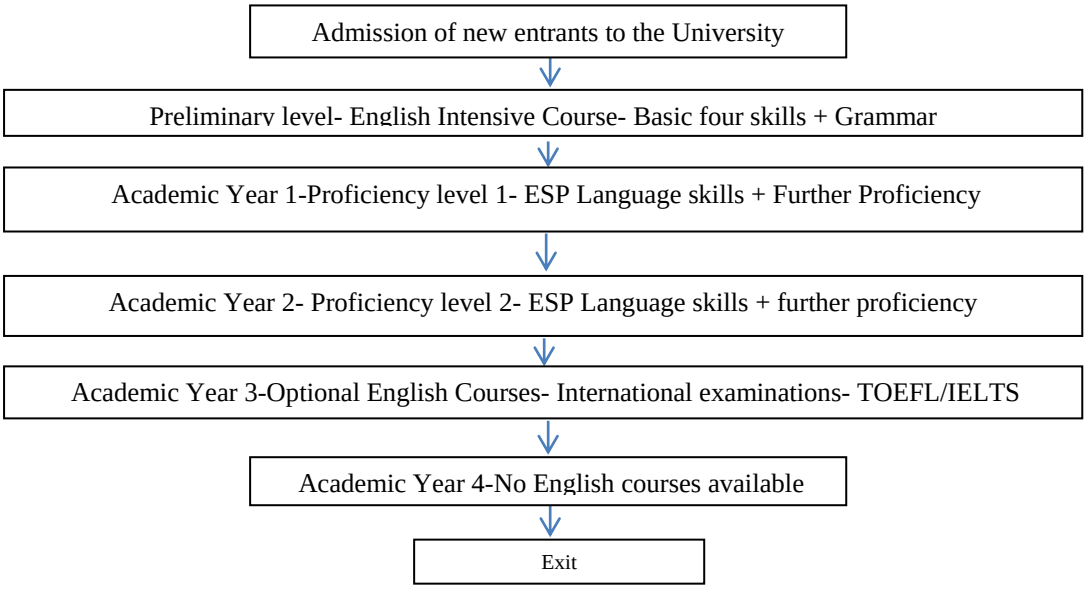

Figure 1.1 Phases of Gradual Exposure to English Language Proficiency

New students who enter the university have to go through several consecutive English language courses in order to improve the language skills step by step. Irrespective of their different language abilities, all fresh students are expected to follow the English Intensive Course to improve four basic language skills together with basic grammar. Moreover, they are encouraged to learn English for Academic Purposes (EAP) together with general proficiency during proficiency level 1 and 2. The optional English course which is named as Advanced English Course is designed to meet the national and international requirements and examinations. They do not follow any English language course during the fourth or the final year since they are engaged in industrial training and doing the dissertation in the final year. The Faculty of Business Studies and Finance consists of four departments namely Business Management, Accountancy and Finance, Banking and Finance and Insurance and Valuation. These departments offer four year degree courses in English medium. The

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