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Challenges Faced by the tertiary Level Second Language learners in the Second Language Classroom

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Abstract
This study shows the challenges that language learners encounter when they learn English Language as their second language. The main objective of this study is to identify the challenges and the data was collected by using 50 students who study English as their second language for the Bachelor's Degree at the ABC Institute through the distribution of questionnaires and classroom observations. It has been identified that both internal and external challenges are affected by second language learners. The internal challenges have been re-categorised as learner-oriented and classroom-oriented challenges. Further to that the external challenges are mainly created by the background of the learners and the learning environment of the second language learners and most of the external challenges can be overcome by the commitment of the students and resource persons.

Keywords: Challenges, English, Second Language Learning.

1. Introduction

A common language for communication has become essential in today's globe due to globalization. Nobody will deny that English is important in the modern world if it is acknowledged as the first global language. Governments in developing nations, like Sri Lanka, are therefore showing a great amount of courage by learning English in order to make it easier for them to meet future demands from around the world. In order to conduct research, apply for scholarships and jobs abroad, and pursue research possibilities, English fluency is now required in the higher education sector. Despite having a special place in Sri Lanka's educational system, English proficiency is still a challenge for many students.

In the Sri Lankan educational system, students have the opportunity to study English as their second language from their primary education to secondary education. Even within the university system, they have allocated a certain number of hours to improve the language skills of the students, because in Sinhala medium also some modules are conducted in English. So, this necessity of being skilled in a second language has become a compulsory fact.

When it looks into the Sri Lankan setting, history shows how much importance has been given to the people who are capable of handling the English Language. At the societal level, English-speaking people were given great respect in social gatherings and even in offering occupations also priority was given. Further, higher educational opportunities were opened for the ones who could study in the English Language. It shows that from history, considerable importance has been given to the second language within the Sri Lankan setting.

Basically, in many Sri Lankan Universities, the English language is conducted as a basic module for undergraduates in the first year of the study period. However, when observing the results of the students, it shows that several students have not been able to score the highest grades in the English Language. This can be a result of many reasons.

Language teaching and learning cannot be done easily as we are learning other subjects. A language should be mastered in a relevant environment that is suitable for learning. This environment can do much for learning. The teachers can give the facts and ask the students to practice the given activities or the grammar. However, pronunciation and speaking need much attention from the teacher. The students should try to acquire language rather than learn. Many studies that have been done on language teaching and learning have found that acquiring is

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more effective than learning.

Generally, education can be affected by many factors. The social background, provided facilities, teaching resources, resource personnel, financial stability, and attitude of the teacher and the learners are some of them. The influence of those factors can be seen in different ways and that can decide the level of educational achievements of the students or the learners. When this comes to language learning, learning a strange language is a tough task. However, the motivation and courage of the learner can do a lot to conduct an error-free education for second language learning.

The researchers have done many studies to identify the issues that students are facing with second language learning. Those studies mainly focused only on the common issues that already we know and many of the findings really do not address the issues that the students are facing related to language teaching and learning. The challenges should be identified and then only the solutions can be given.

This study, it tries to identify challenges that tertiary-level second language learners are encountering in the second language classroom. This study would be effective for the teachers who are engaged with language teaching to identify the challenges and difficulties that the learners are facing in the learning process while enabling scholars to find solutions for potential issues which the students are facing.

Presently, the researchers are encouraged to engage in more research activities to facilitate the society with new features of the findings. Further, these studies can reveal more on the existing knowledge by adding weight as it has not been done before. In this sense, many of studies have been done to identify the challenges that the students meet in the second language learning classroom. Even though the studies have been completed to solutions for the mainly highlighted issues related to learning and teaching, there is negligence for the minor issues that the learners are facing.

This saws the necessity of having actions and studies to address the challenges to provide better opportunities for students and teachers. If there is a failure to address and take an action to answer the challenges that the learners are facing in the second language classroom, the condition will be worst when it comes to seeing the output of the teaching. Especially, with language teaching and learning, every aspect should be examined by the researchers before recommendations for solutions. So, this study tries to find out the challenges and the solutions for those challenges on the second language learning of tertiary level second language learners in the Sri Lankan context.

1.1 Background of the study

Within the current Sri Lankan context, it is an evident fact that the authorities have taken actions to develop second language learning by providing many facilities for the learners. In tertiary level second language learning, especially for second language learning within the university provided with good facilities to provide a quality language education for the students. However, the performance of the students seems vague when compared with the given opportunities. This study 'Challenges Faced by the Tertiary Level Second Language Learners in the Second Language Classroom' takes its opportunity to identify challenges that tertiary level second language learners face during the second language learning process.

1.2 Objectives

To identify the Challenges Faced by tertiary Level Second Language learners in the Second Language Classroom.
To identify the possible solutions for answering the identified challenges.

1.3 Research question

What are the Challenges Faced by tertiary Level Second Language learners in the Second Language Classroom?

1.4 Methodology

The primary data was collected by using the students of the Bachelor's Degree Programme of the ABC Institute of Sri Lanka by distributing a structured questionnaire for the selected sample and doing the classroom observations. Further to that the secondary data was obtained from the referred articles, magazines and through online resources. The data analysis and the presentation were done by using figures.

2. Discussion

This section talks about the analysis of the collected data. The students were given a questionnaire that consisted of twenty-five questions to identify the challenges that they face in the second language classroom. The questionnaire was designed into two sections including internal and external challenges that the students face in second language learning. Classroom observations also have been used as a tool for data collection for this study.

2.1 Internal Challenges that Second Language Learners encounter inside the classroom.

2.2.1 The Limited Language Proficiency of Second Language Learners

This statement was included in the questionnaire to see the language proficiency of the students. When the teaching was done inside the classroom, it was proved that the way of answering and the participation of the students in the classroom activities were not at a satisfactory level. The student population shows an unsatisfactory level of English language proficiency and the below graph shows the analysis of the given responses of the sample. According to the below chart, it shows that eighteen students have agreed that their language proficiency is at a limited level and twenty-seven have given their responses as strongly agree with the given statement. It shows that only five students disagreed with the above statement and no students agreed with the response strongly disagree.
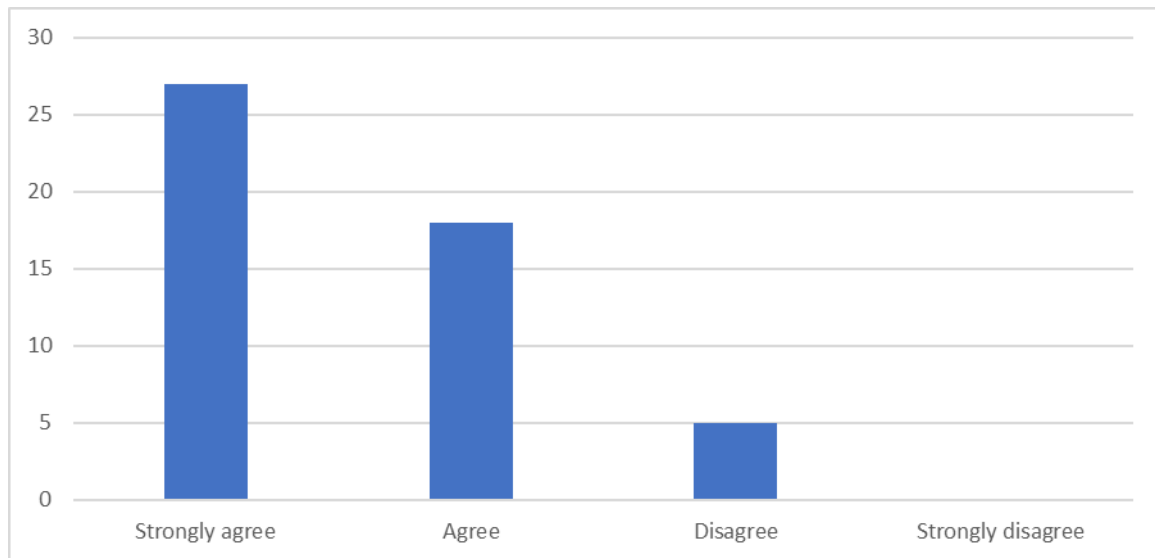
Fig. 1: The Language Proficiency of the students
Source: Author Generated.

2.1.2. Lack of Self-Confidence and Motivation

Self-confidence and motivation have been identified as important factors which affect strongly for language learning. The survey done with the students of the second language classroom has proved that the lack of self-confidence of the students to perform inside the classroom is one challenge that the students encounter. In the responses given by the students they have mentioned that since they have limited access and the opportunities to use and employ the English language in everyday routine, they have no confidence to perform in English. Especially, in speaking and presentation sessions the students have shown poor performance.

The lack of motivation inside the classroom has taken on two aspects. It has been taken into consideration as the self-motivation of the students and the motivation of the instructor to the students for better learning. Since the student population is working mostly in their native languages, it is difficult for them to be motivated and require external motivation. The result of the survey has presented that the motivation of the lecturer is insufficient since they meet only for two hours and thirty minutes per week for language learning.

2.1.3 Different Proficiency Levels of Second Language Learners in the same classroom

During the survey, it was noticed that there are different levels of learners in the same classroom and it has been identified as a challenge that second language learners face during the learning process. Due to the different levels of learners, the lecturer faces difficulties to do the teaching and even the students are unable to cope with the activity. Further, it has been identified that when the students come with better performance, the category who have the underperformance does not come out for the classroom performance. It has been recorded that having different proficiency levels of the learners in the same classroom is a challenge for second language learning.

2.1.4 Having Limited vocabulary

The survey result shows that the students are facing difficulties with having limited vocabulary. Students are unable to do the writing and speaking tasks in the classroom since they do not have appropriate and sufficient vocabulary. Furthermore, the comments of the students have shown that even though they collected vocabulary they want to manage the learning activities since there is no practical usage, it won't be lifelong learning.

2.1.5 Translating the learning Tasks of the second language into the Native Language of the Second Language Learners

It has been observed that second-language learners tend to use their native language for the learning tasks given inside the classroom. Especially for the writing and speaking activities, the students of the second language classroom start writing in their native language and then translate it into English Language. The students' responses show that they practice translating as a habit in second language learning and have identified it as the worst practice they do.

2.2 External Challenges that Second Language Learners encounter inside the classroom.

2.2.1 Failure of the second language learners to allocate additional time for self-studies

The selected sample of this study is employed students and they attend the lectures in the evenings. Further, all the students are above 22 years and they have mentioned that due to their commitment to the workplace and the family, they have difficulties finding time for self-studies. Even though the lecturers have given them recommended readings for the modules, the students are unable to refer to the given materials for further improvements. The below chart shows the responses of the students. As the below chart shows, 12 students agree that they have no time to do self-learning and 28 students strongly agreed with that statement. Also, 6 students disagreed and 04 students strongly disagreed with the given statement.
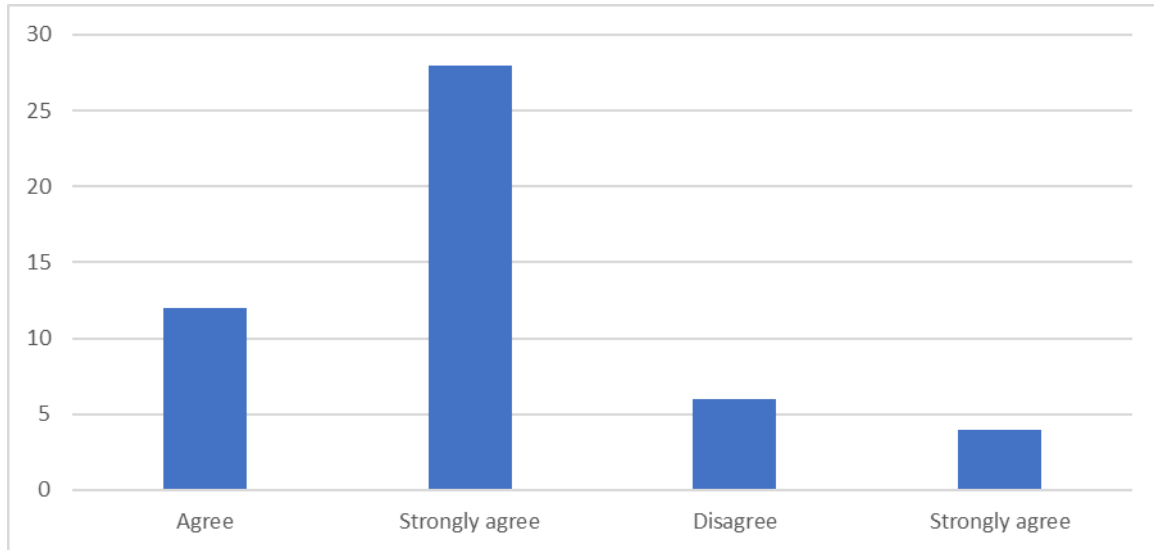
Fig. 2: Failure to find additional Time for Self-Learning
Source: Author Generated.

2.2.2 Without having a supportive background for second language learning

The selected students for the survey mostly come from blue colour ranges of occupations and a number of them have migrated from rural areas to Colombo. They have learnt the second language only in schools even under teachers who use their native language to teach the second language. It is natural for them to use their native language in the family background and the workplace as well they work in their native languages. In the second language classroom as well, the students communicate with their fellows by using their native language rather than using the second language. The study shows that they do not have a supportive background with the learners to practice learning well outside the classroom.

2.2.3 Utilizing Easy Apps for Second Language Necessities

The study reveals that students tend to utilize easy apps to fulfil their second language necessities in daily practice. This has made it easy to complete the task without spending money and more time. This is the worst practice even if there are mistakes that the students do not recognize. And also, it misleads the learners not to have any systematic learning. The collected data shows that they have mostly used Google translator, Fluent U and Sinhala as English word translators.

2.2.4 Disqualified Human Resources and Materials for Learning

Within the Sri Lankan context, several disqualified teachers have appeared as lecturers to conduct English Language Teaching Programmes. They conduct programmes and make their videos and learning materials available through YouTube and Facebook. Since easy access is provided by the people, the students tend to follow those learning resources. This has become a great challenge for them to keep learning from their mistakes. The survey has found that the tendency is there to follow those materials by the students since they are easy and eye-catching.

3. Findings and Recommendations
3,1 Findings

The analyzed data of the conducted study has identified two types of challenges as internal and external. Based on the

data analysis, this study has identified that the assigned number of contact hours is insufficient for second language learning. Further to the data analysis, the mechanism should be implemented to enhance the self-confidence and motivation of the students inside and outside of the second language classroom. It has been identified that the resource persons are doing the same type of learning activities for the different levels of learners and this has created understanding and language-captivating issues with the learners. The study shows that the students do not have enough vocabulary to cope with language learning in a second-language classroom. The students are doing translation from their native language to a second language when they are supposed to do the classroom performance. The data analysis shows that the students do not have time for self-learning and there should be a learner-supportive learning environment. The result of the study displays that the students tend to use easy apps to do the necessities of the language task and follow disqualified resource persons and their teaching materials.

3.2 Recommendations

According to the study conducted, the authorities must allocate more contact hours for second language learning inside the classroom rather than allocating two hours and thirty minutes per week considering the busy schedules of the student population and since they do not have enough time to do the self-learning. Furthermore, the resource persons should work and introduce the mechanisms to enhance the self-confidence of the students when they engage in learning activities inside the classroom. Also, motivation can be increased by employing various techniques and this should be deployed both inside and outside of the classroom. Since the different levels of learners are there in the same classroom the authorities should work on the identification of the levels of the learners first and then they should categorize the students according to their level. This would be ideal and easy for the resource person to employ effective learning practices and teaching methods to increase the language learning of the second language learners. Based on the identified facts of the data analysis, it is suggested that the teaching staff should take measures to increase the vocabulary of the students and they

should be practised to use those learnt words in practical scenarios. The translation from a native language to a second language should be avoided by the learners and they should be encouraged to think and work in the second language.

Since the data analysis shows that the learners do not have enough time to assign for self-learning, more learning activities should be done inside the classroom and a learner-supportive learning environment should be created by the authorities and the resource persons. Furthermore, the study suggested guiding the students when they use different apps which can support the learners to master the language and to select external parties for language learning.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to identify the challenges that second language learners encounter when they engage with English language learning as their second language. The collected data shows that the students are affected by two types of challenges internal and external. In the category of internal challenges, there are facts which can be considered as the learner-oriented challenges and the classroom-oriented challenges. Under the external challenges, many of the challenges are related to the background and the learning environment of the language learners. However, many of the challenges can be overcome through the accurate guidance of the resource persons and the motivation of the learners.

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