

English Medium Education and Bachelor of Education Programmes in the Sri Lankan University: challenges and realities

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Abstract: English Medium Education (EME) has been in existence for several decades in many Universities in Sri Lanka. However, there is a scarcity of research on the challenges faced by the lecturers and students in the implementation of EME in the Universities. This study examines the challenges encountered by the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) undergraduates and lecturers involved in the EME in the Faculty of Education (FoE), University of Colombo. It also examines the English Language Proficiency (ELP) needs of the students that hinder successful learning by investigating the perception of the students on EME and the emergent realities. The study was conducted as a survey by utilizing questionnaires, observations, interviews and documentary survey for collecting data and analysis was done using qualitative as well as quantitative methods. The key findings were that lack of ELP skills was the main challenge encountered by the EME students but the students had not perceived their language needs correctly. Lack of response of the students in the EME class was the greatest challenge lecturers encountered in the EME classroom which was due to the lack of ELP skills of the students but the lecturers avoided the language aspects because they were not aware of the EME methodologies of content and language integrated education. Therefore it is important to introduce strategies to develop the teaching-learning process in the EME by promoting collaborative teaching of language lecturers and content lecturers.

Key words: English Medium Education, Bachelor of Education, English Language Proficiency

I. INTRODUCTION

Many Faculties in the state universities of Sri Lanka including the Faculty of Education (FoE) in the University of Colombo have introduced English Medium Education (EME) to all or part of the curriculum of the undergraduates to be in par with the International Standards of Higher Education in the world. However, there are many issues which are yet to be uncovered and addressed in-order to strengthen and develop EME in the Universities to achieve the desired outcomes.

Although there is this persisting need to identify and address the challenges that hinder the successful implementation of EME, there is a dearth of research on EME in the Universities in Sri Lanka as well as abroad. Research studies carried out by Costa (2016), Costa and Coleman (2010) and Chang (2010) have highlighted the lack of research in many countries of the world on integrating content and language in higher

education. Chang (2010) has reviewed a number of research studies on Content Based Instruction at tertiary level and stated that there were “no comprehensive and reliable surveys of the implementation of English medium instruction at the tertiary level in different parts of the world (p.58)”.

Against this backdrop, the focus of this paper was to identify the challenges encountered by the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) undergraduates in the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka whose First Language was not English but study the subject content in English and to uncover the realities underlying the challenges. The challenges were identified by investigating the specific English Language Proficiency (ELP) needs of the students and their perceptions of the needs as well as by examining the perceptions of the lecturers on the student needs. Conclusions have been made in comparison with the EME in other universities in the world.

The Concept of English Medium Education (EME)

EME in the context of Sri Lanka is the use of English Language as a medium of instruction to teach academic subjects in countries where the First Language of the majority is not English. The goal of EME is to broaden the general and specified knowledge in academic subjects and to promote professional expertise in English that enables students to take leadership in the International Community. (Taguchi, 2014)

Historical Perspective of introducing EME in Sri Lanka

EME was first introduced in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) during the British rule in 1796. However, only a small percentage of the native people in the country had opportunity of learning in the English Medium (EM) and those who studied in the EM had the advantage of remunerative employment and higher education.

In an attempt to eliminate this disparity of opportunities, ‘Swarbasha Policy’ (Sinhala as the Official Language policy) was introduced in Sri Lanka in 1956 to provide equal opportunities of employment and higher education for all in the country. Accordingly, EME was replaced with First Language (L1) Education for all.

However, this could not diminish the influence of English in the lives of people in Sri Lanka because the country could not avoid being a part of the rapidly developing global society.

English being one of the languages of business, communication, science and technology, its influence on the people in Sri Lanka was inevitable.

Sri Lanka being a part of the global economy, an adequate level of ELP was beneficial for those who aspired for remunerative employment and for those who sought to pursue higher studies. (Fernando, 2010; Canangarah, 2010; Ariyawansa, 2008)

Graduates from the state universities in Sri Lanka were the most affected by this, because their performance or achievements did not have the expected recognition without adequate ELP skills. As a result, majority of the graduates from Arts and Social Science programmes had difficulty in obtaining a job particularly in the private sector due to their poor ELP skills. (Asian Development Bank, 2016) Some research studies conducted on the higher education in Sri Lanka have revealed that the graduates from the Faculties of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in Sri Lanka have not acquired the ELP skills required for employment. (Perera, Silva and Marabe, 2009; Ariyawansa, 2008; Nanayakkara, 2004).

As a result, graduates from the Faculties of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences including the FoE could not meet the demands and challenges of the rapid changing global economy. L1 medium graduates could not compete with the EM graduates in acquiring remunerative employment. (Asian Development Bank, 2016)

Considering the responsibility of the higher education sector to produce graduates who are well equipped to contribute successfully to the international demands in the global economy, EME was gradually introduced to the state universities in Sri Lanka.

Many Faculties of Science, Engineering, Law and Management in the state universities in Sri Lanka, have implemented EME in the Faculties to provide opportunity for the students to develop their ELP skills. However, this had not been successfully implemented in the Faculties of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. (Ariyawansa, 2008) Faculty of Education too belonged to this category.

Relationship between English Medium Education and English Language Development

Although ELP courses have been introduced in every state university in Sri Lanka to develop the ELP skills of the undergraduates, majority of the graduates from the Faculties of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences have not developed the desired ELP skills. In accordance with the study of Canangarah (2010), undergraduates followed the grammar based approach to language by simply mastering the rules of language. They developed an abstract competence in the grammar rules of the language without communicative competence.

Ibrahim (2001) has identified using English to teach subjects to be more effective in developing the ELP skills of the students than teaching English as a subject. The reason he has given was teaching the subject in English allowed more comprehensible input and more comprehensible output through more exposure to language and more opportunity to use the language.

Many countries in the world have identified teaching the subject content in English as an effective way of developing the ELP skills of the students. A study conducted in fifty-five countries revealed that the policy makers in the countries have considered EM instruction in universities as a mechanism of internationalizing Education and creating opportunity of the students to join the global and academic community. (Dearden, 2014)

Similar studies conducted by researchers such as; Perera, Silva and Marmbe (2009), Ariyawansa (2008), Ye (2016), Din (2015), Dearden (2014) and Massler (2012) have revealed that learning the subject content in English developed the ELP skills of the students.

Ball (2015) emphasizes the benefit of using Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) to develop the language proficiency over teaching the language in isolation by taking the example of swimming; *CLIL throws its learners into the deep end of the conceptual and procedural pool, then throws in the linguistic armbands. Language teaching takes learners to the shallow end in the vague hope that someday they might swim. (p.17)*

Thus there is adequate evidence to support that EME can be identified as a successful tool to develop the ELP skills of the undergraduates.

Benefits of Implementing EME in the Universities

As stated by Dearden (2014), teaching the subject content in English is a mechanism for internationalizing the education of a university and creating opportunities for students to join a global, academic and business community.

An experimental study conducted by Ament and Perez-Vidal (2015) revealed that there was a trend for improvement in lexico-grammatical and writing tasks in the students who studied their entire degree programme through EME.

It also is a way of developing the ELP of the students which enables them to produce high quality research papers in English which makes way for the university to move up in the international rankings; EM instruction enables to teach mixed nationality classes which can attract international students. The students have more opportunity to develop in their fields of study because they are able to access resources which are in English. (Basibek et al., 2014)

One group quasi-experimental research conducted by Chansri and Wasanasomsithi (2016) at a public university in Bangkok has revealed that studying the content in English was beneficial for the development of English abilities of the

students as well as their content knowledge. The students had displayed significant improvement in their writing abilities in all five aspects of writing; content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics of writing.

Further, English as the medium of instruction could be the most suitable mode of teaching and learning in the tertiary education in Sri Lanka where there is racial and language diversity.

Challenges of Implementing EME in the Universities

Studies carried out by Costales and Riano (2015) and Ye (2016) revealed that some of the drawbacks in the successful implementation of EME in the University were; the training provided for the lecturers had not improved their teaching methodology to teach the content through English; absence of a standardized university policy towards languages and multilingualism that provided strategies for bilingual programmes.

In a research conducted by Costa (2016), it was identified that the lack of experience of the subject matter teachers in the development of language by balancing both language and the content objectives was one of the main drawbacks in the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in the universities. Similar issue was identified by Furstenberg and Kletzenbauer (2015) in a research carried out in an Austrian University. Lack of awareness of the teachers on how to use language for pedagogical purposes demotivated the students because they could not complete the tasks successfully due to inadequate language instruction and support. Teachers too were dissatisfied with their choice of materials and activities when the results did not match the intended learning outcomes. The lecturers considered providing language support in the content lectures to be burdensome.

Dafouz and Nunez (2009), conducted a study on using the Content and Language Integrated Learning approach in Higher Education in Spain and they have stated that many higher education institutions in Spain have introduced bilingual degrees at undergraduate levels to give an 'added value' (2009, p.102) to the degree programmes. However, they have identified the following issues in the implementation of EME in the higher education centres;

- Qualified and capable people who can work in an international multicultural environment.
- Linguistic competence of the teachers and the students.
- Methodological changes and subject-specific adjustments required for instruction in a foreign language
- More preparation of teaching material than for the First Language medium students
- Limitation of interpersonal skills

In-accordance with the research findings of Ament and Perez-Vidal (2015), students who followed the subject matter in the

English Medium tended to interact less and asked fewer questions. The lecturers tended to follow the slides which resulted in the less interaction in the class and less output abilities.

Many lecturers who taught in English were not language specialists. Thus, there was no correction of the language errors students made in the class or in their assignments. Focus was only on the content but the students had no feedback on language skills.

An action plan presented by the Faculty of Arts, to the Senate of University of Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2004 on the implementation of EME in the Faculty, highlighted that the undergraduates studying for a Degree in Social Sciences and Humanities disciplines were required to read and analyze lengthy primary texts and secondary material. Therefore, the students needed a high level of language skills and competence which was not required in the technical disciplines.

Although learning the subject content in English is an effective tool in the development of ELP, this would be very challenging to the undergraduates who have completed their school education only in L1. Students who enter the university from the rural areas are more challenged than the students who enter the university from the urban schools because they may not have developed their Basic English competences.

A research conducted by the National Education Commission (NEC) in 2016, revealed that majority of the students in the rural areas did not have opportunity to learn English as a subject due to teacher shortage and lack of interest of the students in learning English.

A report published by the Ministry of Education Sri Lanka (2013), revealed that majority of the students mainly in the schools in the rural areas completed their G.C.E. Advance Level education in the Arts stream due to inadequate facilities in the schools.

Thus, majority of the students in Sri Lanka entered the Art stream in the university and the B.Ed students who enter the FoE fall into this category of students who did not have adequate opportunities in their schools to develop their Basic ELP skills. Therefore, it would be difficult for these students to transit to an all English approach on entering the university

Introducing EME to B.Ed students in the University of Colombo

FoE in the University of Colombo introduced EME to the B.Ed programme in 2004 with the initial plan of conducting bilingual instruction for the B.Ed (First Year) undergraduates. Accordingly EM students were given a summary of the lesson in L1 at the end of each lecture. There was no established mechanism to develop the ELP skills of the students.

In-accordance with the researchers such as Ye (2016) and Canado (2016), universities in a country are responsible for the development of ELP skills of the students. Universities

have a responsibility to examine whether pedagogical options currently being used in the integration of content and language have produced the desired results. FoE has more responsibility than the other Faculties to investigate the suitability of pedagogical options that are being used in the field of Education.

Role of EME in the FoE

One main reason for introducing EME in Sri Lanka was to develop the ELP of the students at the school level in-order to prepare them for higher education as well as for employment but this has not been successful due to the lack of competent teachers who could teach the subject matter in English (National Education Commission, 2016).

Thus, the FoE has a dual responsibility; to prepare the B.Ed students to face the challenges in the global society by developing their ELP Skills and to produce competent teachers who could teach the subject content in English, which is a current need in the field of Education in Sri Lanka. EME was introduced in the Faculty to address this need.

II. METHOD

This study was conducted as survey to identify the challenges that impede the production of competent graduates who could strengthen and develop the EME in Sri Lanka. Sample of the study consisted of twenty B.Ed (Final Year) EME undergraduates, thirty-five B.Ed (First Year) EME undergraduates and all the EME lecturers in the FoE.

Data were collected using documentary survey, questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations to investigate the practice of EME in the FoE and to identify learning needs and issues of the EM B.Ed students. Gathered data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Mainly, the in-depth data gathered from the interview, classroom observations and the documentary survey were analyzed qualitatively under the themes that emerged from the data.

III. DISCUSSION

Implementation of EME in the FoE

The undergraduates who had completed the First Year of studies in any media (Sinhala, Tamil, or English) in the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo were eligible to apply for EME in the FoE. However, students were selected for EME by administering an ELP test. The basic reading and writing skills of the students had been assessed at the ELP test. Students who were selected were enrolled as B.Ed (Part I) EM students. All the lecturers agreed that an ELP test was essential to select the students for EME. One such response was; *“It is important to check the language skill. Otherwise it is difficult for us and the students”*

Generally, students who were not selected to read the B.Ed degree in the First Language opted to study in the EM because

there was a high demand for the enrolment in the B.Ed programme that assured a job in teaching. One student said;

“I was not selected for Sinhala medium. I like teaching. So, somehow or the other I want to do B.Ed”

However, the students who were enrolled in the EM programme expressed that they believed their ELP would develop by studying in the EME which would give them advantage over the L1 Medium students in their career advancement; they also believed that they would have opportunity to be employed in a prestigious urban school because only prestigious schools offered EME. Some of their views were;

“I always want to study in English. It is better more demand”

“When we follow in the EM we get appointment in a good school that has EM”

Fig. 1 below further explains the trend of selecting EME of the B.Ed students. In accordance with the responses of the students, 94 percent of the students had opted to study the subject content in English to develop their ELP skills and more than 60 percent had selected it because they perceived the graduates who studied the content in English to have more career opportunities. Less than 40 percent of students had opted to follow the content in English because they liked it. Thus the main reason of the majority of students to select EME was to develop their ELP with the aim of future career development.

Scale for the reasons

- 1 - like to learn in English
- 2 - parents’/elders’ advised
- 3 – friends chose
- 4 - not selected for B.Ed in L1
- 5 - better career opportunities
- 6 - more recognized
- 7 - can improve EL

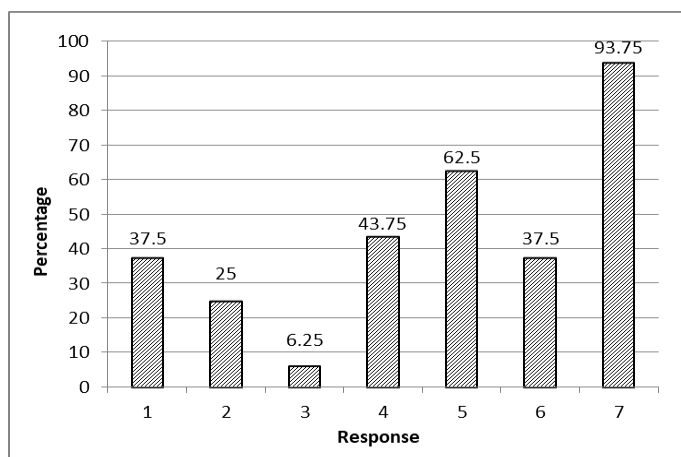


Fig. 1: Reasons for the Final Year students to select BM instruction

IV. STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES OF EME IN THE FOE

Students enrolled in the EME programme in the FoE would follow only forty-five hours of subject matter in English each semester during the First and the Second academic years and only in the Final Year, that they were required to follow all the subjects in English. In the Final Year, students were given the opportunity to practice their ELP skills and teaching methodologies in a state school for ten weeks on which the students were required to teach two subjects in English. Additionally, the EME students would produce an extended essay in English on a topic related to Education.

Gradual transmission of the students from following one subject in English in each Semester to all English approach in the Final year was beneficial to the students who had not developed adequate ELP skills at the entry level. Some of the comments were;

“It is good that we have to cope with only one subject. It takes all our time. I feel dizzy when I think of studying all the subjects in English. Fortunately, there is only one subject.”

“We need to develop our English. If we study many subjects in English, we have trouble”

Syllabus and the subject content for all the three media (Sinhala, Tamil and English) were the same. A translation of the same question paper was administered to all the students at the end of the semester for the equal evaluation of every student despite their medium of study. One lecturer confirmed this; *“Question paper is the same for Sinhala, English and Tamil. We have to think of that when teaching”*.

The EME students who had difficulty in comprehending the content in English had the opportunity of comparing the content in English with the content given in their L1.

Students were given a hard copy of the lesson material, prior to the lecture. Power point presentations were prepared by stating the specific learning objectives for each lesson. The main facts of each lesson were given in the point form by including pictures and diagrams to help the students to understand the content of the lesson. Some materials contained a list of suggestions for supplementary reading as well as activities for the students to work on their own.

Lecturers who were involved in EME in the FoE viewed studying in the EME to be beneficial to the students in three ways; Students would develop their ELP skills and they would develop skills to teach the subject matter in English when they would be employed as teachers in schools. Further, they would be able to teach in English as well as in the L1 which would give them an additional advantage over the L1 Medium students. According to one student; *“Before I am sad I did not select to Sinhala Medium. Now happy. I know I am more advantage”*

This student has applied for the B.Ed degree in the Sinhala Medium but she was not selected. She had been unhappy at the beginning but later she had realized that studying in the EM gave her more advantage than studying in the Sinhala Medium.

Majority of the students agreed that their ELP had begun to develop by studying the content in English. One such response was;

“After starting to study in English unconsciously my English too is developing”.

Similar views were expressed by other students as well. They were self-motivated to develop their ELP skills and tried to develop English by referring to the dictionary, reading English books and newspapers, listening to English news and other documentaries and by referring to Grammar books.

Challenges of practicing EME in the FoE

It was mandatory for all the EME students to answer the end of semester papers in English which required an adequate level of academic language proficiency and higher order thinking skills to answer the essay type questions.

All the lecturers were of the opinion that the language errors of the students should not be considered in assessing their written assignments or their oral presentations. One lecturer said;

“My concern is the subject content not language. It is unfair to reduce marks for language”

Further, some lecturers stated that when the language errors were detected in the answer scripts submitted at the end of the course unit, it was too late for them to address the issues because the student had already completed learning the subject. On the other hand, a complaint of the lecturers was the difficulty of assessing the answer scripts of the students, due to numerous errors made by them in their writing.

“It's difficult to understand what they are trying to say because of the language problem. I think they have many ideas but they are unable to present these ideas because their language is weak”.

Some lecturers were of the view that the achievement of students who answered the papers in English was lower than that of the L1 medium students. They assumed it to be their lack of ELP. Majority of the lecturers identified the inability of the students to provide appropriate and precise answers to the questions as a crucial problem and they considered addressing this problem to be very important because this was an essential skill for a teacher. However, they were not prepared to address this problem because they were not aware of the methodology of developing language skills.

Lecturers found teaching in the EM to be very challenging because majority of the students had not acquired the desired ELP skills and the lecturers had to make an extra effort to communicate the subject matter to the EME students. Some

lecturers said that they needed more time with EME students than with the L1 Medium students because the pace of the lecture was slower than that with the L1 Medium students but the same subject matter had to be covered. The view of a lecturer was;

"I speak very slowly and sometimes I repeat the same thing two or three times because I feel that they don't understand"

Interviews with the lecturers as well as the classroom observations revealed that the main challenge faced by all the EME lecturers in the FoE was the lack of response of the students in the classroom. Lecturers complained of the difficulty they encountered in assessing their own teaching, due to the lack of response of students. They rarely answered a question and never asked a question either in English or in L1. Responses could not be got from the students, although the questions were simplified by the lecturers. Students could not be given support in their learning needs, due to the inability of identifying the errors made by them. Some of the expressions of the lecturers regarding the lack of response of the students were;

"Students don't respond. May be what I teach is not clear to them"

"I try to get them to talk but they don't say anything. It's frustrating because I don't know where I am heading".

According to the students, their lack of response in the class was due to the fear of making mistakes when speaking in English. Some said that they could not spontaneously respond in English in the classroom because they had to first think in English but the classroom atmosphere with restricted time did not permit this.

"Not like Sinhala. We can't mistake English. If I speak wrong others will laugh. I am afraid of that" (Unlike in Sinhala, we have to speak accurately when we answer in English. I am afraid of being laughed at if I made mistakes).

Some students said that even though they did not understand certain areas in the lecture they were afraid to ask questions because their questions might sound absurd. On the other hand, lecturers expressed their concern that they could not develop a rapport with the students, due to the lack of confidence in the students to speak in English with them. One lecturer said;

"I think, they believe that they are supposed to speak in English with me. Therefore, neither they speak in English nor in Sinhala."

Lecturers admitted that, they had not given attention to the English language needs of the students but their focus was only on the development of content skills. One lecturer said he could not address the language difficulties of the students because;

"For me to help them in their language they should speak but they don't speak much in the class".

Some lecturers were not prepared to address the language issues of the students, because they were not aware of the methodology of developing language skills and they did not think that they were expected to help in the language needs of the students. One lecturer said that the only way she could help the students to develop their language was to speak to them in English. Some of the opinions of the lecturers were;

"How can we help in language? It is not our area".

"I don't know about their language. I focus on giving knowledge. I don't know whether their English is good or not. Weren't they selected by administering a test?"

"I can't develop language. I give the subject matter as best as I can"

View of the lecturers was that, if the language of the students had to be developed, more time had to be allocated for the lecture. However, in their opinion, the subject lecturer could not help in the language needs of the students, because some students had not acquired even the basic language skills. According to one lecturer; *"I speak very slowly and sometimes I repeat the same thing two or three times because I feel that they don't understand"*

Classroom observations confirmed that there was no adequate exposure in the classroom for the students to develop their communicative competence. Use of English in the classroom by the lecturers was limited to teaching the subject matter. There was no communication in the classroom because the students did not respond to the questions posed by the lecturers. Lecturers de-motivated due to this. One lecturer said; *"I try to get them to talk but they don't say anything. It's frustrating because I don't know where I am heading".*

During a lesson in the EME class, after trying to get the students to respond to the lesson one lecturer said; *"Very poor response. I am tired, very difficult to get you to talk".*

During the group activities L1 was used by the students in sharing ideas and when they were requested to communicate in English, there was no communication either in English or in L1. Some lecturers complained of lack of motivation in the students for their own development due to their 'exam oriented' mentality. When they were assigned tasks to explore on a topic and make a presentation in the class they would attempt to produce a good report only if a mark was allocated for it, or else they ignored it.

"Their aim is not long term but they only want to get a good Grade. They don't pay attention to develop the skills in the First and Second years but in the final year they realize it but it is too late for them to develop English language".

Lecturers as well as the students agreed that the EME students needed additional support for subject specific academic language development but the lecturers were of the opinion that it should be done by a language specialist and not by the content lecturer.

“We don’t know how to develop English. It has to be done by an English lecturer. However, it is important to give facilities to the students to develop English”.

Documentary survey revealed that language development had not been considered in designing the syllabus for the subjects offered in the B.Ed EME programme. Students were expected to develop the ELP skills on their own. ELP courses offered in the University for the undergraduates did not facilitate in the development of subject related academic language proficiency skills. The four language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing as well as grammar were considered as separate entities to be developed in isolation.

According to the students, ELP course offered by the University helped them to develop ELP skills but not adequate to address their actual English language needs. They were unable to use the knowledge they had gained on Grammar and vocabulary in the ELP course in authentic oral or written communication. Some of their responses were;

“They give lot of words to study. We don’t need to go to class for that”

“They give what they want, not what we want. Our language don’t develop”

“English course good. Many modules, activities – grammar but I feel not enough. I mean ... not so... not so... relevant to our life”.

Perceived Language Learning Needs of the B.Ed (Final Year) EME Students

Perceptions of the students on their English language learning needs were identified by analyzing the responses given by them to the questionnaires and at the interviews as well as by analyzing the scripts written by them. Responses of the students are presented in the following table in percentage.

Table 1: Perceptions of the B.Ed (Final Year) students on their competence in English language skills (in percentage)

| Competence | V. good | Good | Weak | V.weak | Total |
|-----------------------------------|---------|------|------|--------|-------|
| Listen & understand a lecture | 13 | 88 | - | - | 100 |
| Active contribution in discussion | - | 56 | 38 | 6 | 100 |
| Presentation skills | 13 | 56 | 31 | - | 100 |
| Read & understand material | 13 | 50 | 38 | - | 100 |
| Note taking | 6 | 81 | 13 | - | 100 |
| Summarizing | - | 44 | 50 | 6 | 100 |
| Writing simple essays/articles | 6 | 69 | 25 | - | 100 |
| Critical writing | - | 25 | 69 | 6 | 100 |
| Total Responses | 6 | 59 | 33 | 2 | 100 |

Positive responses of the students on their competence in the English language skills exceeded the negative responses.

When the students were asked to list their learning needs majority of the students listed communication skills and presentation skills as their most desired learning needs.

Development of comprehension skills was considered as necessary by some students, but the development of writing skills was not considered as important by any of the students.

Thus, the students had perceived the development of speaking skills as more important than the development of writing skills. Responses of many students at the interviews confirmed the above idea. Some of their views are given below.

“Writing not a big problem. Not like speaking. ”

“My listening, writing, reading good but I have problems speaking.”

“Lectures are ask only questions. But if they organize programme to develop English good. If you give group works or presentations really effective”

“There should be good chances to speaking English fluently in the class”

Some students perceived their writing to be good because they received good Grades for their assignments.

“My writing not bad. Assignments I get A, B+”

Students also expressed their desire to develop language required for their profession.

“Create a programme or course to develop English to teaching”

“Develop our language skills & enter to the society as a professionally qualified English teacher with self-confidence”

Many students assumed their ELP to be good because they had obtained good Grades at the National examinations especially at the General Certificate of Education (GCE), Ordinary Level (O/L) Examination. Some of their responses were;

“I got ‘A’ for English. That is because I am good. My English good”

“My English good in the school but now not good. I passed O/L with A pass and I pass A/L General English with B pass ... Then my English good. Now not so good.”

Data revealed that eighty one percent of students had obtained an ‘A’ Grade pass for English Language at the GCE (O/L) Examination. However they had not shown equal performance in the General English paper at the GCE, Advanced Level (A/L) Examination. Only two students had obtained ‘B’ passes but fifty percent of the students had obtained ‘C’ and the others had either had not sat for the examination or had failed the examination.

Data from the questionnaire as well as from the interviews confirmed that all the students perceived ‘Speaking’ as the most desired skill to be developed. Some of their responses were;

“Our essential need is nowadays is improving spoken skills as we have a great fear”

“Lot of wrongs are done by us because not have knowledge. The accent of the speaking should be developed”

“Spoken English is very important to us. I want to improve my spoken side English very much”.

Perceived Content Learning Needs of the B.Ed (Final Year) EME Students

Many students had perceived their knowledge of the subject matter to be satisfactory. They claimed that they did not have many issues related to the subject matter because they had obtained good Grades for the assignments given to them by the content lecturers.

“No problem with subject. I can manage. English is the problem.”

“I think I do well all other things. My assignments I get good Grades”.

Students expected support from the EME lecturers to develop their ELP skills and they were disappointed that they did not get it. They were satisfied with their knowledge of the subject content but their issue was related to the lack of ‘Speaking’ ability.

“Lectures are ask only questions. But if they organize programme to develop English good. If you give group works or presentations really effective”

“I can understand the lectures and pass the exam. But I can’t think how I can make my spoken side. I want to become fluent of English in this time”

- “I can manage the subject but the problem is the flow of the language isn’t good”

All the students had identified ‘Speaking’ as the most essential skill that needs to be developed for them to be competent EME Teachers.

Realistic Language Learning Needs of B.Ed (Final Year) EME students

Although the students had perceived their writing to be good, analysis of data collected from the oral communication and written scripts of the students revealed that all the students had problems in both speaking and writing in English.

None of the students could construct simple sentences accurately in English, which could be due to the MT influence. The students seemed to think in L1 and then translate it to English. There were many errors in the use of tenses, gerunds, infinitives, prepositions and so on. There were many errors in the structure of the sentences and the word order. For example, a student who intended to say that it was her Mother’s wish that she should study in the EM said;

“My mother liked English Medium to me”

Using accurate grammar in oral and written communication was a problem for all the students. In some instances the intended meaning was not communicated due to this problem. A few such examples are;

“I am very shy to talk to English” (I am shy to talk in English)

“I improve English reading books” (I improved English by reading books)

“I think problem in the accent.” (I think I have a problem in the correct pronunciation of words)

Appropriate use of words in both oral and written communication was another problem for many students, mainly due to the lack of practice in speaking in English. Spontaneous use of familiar words too were difficult for them, due to lack of practice. Some of their responses were;

“I followed English course in Art Faculty but I didn’t get big knowledge.”

“English is want for everything”

That lesson was done in before day (on the previous day) by their English teacher.

There were many errors in the writings of the students due to their lack of practice in the appropriate use of vocabulary. A few mistakes identified in the scripts of the students were;

“I obtain a credit (credit) pass

“ My floor (flow) of the language not good”

“There were several principles (principals) worked this school”

Inadequate knowledge on vocabulary was a reason for the spelling mistakes of the students. They were confused with the appropriate word to be used in the context.

According to the above data it was evident that the B.Ed (Final Year) EME students had not developed their basic speaking and writing skills in English. Lack of ELP skills was the main barrier for their successful learning and development. Nevertheless, studying in the EM had helped in the development of ELP skills of the students to a certain extent.

There is a mismatch between the perceived learning needs and the realistic learning needs of the students because majority of the students had perceived their writing to be of acceptable standard but they made several errors even in the simple writing activities.

Perceived Language Learning Needs of the B.Ed (Part 1) EME students

Perceptions of the students on their English language learning needs were identified by analyzing the responses given by them to the same questionnaire which was administered to the B.Ed (Final Year) students. Responses of the students are presented in percentages in the Table below.

Table 2: Perceptions of the B.Ed (I) students on their competence in English language skills (in percentage)

| Competence | V. good | Good | Weak | V.weak | Total |
|-----------------------------------|---------|------|------|--------|-------|
| Listen & understand a lecture | 10 | 80 | 10 | - | 100 |
| Active contribution in discussion | 10 | 52 | 38 | - | 100 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Presentation skills | - | 52 | 45 | 3 | 100 |
| Read & understand material | 10 | 80 | 10 | - | 100 |
| Note taking | 3 | 76 | 21 | - | 100 |
| Summarizing | - | 69 | 28 | 3 | 100 |
| Writing simple essays/articles | - | 97 | 3 | - | 100 |
| Critical writing | - | 24 | 66 | 10 | 100 |
| Total Responses | 4 | 66 | 28 | 2 | 100 |

Similar to the Final Year students, the perception of the Part 1 students of their ELP skills was more positive than negative and there were many similarities in the perceptions of both groups.

In their responses to the ELP needs in the questionnaire, more than 60 percent of the students from the Final Year as well as the Part 1 had perceived all their English language skills to be good and both groups had identified speaking skills as the most important skills to be developed. Development of the writing skills was not considered as important by both groups. This could be due to the reason that they had not yet faced the need to be engaged in writing activities.

Perception of the Part 1 students on their essay writing skills was even higher than that of the Final Year students. 97 percent of them claimed that their ability to write simple essays and articles to be good and 80 percent of them considered their listening and reading skills to be good. Some responses of the students at the interviews were;

“Listening is not a problem. We listen from the time in school. Teacher speaking and we listening. But it is good no to have a handout”

“Listening okay to me. But if the lecturer use some Sinhala too good (It would be good if the lecturer used the First Language as well)”

Ability for critical and argumentative writing was the only area perceived to be weak by more than 50 percent of the students. Note taking and summarizing skills were perceived as good by most of the students.

Although 62 percent of the students claimed to have actively contributed towards the classroom discussions, it was evident in the classroom observations as well as in the responses of the lecturers that there was no active participation in the classroom.

Many students were of the view that speaking skill was the most required skill in the Teaching Profession and they seemed to think that lack of writing skill did not affect their teaching.

Perceived Content Learning Needs of B.Ed (Part 1) EME students

Majority of the students (77 percent) stated that they could comprehend the lectures conducted in English without much difficulty. Preference of the students on the language used in

teaching the content in the classroom is presented in the bar-chart below.

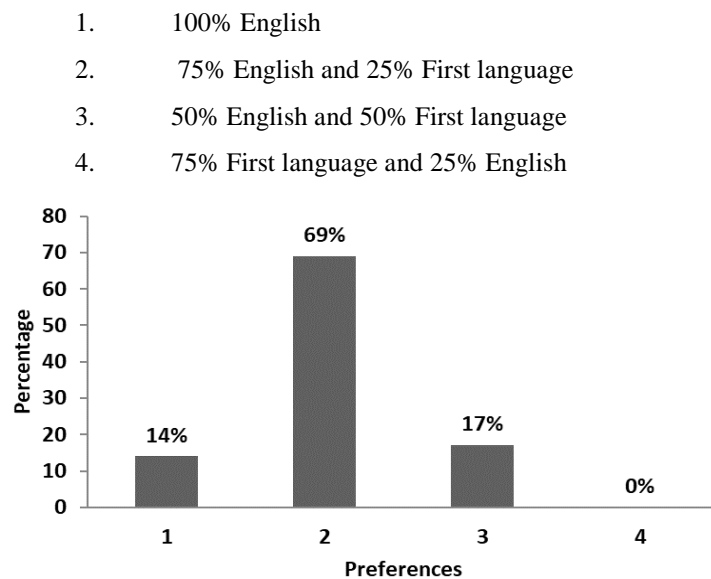


Fig. 1: Preferred medium of instruction of the students

In-accordance with the responses given by the students, 69 percent of the students preferred the medium of instruction of the academic subjects to be 75% in English and 25% in their Mother Tongue while some preferred the medium of instruction to be 100% in English.

However their responses at the interviews were contradictory.

“It is good if we are got a completed note by lectures. Because students are unable to understand and comprehend the lectures suddenly” (It is good if we can get comprehensive notes of the lectures because it takes time for the students to comprehend the lecture.)

Some students expressed their difficulty of understanding the lesson material in English on their own. Main concern of majority of the students was not the subject matter but their lack of ELP in learning the subject content. They needed support to develop their ELP skills. Some of their responses were;

“Most students in Educational faculty in English medium are angaging to do in English medium in first time. ... it is important to do a special English course for English medium students” (Majority of the EME students in the FoE have started learning the subject matter in English for the first time in our lives...)

“Most children come from rural areas. Therefore they cannot to convert in English medium studies quickly. They want to a support and they can touch them in quickly because of university students” (Majority of the students are from the rural area.

Therefore, it is difficult for them to transfer to EME immediately. If we are given support to develop our language, we will be able to adopt soon because we are university students)

Realistic English Language needs of the B.Ed (Part 1) EME Students

A test was administered to the students to assess their level of English language skills. A short article from a theme in their subject matter was given to them to assess their level of reading comprehension and summarizing. Their writing was assessed by getting them to write a short essay on the topic "Role of Education in the Development of the Community". Marks were allocated out of fifty for Reading and fifty for writing. Marks obtained by the students have been categorized under the class interval in the Table below.

Table 3: Marks for Reading and Writing (percentage of students)

| Class Interval (50) | Reading | Writing |
|---------------------|---------|---------|
| 0 - 5 | 3 | - |
| 6 - 10 | 26 | 10 |
| 11 - 15 | 32 | 32 |
| 16 - 20 | 19 | 48 |
| 21 - 25 | 13 | 10 |
| 26 - 30 | 7 | - |
| 31 - 35 | - | - |
| 36 - 40 | - | - |
| 41 - 45 | - | - |
| 46 - 50 | - | - |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

All the students scored below thirty-one out of fifty for Reading and below twenty-six for writing. Majority of the students had answered the skimming and scanning questions but none could score any marks for summarizing. A few who attempted to summarize had presented a few disjointed sentences extracted directly from the article.

There were several errors in the written work of the students that far exceeded the errors of the Final Year students. Facts and the ideas presented in the essays of the students were not relevant to the topic of the essay. Majority had taken sentences directly from the article to the essay without any meaning. There was no organization of ideas in many essays.

V. FINDINGS

Language development had not been considered in designing the curriculum for the B.Ed programme in the EME. Therefore, the students faced many difficulties when learning the subject matter in a language which was not their Mother Tongue. They had to cope with the language difficulties as well as content difficulties.

Lack of response of the students in the classroom was identified as the main barrier for successful teaching in English by the lecturers in the FoE. Student learning could not be assessed due to the lack of response of the students. Considerable time of the teaching was spent by the lecturers in an attempt to get the students actively involved in the lesson because the students did not respond adequately in the classroom.

Although the students refrained from active communication in the classroom, they desired for opportunity to develop their ELP skills by communicating in the classroom. However, there were no adequate opportunities for the students in the FoE, to develop the ELP skills relevant to their subject areas or their profession.

Students had not developed adequate language competences even in their final academic year in the FoE. This was a major problem that needed to be addressed by the FoE. Introducing a programme to develop the above skills of the undergraduates in the Final Year would not be successful because the time available for them was not adequate to develop their ELP skills.

Although the lecturers complained of the poor ELP skills of the students, the language errors made by the students were overlooked by the lecturers. A research conducted in the universities in Japan (Chapple, 2015), has revealed that studying the content in English without support to develop the linguistic skills would not be adequate to develop the ELP of the students.

Both the lecturers and the students were not aware of the objectives, strategies and methods of EME. Lecturers, who taught in the EM in the FoE, were not given training and guidance on the methodologies of integrating the language and content. This has been a common issue in the universities in Sri Lanka as well as in other countries. A research study by Wijayadarmadasa (2011), had identified lack of training for teachers on the integration of the language and content as one of the fundamental issues in the implementation of CLIL in the Faculty of Medicine in Sri Lanka. Further, research studies on EME in the universities in other countries (Dearden, 2014; Asomoza, 2015; Arno & Mancho, 2015; Chapple, 2015; Ye, 2016) revealed that many teachers did not know the strategies or methodology of teaching the content in English.

Further, there was a mismatch between the perceived learning needs and the realistic learning needs of the students. Overall English competences were perceived to be good by both Final Year and Part 1 students. However, many language errors were identified in Speaking, Reading and Writing of the students.

Learning the subject matter in English had not contributed towards the required development of ELP of the students. Majority of the Final Year students had not developed adequate academic ELP skills.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Considering the above findings it is evident that the B.Ed students had opted for EME with an aim of developing the ELP skills while learning the subject content. Thus, there must be provision in the B.Ed curriculum to provide support to the EM students in their ELP development. Since majority of the undergraduates in the FoE would be appointed as teachers in schools, it is the responsibility of the Faculty to develop the ELP skills and the professional skills of the students.

Thus the most suitable approach would be the collaboration between the Language lecturer and the subject content lecturer in addressing the learning needs of the EME students. This practice has been successful in the Universities in other countries (Asomoza, 2015; Furstenberg & Kletzenbauer, 2015; Chansri & Wasanasomsithi, 2016).

Therefore it is important to identify strategies that can be used to develop the EME in the teaching-learning process of EME classroom in-order to strengthen and develop the EME in the FoE.

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