CHAPTER 6
Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter attempts to knit the discussions made in the previous five chapters together. The first chapter introduces the research problem and puts forth objectives of the research. The second chapter reviews the related literature. The third chapter discusses the language policy of the country, language practices in the universities and some popular notions of English and graduates in the society in the backdrop of graduate unemployment problem. The fourth chapter deals with student perceptions in relation to motivation to learn English, syllabus/lesson materials and their content, language teaching process, assessment practices and medium of instruction. The fifth chapter discusses teachers' perspectives on language policy of the country and institutional language practices, medium of instruction, lesson materials and their content, student performance, teacher training, teaching methods and student assessment practices. This chapter brings together the above issues comparing and contrasting the perceptions of teachers and students, and attempts to find some broad perspectives in relation to undergraduate English language teaching in Sri Lanka in particular and English language teaching in the country in general. The chapter concludes with limitations of the study and some suggestions for future research.

The reader will find the perceptions of teachers and students situated in the outcomes of the discussion on language policy of the country and standard language practices in the universities. The salient aspects that will be discussed are student motivation and performance, lesson materials (content components), English literature and culture, student assessment, teacher training, ELT programme and medium of instruction at the undergraduate level.
6.2. Diverse aspects of English language teaching

Student motivation and performance

The economic policies Sri Lanka adopted in 1977 paved way for major changes in the country's socio-politico-economic domain. The home-grown close economy gave way to open economy which opened the country to the world. The agriculture-based society was given a non-agrarian facet which swiftly moved towards a service-based economy. Society changed acquiring a different value system when foreign goods and investments began to flood in. Private sector involved (both local and foreign) in large-scale in the economy and many governmental organizations were privatized. International standards filtered into the society. English became essential for the private sector employment which has been fast expanding. Failure in the education output to meet the requirements of the changing society forced the country's education to reflect upon its visions and missions. Accordingly, changes have been made, yet they are not keeping pace with the rapidity of the changes in the economic sector. In the 21st century Sri Lanka, the main employment provider is the private sector which uses by and large English as the medium for communication.

Society is influenced by such transformations in the economy and education. The interplay between economy and education forms the expectations and popular notions in the society of its education output. Students' awareness of the requirement of their society, especially of the employment sector results from interchanges between education and economy of the country and the popular notions of the society. Consequently, students form and shape their goals and aspirations through education to equip themselves for future prospects. Their motivation to learn English is closely linked with the changes witnessed in the society and the demands of the employment sector. This has been clearly depicted by the predominantly instrumental motivational orientation of students to learn English. Students in Faculties that offer core-subjects with a career bent in them exhibit a clear career motive for learning English. This further strengthens the influence of the economic domain on the education output. The long-ran ethnic
conflict in the country created major setbacks in the socio-economic domain. This resulted in huge outflow of human resources through mass exodus that continued for decades. Students' motive to learn English for its international standing clearly shows the bearing of such socio-economic factors upon students' desire to learn English. On the other hand, socio-psychological factors influence students having integrative motivation to learn English. Students who do not get opportunities to interact with others in the society tend to develop integrative motivational orientation to learn English as a means to reach other communities.

As viewed by teachers, students' improvement of performance in English is mainly due to factors external to the university. Students' general awareness of the demands of the job market and the exposure to the modern world are the key factors. This further supports the above argument that students' motivation to learn English is instrumental and it is the outcome of the influence of the socio-economic domain. However, teachers' views reveal that poor performance in English is due to the factors within the control of the university. The implications of the outcomes of empirical studies to the discourse of the undergraduate English language teaching trigger critiquing the policies that involve language issues and practices in use for ELT in universities. The need to prepare undergraduates to take up responsibilities of the society while keeping pace with the moving economy should be emphasized in ELT.

**Lesson materials (content components)**

With considerable autonomy from the university administration for materials production and modifications, university English language teaching academia is entrusted with the selection of content and activities. The attitudes of both teachers' and students' towards the end-product - lesson materials are negative. Students' perceptions on the various components show that they dislike certain components that are included in abundance. At the same time, the skills/components they prefer most have been given less emphasis. In content selection, teachers welcome topics and themes that are specific to students' core-subjects. However, in the absence of subject-homogeneous student population, the
task of selecting content makes teachers look for other parameters. In such a case, students are at disadvantage for having to study content that may be neither relevant to their core subjects nor of their interests. Students' preferences based on their needs in relation to English have a string attached to their present interactions and future prospects. Overlooking them can have undesirable consequences as found in the status quo.

The negative attitudes of both teachers and students towards the existing materials necessitate critiquing the process behind materials production and invite an in-depth evaluation of the existing materials with the involvement of both parties. The bottom echelons of the curriculum are lesson materials and their content. Apart from being the medium through which course objectives are transmitted to students, lesson materials manifest the curriculum designers' degree of awareness of the wider perspectives of language and language teaching discourse in a given context. Such awareness in turn reflects the future of English language teaching and the ideologies of education as an investment of a nation. The future of the lesson materials as perceived by Tomlinson (2003, p.9) is expected to have the following characteristics:

1. Greater personalization and localization of materials
2. Greater flexibility and creativity of use
3. More respect for the learners
4. More affectively engaging content
5. A greater emphasis on multicultural perspectives and awareness
6. More opportunities for learners with experiential (and especially kinesthetic) learning style preferences
7. More attempts made to engage the learner in the language learning process as an experienced, intelligent and interesting individual
8. More attempt made to use multidimensional approaches to language learning

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The aspects such as greater personalization and localization of materials with a
greater emphasis on multicultural perspectives and awareness are quite significant to
the Sri Lankan situation. In Sri Lanka, English is treated as the link language in
constitutional terms. Yet, the initial intended meaning, that is, to link ethnic groups
via English has lost its value to a certain extent due to two reasons: one, the
medium of instruction in school education by and large is mother tongue; two,
presently the second official and national language is taught to school children
(Sinhala to Tamil speaking students and Tamil to Sinhala speaking students). In
such a context, the need arises to clarify the new meanings of ‘linkage’ via English.
The concept of English as the ‘link language’ has not been adequately explored,
interpreted and used by the academia. The linkage through English could be made
via a number of ways: English can link languages, communities and knowledge. It
can link languages with one another and this can be made possible at the levels of
grammar, phonology, etc. Linkages made among languages can change societal
attitudes. As it was intended by the then political will, which initiated the
recognition of English as the link language, English can link communities and
ethnic groups. It can link an individual with knowledge. The society associates new
knowledge with English language and thereby dissociates new knowledge from
vernaculars. Such concepts degrade the value of the abundance of knowledge
vernaculars carry as they are pushed backwards with the acceptance for English.
Links between languages and knowledge they carry can be built via concepts. Also
English can link an individual with his profession. Different interpretations of
English as the link language in the changing society are necessary to make English
language learning pragmatic and meaningful. Teachers as course planners need to
rethink about the setting of course objectives with societal and student needs and
interests along with wider perspectives of English as the link language. At one level,
the linking is via communication and at another the linkage is through knowledge.
Also, what is communicated is knowledge, yet the kind of knowledge to
communicate should be determined by parameters that are both local and global. In
its basic sense, the indication of English as a link language is the recognition of it as
a cultural instrument. By the same token, the non recognition of English as a
knowledge or cognitive instrument is also implied. It is the responsibility of the academia of the country to interpret it in a wider way so that new meanings emerge to suit the changing societies. It is essential that curriculum designers have a profound understanding of these salient features attached with the meaning 'link'. On the one hand, failure to recognize student capacities is depicted by the teaching of English exclusively with a 'communicative base'. Such an endeavour ignores the importance of English for linking individuals with knowledge. Similarly, the failure to provide teachers with adequate knowledge in curriculum design is manifested through a system that ignores a wider perspective of treating English as the link language in the Sri Lankan context.

It is crucial that materials give more opportunities for learners with experiential learning style preferences. As students come to the undergraduate level, they have already developed certain learning styles and strategies. Most of the styles and strategies are established and consolidated in regard to the learning of students' main subjects and have been rewarded (by being the means for students to reach the university level). Yet, learning styles of students in relation to English language have not been affirmed positive because their proficiency in English is poor. Research has shown that learning styles are not static and students are not prisoners of their learning styles despite them having various styles embedded in their personalities. Styles could be stretched by examining and practising various learning strategies which are consciously adopted (Reid, 1995, p.viii). Pask (1969) is of the view that many students are able to use both serialist and holistic strategies. There is also evidence that students in higher education often abandon less effective learning styles and develop more effective styles (Wallace, 1991, p.24). Therefore, lesson materials for undergraduate ELT should help students change, shape and develop effective learning strategies for English language learning.

Materials that manifest more respect for the learners with more affectively engaging content and with more attempts made to engage the learners in the language learning process as an experienced, intelligent and interesting individual are likely to attract them to learning. Undergraduates whose intelligence level is undoubtedly
higher than others of their generation should be respected by making them engage in a variety of learning experiences that suit their age and intelligence. More often than not, low proficiency level of English is misinterpreted as and associated with low intelligence level. This is manifested through the selection of content which is often too simple and unsuitable of undergraduates’ age and experience. Such a stance of content selection results in students having lack of enthusiasm and developing negative attitudes to learn English. The context in which students are placed within the university as readers for a degree and potential employees aspiring to join the workforce should also be highlighted by selecting content that is relevant to their context. This can be accomplished by having content that supports their core-subjects and procuring employment. Such a selection would be in compliance with what has been discussed by Brundage and MacKeracher in relation to adult education: Adult learners are less interested in learning for learning's sake than in learning to achieve some immediate or not too far distant life goals. They are profoundly influenced by past learning experiences, present concerns and future prospects and do not rely on 'banking principle', that is gaining mastery over subject matter or skills which may be useful at some far distant date (1980). They like gaining mastery over skills that can be put to immediate use.

Materials that have greater flexibility and creativity of use with more attempts made to use multidimensional approaches to language teaching tend to attract both teachers and students. As both the groups are inherently creative, it is vital that materials are able to bring out this creativity in them. When eclectic approach to English language teaching is emphasized through the claims made by teachers, materials that provide ample scope for teachers to use multidimensional approaches to their teaching according to the level and needs of their students are likely to give satisfaction to teachers in teaching. Their dissatisfaction of the materials in use exhibits the failure of the materials production in bringing out the creativity in teachers as well.

The above characteristics in materials would help progress and sustain teaching English both as a tool for communication as well as a source of knowledge. The
scope for materials development to suit the Sri Lankan context can best be found in the multidimensional interpretation of English as discussed before. Moreover, such interpretations are the call of the hour as the country is in greater need of ‘linkages’ now than at any point of time in its history. Teachers, as material preparators should be made aware of the parochialism of interpreting English as a language for communication in its basic sense and of the importance of using context relevance as a parameter in selecting content. This is because content that is divorced from life and future occupation of students will not draw them to English language learning.

*Literature and culture*

One of the several implications of English as the link language in the context where the other two languages being treated as both national and official languages is that English is used to serve a cultural function. This is partly entrenched in the education system as the teaching of English is aimed at developing communicative competence in students. But the cultural aspect of a language does not limit its function in communication in its general sense. It needs to reach out to the target community in deep and diverse measures. One such is the cultural component which is couched in the English language curriculum content. Literature being treated as the carrier of cultures, undergraduate English language teaching could be enhanced with the use of literature in order to fulfill the function of English as the link between and amongst cultures. Teachers’ choice of local English literature over foreign works implies an increase of focus on Sri Lankan English literary works in the undergraduate general English language classroom. Recognition of one’s own English literature is one way of building bridges between English language and local knowledge. Using contextual familiarity as a parameter, foreign literary works can be brought into the classroom whereby linkages between cultures can be established. The confluence of preferences of both the teachers and students to Sri Lankan literature can be made use of in teaching English where language improvement is aimed at by both parties with the use of literature. The prominence given by teachers and students both to the Language model in teaching-learning
literature can be made an extended discourse whereby the functions of both the Personal growth model and the Culture model are present and equally active.

In addition, teachers’ perceptions of the coexistence of the three languages as (a) hierarchical, (b) competing and (c) English replacing the other two imply that there is certain aloofness in their views of the coexistence of the three languages. Such impervious views regarding languages should be replaced by languages as complementing each other. Change of attitudes amongst teachers needs to be redressed initially in order to change the same in students. Building the gulfs that exist amongst languages is the need of the hour. Pluralism as viewed by Udaya Narayan Singh (1993) brought in enormous changes in both style and content to many fields when monism was relegated to the background. He views this shift from one to many in sharing powers, privileges, opportunities and possibilities among languages, cultures and societies as a gift of the post modernism (1993, p.40). Such views of pluralism have a special significance in the context like Sri Lanka, which experienced bitter consequences of not treating languages as complementing each other.

Teacher training

Teaching a language has a communicative base and a knowledge base. More often than not, the former is emphasized in the contemporary times in relation to English language teaching. Teachers of English as instruments of knowledge have not been given due recognition in the teacher training discourse. As a result, teachers of English when faced with responsibilities that exceeds mere teaching are left with knowledge gained through experience. Teacher training programmes for teachers of English need to redress their missions and visions with a broader perspective. Teachers need to be empowered with every aspect pertinent to language teaching discourse as instruments of knowledge as well as their role as teachers of English for communication purposes.
The professional education of teachers has not empowered them adequately enough to cater to all the requirements made upon them in the undergraduate English language teaching enterprise that include planning, designing and implementing of curriculum. Considering the future of English language teachers, the training given to them should encompass two chief areas: one, training them to impart knowledge of English language and teach it for communication; two, training them to become contributors of knowledge. The country's education is, though slowly, moving towards English medium instruction. Schools have started teaching in the medium of English. Though progress in this respect is extremely slow, in the years to come, teachers of English would survive if they specialize not only in teaching English, but in teaching relevant knowledge and skills in English as well. This view can be supported by the demand for ESP courses in the country. ESP courses are essentially specific-knowledge-based, skill-fronted/oriented programmes. A natural question that would arise in relation to this would be to distinguish between the subject teachers who teach in English and the teachers of English. The difference is that the teachers of English would be equipped with professional training to teach English both as a tool for communication and as an instrument of knowledge. In addition, they would have the professional knowledge behind them to plan, produce and implement a curriculum that serves both the above purposes.

As the study reveals, university teachers of English do not have much opportunity to update their professional knowledge. Students' views on teaching English as negative corroborate this issue. In the Sri Lankan English language classroom where teachers and lesson materials still play the main roles, inadequacies in the teaching process account much for the failure to realize the expected goals. The system should provide teachers of English with in-service teacher training programmes. The reflective model suggested by Wallace (1991) shows two kinds of knowledge contributing to teachers to improve their professional competence (see Figure 2.1).
The reflective model has 3 stages:

**Stage 1:** This is the pre-training stage where an individual is at, before he/she decided to take a professional training. The Reflective model highlights the fact that the individuals seldom enter into professional training situations with blank minds and/neutral attitudes but with mental constructs or ‘conceptual schemata’ which stem from personality factors, social factors, cultural factors and many others. It is crucial to know “where trainees are at” when they enter the developmental process than “where they are coming from”, (Wallace, 1991:51). Such conceptual schemata may be derived from what trainees have been reading or taught and what professional experience has given them.

**Stage 2:** The stage of professional education or development that takes place due to the reflection on the combination of both received knowledge and experienced knowledge.

Received knowledge is where a trainee becomes acquainted with the vocabulary of the subject and the matching concepts, research findings, theories and skills which are widely accepted as being part of the necessary intellectual content of the profession. So, currently, it might be accepted that a skilled language teacher will be able (among many other things) to speak the target language to a reasonable degree of fluency, to organize pair and group work, to read a simple phonetic transcription, to be familiar with certain grammatical terms and so on (p.14).

Experiential knowledge is the knowledge-in-action. A trainee will have such knowledge by practice of the profession. Also he/she will have had, the opportunity to reflect on that knowledge-in-action. (Herein, Wallace makes a distinction between experiential knowledge-by-observation and experiential knowledge-in-action) Wallace argues that the language teacher training courses offer variety of subjects that are related to the language teaching per se, yet trainees are left to themselves in amalgamating them and making use of them ‘somehow’ in their teaching practice. The reflective model suggested by him incorporates received
knowledge into practice through the training course itself. The ‘reflective cycle’ is a shorthand way of referring to the continuing process of reflection on ‘received knowledge’ and ‘experiential knowledge’ in the context of professional practice (p.56). This reflection can take place at many points: while reading texts or listening to lectures trainees may reflect upon them and comprehend them “with reference to” their “professional concerns” (Ibid). Also, reflection can take place by a process of recollection or it may take place during the practice itself.

**Goal:** This is what the professional aspires to, namely (increased) professional development. Wallace discusses the goal of professional competence in two ways; first, one’s competence may be proved by a certificate gained at the end of a teacher training programme. This he calls as “initial competence.” Second, professional competence is a moving target which can never be attained but through which a professional travels all his professional life. There are many variables in this regard: society’s expectations, the nature of the subject, the examination system, the curriculum, methodology, teacher’s own interests, teacher’s changing and deepening insights into the nature of the profession, changes in responsibility, etc. It has a force of “expertise”. Therefore, professional competence is not a terminal point, but a point of departure.

As discussed above, the professional training helps teachers to continue their professional growth with clear perceptions of the requirement of the profession. Teachers need to rise up to the level to reflect upon both experiential knowledge and received knowledge so that self assessment is possible.

In the light of above, the need to expose university teachers to received knowledge becomes imperative. The teacher training programmes should make teachers reflect on both received and experiential knowledge in every aspect pertaining to English language teaching. On the one hand, the lack of in-service professional programmes leaves university teachers with few opportunities to upgrade and update their professional expertise. On the other hand, the existing teacher education programmes need to be refurbished with equipping teachers in tasks such as
curriculum planning, material production, materials evaluation and assessment of students. In the current scenario of the teacher training programmes, the emphasis is primarily on teaching while other aspects mentioned above are merely 'touched upon' with a couple of hours' lectures as revealed in the study. Wallace's reflective model needs to be used for developing each of the aforementioned areas namely curriculum planning, syllabus design, materials production, teaching and student assessment that fall under undergraduate English language teaching where teachers are entrusted with responsibilities other than mere teaching.

According to Wallace, any occupation aspiring to the title of 'profession' will claim at least some of these qualities: a basis of scientific knowledge, a period of rigorous study which is formally assessed, a sense of public service, high standards of professional conduct and the ability to perform some specified, demanding and socially useful tasks in a demonstrably competent manner (p.5). The study reveals that teachers are not adequately trained to produce materials and they work chiefly through experiential knowledge. This has not proved effective as both teachers and students are not satisfied with the materials. We suggest that there should be a system through which teachers of English are equipped with the first two, that is, a basis of scientific knowledge, a period of rigorous study which is formally assessed by means of specially designed professional training programmes pertinent to all the aspects of language teaching. We further suggest that the personnel specialized in the above aspects be produced from the university teachers of English who can impart such knowledge to the teachers of school education as well. Emphasizing on the division of labour concept, it would be desirable to produce separate team for each aspect, thus the specialization would achieve more precision.

**Student assessment**

Institutional standards and societal standards of graduates' English language proficiency are not equal. The disparity between the two creates a wide chasm which keeps graduates away from their aspirations in terms of their careers, which eventually results in graduate frustration and unrest. The ideology of evaluation of
English language proficiency in the Sri Lankan universities has changed in keeping with the practices the world over. But its implementation at the level of each individual institution has been questioned by teachers themselves. Graduate unemployment problem due to their incapability of meeting the demands of the employment sector is a fact that has been emphasized and reiterated by both popular notions of the society as well as the government authorities of education. Students' suggestions for assessing English language proficiency should be treated with precision.

With Communicative language teaching, testing has undergone a complete shift.

To begin with, the very nature of testing has changed quite radically over the years to become less impositional, more humanistic, conceived not so much to catch people out on what they do not know, but as a more neutral assessment of what they do. (MacNamara, 2000, p.4)

As the tests are conducted to measure students' achievement during and at the end of the semester (or course), they fall into the category of achievement tests. Undergraduate English Language programmes have both summative and formative assessments. The formative assessment practice in use needs to be viewed against its principles: It is to improve student performance as opposed to summative assessment which is to prove. Formative assessments are intimately connected to instruction and produce non-threatening results¹. As per teachers' views, formative assessment practices lacks credibility as students tend to copy from other sources and produce assignments. In order to make formative assessment meaningful, there should be mechanisms to detect and avoid plagiarism. Current summative assessments are as per students views more of paper pencil-type. Students need their speech ability assessed. As teachers view, current testing practices represent traditional written tests. Given such a scenario, within the undergraduate assessment system, testing practices are not up to the expectations of both teachers and students. The rejection of graduates by the society because of their inability to

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formative_assessment, retrieved on 27.05.2009
cope with the expectations of the employment sector is justified by the views of both students and teachers of undergraduate English language assessment. The difference between the standards of the institution and the expected standards of the employment sector of the graduate English language proficiency requires harnessing. The need arises to find measures to improve achievement tests both in method and purpose to test undergraduates’ English language proficiency.

**ELT programme**

English Language Teaching Units/Centres in the Sri Lankan universities have considerable autonomy in course planning. English language teachers shoulder the responsibility of course design and modifications other than teaching and testing. However, the teachers’ responses show an overall lack of planning of courses: The programme lacks a curriculum with clearly articulated goals and teaching instructions. Goals of a course transmitted via materials along with teaching methods to comply with them together comprise the basic structure of a programme. Failure of one results in the collapse of the structure.

The views of the teachers and students on the existing English language programmes show that both parties are unsatisfied with them. In the context of societal dissatisfaction of the graduate output vis-à-vis English language proficiency, teachers’ and students’ negative views of the English language teaching programme prove that the undergraduate ELT discourse is a failure. English being pivotal to today’s education, the institutions and programmes that deal with teaching English to the new generation have faced a number of challenges. As stated earlier, teaching English for general communicative purposes and teaching English for knowledge communication are two chief challenges in this regard.

Treating English as a subject and treating it as a medium of instruction are two different aspects. The distinction of the two aspects in practical situation can best be found in school education and higher education: In the school education, English is a subject and in the university education English is the medium of
instruction (except in the Faculties of Arts in some universities). Programmes that cater to the first, that is, teaching English as a subject should aim at preparing students for the second. Failure of the first results in having discrepancies in the second as found in the English language teaching in the country. Teaching a language, teaching about a language and teaching through a language are three distinct concepts that need to be understood with precision. The need of the hour is to teach English with an aim to teach through English while giving adequate knowledge of English. This task lies within the pedagogical domain.

As it was intended at the commencement of this study, to find remedial measures to teach undergraduates English irrespective of their English learning history, we propose the following as immediate steps that should be taken:

The intensity of the English language teaching programme should be increased. Students’ reiterated preference to learn English speech should be respected, thus more hours and activities should be allotted for speech. Krashen’s (1982) Input Hypothesis clarifies the relationship between input (exposure) and acquisition. People acquire language best by understanding input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence (1 +1) and the ability to speak cannot be taught directly: Rather it emerges independently in time once the acquirer has built up linguistic competence by understanding input. Provided there is sufficient quantity of comprehensible input, 1+1 will usually be provided automatically. Therefore, it is desirable that the programme has ample scope for providing students with sufficient quantity of comprehensible input.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) underpins a theory of language learning, which includes that conversation is the central focus of language and the keystone of language acquisition (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Therefore, the use of eclectic approach to language teaching should accommodate aspects of such theoretical assumptions by incorporating tasks that require students engage in conversation.
Quite often there are discussions about teachers having to develop the qualities of adjustability and flexibility to suit the student level. By the same token, there is hardly any focus on teacher satisfaction on the basis of teacher-student compatibility which is crucial for building a healthy rapport between the two groups. As learning processes ought to make students content, teaching should make teachers satisfied for the teaching-learning process to be successful. Teachers should be interchangeable within the programme to teach different components so that student-teacher compatibility can be found and nurtured while any incompatibilities are minimized. In addition, the present student grouping system on English language proficiency level of the students at the entry point to the university can be replaced with more innovative methods such as methods based on students’ preferred learning strategies, core-subjects, etc. Once grouped in diverse ways, students could be assigned to teachers taking into account of teachers’ preferences. Such logistics can enhance teaching-learning process by meeting teachers’ needs.

Confidence building and needs (to learn English) building should be part of the English language teaching programme that should be incorporated into the syllabus. Students’ attitudes show that they have a positive disposition towards English language. The negativity is towards the teaching methods and the materials that are in use. Students need confidence built in them through classroom activities where they find a safe zone to use English. Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis advocates that the learner’s emotional state or attitude is an adjustable filter that freely passes, blocks or impedes input that is necessary for language acquisition. Acquisition is said to be better when there is low affective filter. There are three affective/attitudinal variables vis-à-vis second language acquisition: motivation, self confidence, anxiety and low personal and classroom anxiety produces more success (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). Thus low affective filter is desirable. In the context where students’ motivation to learn English is extremely high, it is their self confidence which needs to be built in the language classroom to produce a low anxiety level.
It is important to have a material content that is culturally appropriate which Prabhu's Procedural Syllabus emphasized as cultural nearness (1987). It would help students relate to English language learning by creating a low anxiety level in the safe zone where cultural resonance is created.

We suggest that the programme take up a serialist approach whereby students' confidence is built step by step. This may be accomplished along the key concepts of language proficiency as put forward by Cummins (1979). Cummins makes the distinction between two differing kinds of language proficiency: BICS and CALP. BICS are Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills; these are the "surface" skills of listening and speaking which are typically acquired quickly by many students.

CALP is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, and, as the name suggests, is the basis for a child's ability to cope with the academic demands placed upon his/her in the various subjects. Cummins states that while many children develop native speaker fluency (i.e. BICS) within two years of immersion in the target language, it takes between 5-7 years for a child to be working on a level with native speakers as far as academic language is concerned. Though Cummins theory is related to children, there is enough evidence that adults who live in English speaking countries acquire English with a considerable speed and master it. If we apply this principle in to the undergraduate English language learning, the programmes can aim at providing an environment which is conducive to developing English systematically. Therein, BICS and CALP can be developed in undergraduates in the following manner:

1. The programme should aim at developing BICS first.

Speech we recognize as primary in keeping with the primacy students have given to it over other skills. Therefore, BICS in speech may be developed first so that students will gain confidence once they are able to speak with their peers and the teacher in the classroom. Based on the built confidence, BICS in writing may be developed easily.
2. With the help of the developed BICS, and the confidence along with it, the programme should gear towards developing CALP – Writing first and speech secondarily.

Despite students' preference for speech, in CALP it is preferable to develop writing skills first on the assumption that as readers of degree programmes, students require production of written CALP skills more than speech as an immediate need.

Another suggestion to make in relation to English language teaching in universities is to abandon teaching English for general purposes. If general English language programmes have to stay, then they need to be redefined with some specificity in them: For instance, “General English for Developing Needs to Learn English”, “General English for Developing BICS,” etc.

UNESCO's (1953) recognition of the principle of mother tongue education is on three basic grounds: psychological, sociological and linguistic. English Education is also required to be based on the above three. This is because the decision to give importance to teach English in education has been arrived at to meet the needs of people. Therefore, the focus of the ELT programmes should be geared to meet the needs of the above three domains.

On the whole, we are in a position to situate our research findings in Nunan's basics of curricular guidelines. According to Nunan, “Curricular guidelines lay out a programme's educational philosophy, specify purposes and course content, identify implementational constraints and articulate assessment and evaluate criteria. They also include banks of materials that teachers can modify to meet the negotiated needs of their learners” (Nunan 1988b).

In the absence of curricular guidelines, what we could find were lesson materials and in some cases syllabuses. Where only lesson materials were available, the constellation contributed to the making of a syllabus. Educational philosophy is not specified in the non existence of a laid down curriculum. Purposes are unspecified or specified in general terms such as “developing communicative competence” in
students. Course content is specified accordingly (in general terms) and is subject to modifications as per teachers' perceptions of societal and student needs. However, implementational constraints are identified during the course of time through practice and experience. Assessment practices have been articulated yet the outcome is not in compliance with the expectations of the society.

Medium of instruction

Universities are autonomous in making decisions pertinent to the various aspects of their academic missions. In regard to language issues, as per the University Act, the decisions seem to come from the topmost level that is, from the Minister of Higher Education and the UGC. Yet, with pragmatism in its maximum, the process is bottom-up. As per the needs of the society as perceived by the respective Faculty, the higher strata of the administration are informed about Faculty decisions on language issues. Yet, some universities with Faculties functioning in mother tongue have not taken steps to make their graduate output ready to face future challenges in relation to English.

Teachers perceive English medium instruction as challenging to students. Yet, they are in favour of English medium considering the potential utility of a degree in English. In spite of having to struggle to learn in English, students too prefer English to be the medium, considering the same. Thus, a shared attitude in regard to medium of instruction is prevalent between students and teachers. The students who study in English and the teachers who teach them English show higher level of confidence to continue with English. They are optimistic in overcoming obstacles attached to the medium. The students who study in mother tongue and the teachers who teach them show preference for English medium with some level of reservation and anxiety. For instance, the students' anxiety is manifested through their liking to have mother tongue support while the teachers favour English medium with similar conditions applied. More often than not, undergraduates' lack of English language proficiency is attributed to the hurdles in their past learning experiences and environment. There is sufficient empirical proof for successful language learning of adults from contexts such as Russian and Chinese where
foreign students master cognitively demanding language skills required by the respective degree programmes. The influence of the environment provides ample exposure to students would be a counter argument. Greater intensity and frequency are the two key factors behind such an environmental support enhanced by the compulsion acting as a positive agent. Herein, the policy aspect acts as the catalyst. Creating an environment which has greater intensity of the use of English supported by administration decisions such as making the programme credited and compulsory would bring about the desired changes in the English language teaching programmes.

To wind up the discussion, the following points are reiterated. In the education system in Sri Lanka, the educational function of English is not recognized. English is taught for communication purpose in its general sense. The purposive domain of communication has not been adequately critiqued. The question, “to communicate what?” has not been sufficiently explored. The need to go beyond the primary meaning of communication is essential to tread the paths of knowledge through English. The lack of emphasis of English as a means to gain knowledge runs through the education system. This results in students having deficiencies in using English for gaining knowledge. When students reach the undergraduate level, they are required to study in the medium of English where English becomes a tool to gain knowledge. This is a sudden and swift change of roles of English. Students who are familiar with mother tongue as the instrument of knowledge over ten years of their study career are suddenly faced with two challenges: one, the need to get accustomed to the mode of study in the university set up which is different from that in the school education; two, the English medium instruction that is thrust upon them. Therefore, the need to consider English as a tool of cognitive development from the beginning of students’ education should be addressed. This is not to suggest that English should be the medium of education from the kindergarten. The recognition of English teachers as an instrument of knowledge is required. The kind of training teachers of English are given should gear them achieve professional competence to become successful carriers of knowledge in English than mere ‘porters’ of language knowledge.
Complementarities of English and National languages should be established. Sudden dropping of mother tongues (National languages) as languages of knowledge and sudden thrusting of English as language of modern knowledge without bridge building has created social and cultural upheavals. Bidirectional and multidirectional bridge building between and among languages must be attempted through time management, structure management, function management, skill management, material management and programme management. This is the only way to build a space where in Tagore's words, "the world finds a nest in every language and every culture."¹

6.3. Limitations of this study

1. The study being diagnostic, exploratory and descriptive in nature had mainly resorted to describe data in terms of frequencies or percentages of responses to a particular question. This was necessary as it was not known how the respondents in the universities would provide answers on issues which were highly subjective.

2. The initial intent to give an in depth statistical analysis for students' perceptions had to be restricted as the scope of this research was vast that covered large issues such as language policy of the country, language practices in universities, and views of teachers and students on the undergraduate English language programmes and popular notions of English prevalent in the society.

3. This study does not provide solutions to problems that were recognized through the empirical data and its analysis. Its main thrust was to find possible causes inferred through such data for a particular situation to exist. However, at the end, it sought to suggest some potential remedies for the areas that were recognized as problematic.

¹ The logo of Vishva Bharati, Shanti Niketan
6.4. Suggestions

As stated at the commencement of the thesis, the study aimed at examining the status quo of the undergraduate English language teaching in Sri Lanka. The effort was to examine the overall picture of the programme with the support of empirical data and explore the causative factors for predicaments. Such a stance was taken with the intent of making this work as a point of departure for future research within the framework of undergraduate English language teaching in particular and English language teaching in Sri Lanka in general.

Enumerated below are some suggestions for further explorations in the field:

1. A full fledged lesson materials evaluation of the undergraduate English language programme should be carried out that involve both teachers and students.

2. Undergraduates’ assessment practices should be investigated as an independent discourse and their performance should be examined longitudinally.

3. Classroom observations need to be carried out in order to further examine teaching methods that are in use and teacher-student rapport in the undergraduate classroom.

4. Teacher attitudes towards teaching English and their job satisfaction should be examined at both school and undergraduate levels.

5. Both teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards the coexistence of the three languages in Sri Lanka should be investigated.