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IMPACT OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY ON MANAGEMENT UNDERGRADUATES' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF RAJARATA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA (RUSL)

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ABSTRACT

As the 'lingua franca', English Language plays a vital role in business world and higher education system in Sri Lanka. Specially, in the field of Management, English language has become the medium of instructions and a major difficulty for the non-native English-speaking students. Among all the universities, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (RUSL) has given the opportunity to face first year examination in Sinhala, English, or both languages. However, it has become a barrier to familiar with English language. Thus, this study conducted with the objective of identifying the impact of English proficiency on Management undergraduates' academic performance of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. Sample of the study was 147 undergraduates from second year, third year, and fourth year and data were gathered using structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using correlation analysis and regression analysis. The Reliability test shows all four variables are internally consistent. According to the descriptive statistics, all four variables are contributing to the independent variable. The correlation analysis shows that, all four variables are positively correlated with independent variable ($p < 0.05$). According to the regression analysis, 80.9% of the variance of the academic performance of Management undergraduates of RUSL is explained by the four variables. Coefficients of all four variables have significant positive impact on independent variable, thus, the four hypotheses of the study can be accepted. The findings show that, majority of respondents acknowledged that English language is important for their academic success. Thus, it should make further opportunities to motivate students to improve their English proficiency.

Keywords: Academic Performance, English Language Skills, Management Undergraduates

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Though, thousands of languages used for communication, English language plays a vital role as the lingua franca (Senanayake, 2019). Currently, 1.5 billion of people are speaking English all around the world and only 400 million of people are native speakers (Serseg , 2018). Ozowuba (2018) also shows that, nearly 1 billion of people learn English as a foreign language and 750 million of people are learning it as a second language. Thus, native speakers are only 9% and English speaking population is 1/3 of the world (Johnston, Partridge, & Hughes, 2014). From the 5th century AD, English has being developed more than 1400 years (Serseg , 2018).

English was the language used by a German tribe named Angles who were

invaded the Britain. After 16th century, English language was begun to cross the borders of the Britain and spread across the world. Sri Lanka, which is a South Asian country located in the southern tip of India, had a temple-centred education system. However, Sri Lanka was invaded by Britain in 1769 and shifted the education system to English based education system. The Britain administered the country's law enforcements and duties; thus, Colebrook and Cameroon Commission established their government in in 1833 and made English language as the official administrative language. It was become the elite's language and people who were fluent in English had the recognition in the society; thus, Sri Lankans tend to fluent in English. (Ranasinghe & Ranasinghe, 2011/2012) Though, the importance given to English was reduced with the freedom, it has become a national language with the globalization and open economy (Coleman , 2010).

According to Ozowuba (2018), English is used for variety of fields such as global communication. Majority of companies are used English as their communicating medium. Thus, English is a major requirement to employee in a public or private sector. Hence, to meet this requirement, Sri Lankan universities are conducting most of their degree programs in English medium (Senanayake, 2019). Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (RUSL) is the eleventh university in Sri Lanka which is conducted its six Bachelor's Special degree programs of Faculty of Management Studies (FMS) in English medium (Faculty of Management studie, 2015-2019).

Problem Statement

According to the University Grant Commission (UGC), students who have a qualified Z-score which is calculated using marks for three major subjects are eligible for the state university entrance. All state universities' are conducted their Management degrees in English medium from the first year, except RUSL. RUSL has given the opportunity to face examinations either in English or Sinhala in their first year and instructions is in both languages in the second year. Third year will be the challenging point to students as it has the toughest theories which are most important for their academic success. Yet, students have to utterly shift to the English medium. However, this rule is not applicable for two degrees: Business Information Technology and Tourism and Hospitality Management. Evaluation will be done by considering the Grade Point Average (GPA) calculated using Continuous Assessments (CA) such as, tutorials, reports, presentations, field visits, projects, research and classroom tests and final examination result (Faculty of Management studie, 2015-2019).

Table 1: Average GPA of 2012/2013 Batch, FMS, RUSL
Source: Department of Examination, FMS, RUSL

Degree Program	Y1S1	Y1S2	Y2S1	Y2S2	Y3S1	Y3S2	Y4S1	Y4S2
B.Sc. (Accountancy and Finance) Special	3.008	2.935	2.605	2.782	2.967	3.113	3.074	3.488
B.Sc. (Business Management) Special) Special	2.820	2.725	2.559	2.768	2.873	3.215	2.450	2.985
B.Sc. (Business Information Technology	2.411	2.204	2.494	2.548	2.455	2.775	2.450	3.196
B.Sc. (Tourism and Hospitality Management) Special	2.234	2.189	2.651	2.524	2.904	2.811	2.827	3.457

Table 2: Average GPA of 2013/2014 Batch, FMS, RUSL
Source: Department of Examination, FMS, RUSL

Degree Program	Y1S1	Y1S2	Y2S1	Y2S2	Y3S1	Y3S2	Y4S1	Y4S2
B.Sc. (Accountancy and Finance) Special	3.009	3.047	2.779	2.926	2.888	2.795	2.890	3.365
B.Sc. (Business Management) Special) Special	3.084	2.899	3.010	2.761	2.967	2.845	3.132	3.501
B.Sc. (Business Information Technology	3.111	3.080	2.681	2.999	2.885	3.223	3.352	3.682
B.Sc. (Tourism and Hospitality Management) Special	2.603	2.592	2.835	2.617	2.854	2.685	2.905	3.642

However, English language is vitally important for the university students, it does not consider when calculating Z-score. Thus, students who got university entrance have different level of English proficiency. As a result, there will be a difference between undergraduates' English knowledge and how they perform in their academics. According to the table 1 and table 2, there can be seen a recognisable reduction in GPAs compared with the year one and two to year three of two degrees. Thus, this study was conducted to identify the impact of English proficiency on Management undergraduates' academic performance of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (RUSL).

Objectives

1. To identify the impact of English proficiency on Management undergraduates' academic performance of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (RUSL)

2. To identify the most influencing English language skill and given the priority to improve it

3. To enhance the importance given to English language in schools and the university

4. To motivate students to improve their English language skills

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cummins' BICS/CALP Theory

The researcher occupied the Cummins' BICS/CALP Theory (BICS: basic interpersonal communicative skills, CALP: cognitive academic language proficiency) as the base for this study. This theory was introduced by J. Cummins in 1979 to show that the challenges and timelines which the second language learners are facing when they acquiring another language. According to this theory, BICS are considered as the social communication such as listening and speaking. Hence, it does not need any kind of specialized language pattern or demanded cognitive tasks which makes easy to develop for second language learners as it takes around one to two years for acquire. CALP are included oral and written production skills in speaking and writing and written and oral comprehension in reading and listening areas which are needed in academic setting and to be succeeding in the

academic. This language level takes around five to eight years to develop for language learners.

English speaking skill

According to Roquia et, al. (2019), speaking of any language is considered as the vital and most required part and the pillar of the classroom. Leong et, al. (2017) also shows speaking as the most difficult part of language learning and the most important skill for an effective communication. This is a globalized world and to interact with this global world, people should be fluent in English speaking skill (Rao, 2019). According to Muamaroh (2009), most of International level and National level job interviews are conducted using medium of English; hence, university students need to proficient in english speaking skill to face the career world. Sadiku (2015) says that, speaking skill is the special skill as peoples' ideas expressions and everything is expressed by speaking and others will measure one according to their speaking ability. As Latha (2018) described in her study, people spend around 25-30% time for speaking in their communication process. According to Pangket (2019), there are three factors affecting oral proficiency: Affective, Linguistic, and Cognitive factors.

According to the reviewed literature, English speaking skill has considered as a major difficult skill which the students face. In the study conducted by Abubakar et, al. (2013) using Somali higher education students shows that there is a weak positive relationship between English speaking skill and academic performance. Though, there is a weak positive relationship between two factors, still they state that 47% of students are embarrased to speak in English. Berman and Cheng was conducted a study based on Canadian University graduate and undergraduate students. They considered both native English speakers and non-native English speaker. According to their

study, native speakers face significant difficulty in speaking English. However, non-native speaking graduate students face more difficulties in speaking English. The result shows tha there is a significant positive relationship between English speaking and academic success of non-native graduates.

English listening skill

Listening is very essential skill in peoples' daily lives as it is the skill of understanding the spoken language (Sabina , 2018). Listening can be defined as "an active process of deciphering and constructing meaning from both verbal and non-verbal messages" (Gilakjani & Ahmadi , 2011). Anderson et, al. (1988) (as cited in Gilakjani and Ahmadi 2011) describe the successful listening as, "understanding is not something that happens because of what a speaker says: the listener has a crucial part to play in the process, by activating various types of knowledge, and by applying what he knows to what he hears and trying to understand what the speaker means". Latha (2018) has shows that, people spend 40-50% for listening in their communication process, still most learners ignore listening skill. When listening well, it contributes for a good note taking and to learn better and faster (Asemota , 2015). According to the study conducted by Renukadevi (2014), learners get 45% of language competency by listening. Gilakjani et, al. (2016) have showed that speaking skill can be developed by listening. Listening skill has four components: Differentiate genres, Understand the spoken message, Hold message in auditory memory, and Comprehension (Ahmadi , 2019).

Though, some litearure showed that listening has a little impact on academic performance, others showed that listening as a most important skill for non-native English speakers. Moradi (2012) has conducted a study based on Iranian English as a Foreign Language learners to

find out if there is an effect of listening on learners acdemic performance. Accoringly, the result shows that there is a statistically meaningful effect on the performance of language learners. Shali (2017) has conducted a study based on law college students to identify the effect of listening skill on their academic success. According to that study, the mojority of students has acknowledged the importance of listening. Hence, it reveals that there is a significant positive relationship among English listenign skill and academic performance. according to the study conducted by Berman and Cheng, non-native speaking undergraduates of Canadian University has faced difficulties in English listening. Thus, they say that there is a weak positive relationship between English listening skill and acadmic performance.

English reading skill

As Adetunji (2007) states, reading can be defined as the "act of translating symbols or letters into word or sentences that have meaning to an individual". As Madani (2016) shows, literacy in reading skills is an essential part and the foundation to become success in educational, cultural, and social systems. He also says that reading can be identified as an interactive process between the reader and the text which he reads. Kaya (2015) stresses that, if someone wants to reading in a foreign language, he/she should think in that language. According to Gilakjani et, al. (2016), reading needs variety of skills such as, complexity of the reading text, environmental influences, and anxiety during reading comprehension, interests and motivation, and decoding speed.

According to the Hijazi (2018), there is a statistically positive relationship between students' reading comprehension and academic acheivement. Further he says, it will increase students' background knowledge, satisfaction, self-confidence, etc. they also say that Cheg (2012), Yildiz (2013), Bastug (2014), and Kerubo (2014)'s studies also allign with Hijazi (2018)'s findings. Kumara et, al. (2019) have conducted a study to find out whether the reading affects Academic achievement or not. The findings of that study revealed that there is an impact of reading habbits on academic achievement.

English writing skill

Kenta et, al. (2019) is defined writing skill as "development and expression of ideas in writing". Writing is considered as important in higher education and workplace and it is affected students daily life and their grades as writing is the mostly used skill professional communication such as: proposals, memos, reports, applications, preliminary interviews, e-mails, etc. (Klimova, 2013). Fareed et, al. (2016) also stress that writing is significant and when it comes to english writing, its necessity increased further. The study conducted by Kenta et, al. (2019) show that, writing is considered as a valuable tool for communication, learning, and self-expression. Thus, students with the low competency in writing skills will have to face difficulties in education and employability. However, writing has become the least considering skill and it does not encourage students for creative writing in examinations system, yet, memorizing and plagiarism is done by learners (Fareed , Ashraf, & Bilal , 2016). Writing skill can identify through variety of skills such as; vocabulary, syntax and grammar, language transfer, and organized writing (Fareed , Ashraf, & Bilal , 2016).

Berman and Cheng was conducted a study based on Canadian University graduate and undergraduate students. They considered both native English speakers and non-native English speaker. According to them, non-native speakers face more difficulties in language skills. They show the result of their study as non-native speaking graduates have significant positive relationship among their English

speaking skill and academic performance. Another study was conducted using Moroccan EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students. This study reveals that writing skill deeply affects for the most of errors done by students and thus, students face more problems. Hence, writing skill has a positive correlation with academic performance. Another study was conducted in Somalian university and reveals that English writing skill is positively correlated with academic performance.
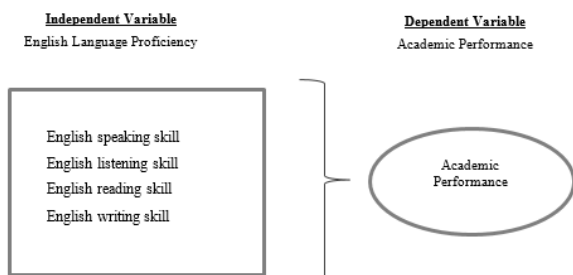
Academic Performance

According to Cambridge Dictionary, performance is defined as, "how well a person, machine, etc. does a piece of work or an activity". In Cambridge Dictionary, academic performance is defined as, "the relationship between skill in anaphoric resolution, academic performance, and language proficiency was examined". According to Fernando (2017), students' academic performance is measured using examinations and the examinations are included with end examination results and continuous assessment test results. Therefore, examination results can be measured using Grade Point Average (GPA) (Fernando, 2017)

METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed by researcher

Hypotheses

H1: There is a positive impact of English speaking skill on academic performance

H2: There is a positive impact of English listening skill on academic performance

H3: There is a positive impact of English reading skill on academic performance

H4: There is a positive impact of English writing skill on academic performance

Research Design

This is a study which attempts to identify the impact of English proficiency on Management undergraduates' academic performance of Rajarata University. Then find out possible ways to solve the issues if the result was 'positive'. Therefore, this research is a basic research. This study was trying to connect the ideas of a specific area to understand the cause and effect. Hence, this is an explanatory research. Furthermore, this study was conducted in a non-contrived setting and can be identified as a cross-sectional study as it was conducted within a particular period of time.

Population, Sample, and Sampling

This study is based on Rajarata University, thus, the population of this study was Management undergraduates of Rajarata University in 2020. The sample size was selected using the following equation.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Accordingly, the sample for this study is 147 undergraduates and the sample was selected based on the random sampling method.

Primary and Secondary Data Collection

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed by reviewing widespread literature and it has three sections as Part A, Part B, and Part C. part A is about the demographic information about the respondent. Part B and Part C questions are in Five Point Likert Scale questions. Structured questionnaires were distributed among the sample and collected data. Secondary data were gathered using sources such as journal articles, web sites (Universities, University Grant Commission, etc.), Examination Department of FMS, RUSL, Reports issued by relevant institutions.

Quantitative Analysis

Structured questionnaire was developed with five point Likert Scale questions to gather the data. The data were analyzed using SPSS software. Thus, the reliability test was conducted to test the reliability of variables and Multiple Linear Regression and Correlation were used to analyze the data. The hypotheses were tested occupying T-test and ANOVA test.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 3: Summary of Reliability Analysis

Variable	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
English speaking skill	6	0.890
English listening skill	8	0.782
English reading skill	10	0.756
English writing skill	8	0.728
Academic Performance	4	0.791

Source: Survey Data (2020)

According to the table 3, English speaking skill is reliable with 0.89, thus, it is highly reliable. All other variables have values greater than 0.7, thus, the variables are fairly reliable. Therefore, questions used to measure dependent and independent variable are internally consistent.

Table 4: Result of Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables

Variable	N Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic
English Speaking Skill	147	3.5896	0.83818
English Listening Skill	147	3.4617	0.79659
English Reading Skill	147	3.5231	0.81980
English Writing Skill	147	3.4966	0.64736
Academic Performance	147	3.4694	0.91314

Source: Survey Data (2020)

Table 4 shows the mean values and standard deviation of the variables. Accordingly, all the variables are complied with the satisfactory level of mean value which is higher than 3.25 and standard deviation which is lower than 1.0. Among variables, English speaking skill has the highest contribution on academic performance and English listening skill has the lowest contribution. However, all four independent variables have a significant contribution to the dependent variable.

Table 5: Result of Independent T-test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	T Value	Sig.
Male	3.5107	0.91330	0.522	0.739
Female	3.4318	0.91734		

Source: Survey Data (2020)

The table 5 illustrates the result of independent sample T-test. It was performed to identify if there is a difference of gender on academic performance. According to the result, the significance value of gender is 0.739 which is more than 0.05 ($0.739 > p = 0.05$). Thus, there is no significant difference between male and female on academic performance.

Table 6: Summary of ANOVA Test Results

Factor Influenced on Academic Performance	F	Sig.
Academic Year	1.199	0.305
Department	0.261	0.853
Grade for G.C.E. (O/L) English	0.671	0.571
Grade for G.C.E. (A/L) English	0.672	0.571
Exam Written Medium in First Year	2.191	0.116
Average GPA in First Year	0.871	0.704
Overall GPA	0.996	0.498

Source: Survey Data (2020)

Table 6 shows the result of ANOVA test which was performed to find out if there is a difference between two factors. According to the test results, the significance values of demographic factors are more than 0.05. Therefore, there is no significant difference among demographic factors and academic performance.

Table 7: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square (R^2)	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimation
1	0.809[a]	0.655	0.645	0.54423
a. Predictors: (Constant), English Speaking Skill, English Listening Skill, English Reading Skill, English Writing Skill				

Source: Survey Data (2020)

Table 7 shows the model summary of regression analysis. The R2 value shows that the degree to which extent the variance of the dependent variable is clarified by the independent variables. According to the result, it can be concluded that 80.9% (0.809) of the variance of academic performance of Management undergraduates of Rajarata University is explained by four independent variables: English speaking skill, English Listening skill, English Reading skill, and English Writing skill. Further it shows that 64.5% (0.645) of the variance of academic performance of Management undergraduates of RUSL is explained by other factors which are not covered by the current study.

Table 8: Regression Analysis (ANOVA Table)

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	76.679	4	19.920	67.254	0.000[b]
	Residual	42.058	142	0.296		
	Total	121.737	146			
a.	Dependent Variable : Academic Performance					
b.	Predictors : (Constant), English Speaking Skill, English Listening Skill, English Reading Skill, English Writing Skill					

Source: Survey Data (2020)

Table 8 shows the result of ANOVA table of regression analysis. Accordingly, the F value is 67.254 and significant value is 0.000 (P < 0.001). Thus, it represents the dependent variable and independent variables are significant.

Table 9: Summary of Correlation Analysis and Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	Correlation Analysis		Regression Coefficient Analysis		Accepted / Rejected
	Pearson Correlation	Sig.	B	Sig.	
H1: There is a positive impact of English speaking skill on academic performance	0.595	0.000	0.114	0.034	Accepted
H2: There is a positive impact of English listening skill on academic performance	0.538	0.000	0.248	0.042	Accepted
H3: There is a positive impact of English reading skill on academic performance	0.647	0.000	0.323	0.017	Accepted
H4: There is a positive impact of English writing skill on academic performance	0.737	0.000	0.353	0.000	Accepted

Source: Survey Data (2020)

Table 9 illustrates the results of correlation and coefficient analysis. According to the correlation analysis, independent variables are performed above the satisfactory level of 3.25 and significant at the level of 0.001. Hence, there is a significant strong positive relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. English writing skill has the highest relationship with academic performance with the correlation value of 0.737 and English listening skill has the lowest relationship with the value of 0.538. .

H1: There is a positive impact of English speaking skill on academic performance

According to the coefficient analysis, English speaking skill has the lowest impact on academic performance with a value of 0.114 (ß= 0.114, p>0.05) and significance with 0.034 (p<0.05). Thus, it has a significance moderate positive impact on academic performance. Accordingly, first hypothesis can be accepted as the above result supports the first hypothesis (H1) of this study.

H2: There is a positive impact of English listening skill on academic performance

According to the coefficient analysis, English listening skill also has an impact on academic performance with a value of 0.248 (ß= 0.248, p>0.05) and significance with 0.042(p<0.05). Thus it has a significant moderate impact on academic performance. Accordingly, second hypothesis can be accepted as the above result supports the second hypothesis (H2) of this study.

H3: There is a positive impact of English reading skill on academic performance

According to the coefficient analysis, English reading skill has an impact on academic performance with a value of 0. 323 (ß= 0. 323, p>0.05) and significance with 0.017(p<0.05). Thus it has a

significant moderate impact on academic performance. Accordingly, third hypothesis can be accepted as the above result supports the third hypothesis (H3) of this study.

H4: There is a positive impact of English writing skill on academic performance

According to the regression coefficient analysis, English writing skill has the highest impact on academic performance with a value of 0.353 (ß= 0.353, p> 0.05) and significance with 0.000(p<0.05) (p<0.05). Thus it has a significant moderate impact on academic performance. Accordingly, fourth hypothesis can be accepted as the above result supports the fourth hypothesis (H4) of this study.

Therefore, there is a significant posisitive impact of English proficiency on Management undergraduates' academic performance of Rajarata University.

CONCLUSION

English language plays a vital role in today's business world and higher education system as the internaional lnguage. Thus, a non-native English speaking country like Sri Lanka is facing challenges when dealing with English language. There can be identified a reduction of average GPAs after second year of two batches of Management undergraduate of Rajarata University. Rajarata University's exam instruction system is different from other state universities, thus, this study was conducted with the purpose of identifying the impact of English proficiency on Management undergraduates' academic performance of Rajarata University.

This study is based on independent and dependent variables and four hypotheses were constructed reviewing related literaure. This study is an explanatory

research and used quantitative methodology. The population of the study was Management undergraduates of Rajarata Unieversity and the sample size was 147 undergraduates. Structured questionnaire was developed to collect the data. The hypotheses were tested using relibility test, independent sample T-est, ANOVA test, correlation analyssis and regression analysis which were run on SPSS 26. According the correlation analysis results, all four variables have significant strong positive relationship with dependent variable. According to the regression analysis result, all four independent variables have significant positive impact on dependent variable. Therefore, all four hypoothese were accepted. Finally, the study result shows that the English proficience has an impact on academic performance of Management undergraduates of Rajarata University. Thus, academic performance of Management undergraduates can be enhanced by improving their English proficiency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the test result, English proficience has an impact on academic performance of Management undergraduates of Rajarata University. Thus, universities, students, education department can proceed actions to enhance English proficiency. Follwings are some of suggestions from the researcher.

1. Conduct a proper English course before starting the academic years

2. Make it compulsory to face examinations only in English medium from first year

3. Establishing clubs for improve students' English proficiency

4. Give an importance to the General English subject in G.C.E. (A/L) examination

Suggestions for Future Research

This study was conducted under time and budget constraints, thus, it was limited only to 147 Management undergraduates of Rajarata University. Therefore, further studies can be conducted related to academic performance and English proficiency. Followings are some suggestions for future researchers who are interested in this field.

1. A study by expanding the population

2. A study to identify the impact of English proficiency on undergraduates using both state and private universities

3. A study to identify other factors which affect the academic performance

4. A study to compare the effect of English proficiency on academic performance among public and private universities

5. A study to identify the effect of external English courses on academic performance of university students

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