

The Impact of an Extensive Reading Programme on Improving English Language Skills among Prospective Teachers in National Colleges of Education

Padmini de Silva

Wayamba National College of Education

<padminidesilva2008@gmail.com>

Abstract - National Colleges of Education (NCOEs) cater to pre-service teacher education in the country. Prospective teachers recruited based on the results of General Certificate of Education – Advanced Level (GCE - A/L) to English Language course in NCOEs have to follow the two-year study course in English medium and get through all subjects at the final examination in order to be appointed as a Teacher of English. The English Language is one of the subjects in the Special Subject Area in the curriculum in NCOEs that award the National Diploma in Teaching (English Language). Consequently, once they are recruited to NCOEs, lecturers who engage in English Language Teaching (ELT) in NCOEs have to consider their English language competency level paying attention to four language skills, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Teacher trainees had not focused their attention on speaking and listening as those language skills are not evaluated at G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E.(A/L) examinations. Consequently, the prospective teachers recruited to National Colleges of Education (NCOEs) based on their performance at the above examinations face difficulty in developing speaking and listening skills whereas they are interested in reading and writing in English. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to develop all four language skills among the prospective teachers in NCOEs through an Extensive Reading Programme (ERP). The hypothesis of the research study was that a systematically planned ERP could be utilized to improve all four skills among ESL students. Related literature on extensive reading was reviewed when designing the programme. Thirty prospective teachers were selected as the sample. The ERP was conducted for three months in order to enable students to read a variety of carefully selected materials, enrich their vocabulary, be familiar with different language expressions and grasp different language structures. Teacher trainees actively engaged in the discussions and speaking and listening activities based on what they had read during the week in the session organized at the end of each week. Also, writing exercised planned

(from simple to complex) were assigned and they had completed within the week. There was a remarkable improvement in teacher trainees' language skills towards the end of the Extensive Reading Programme based on their performance in weekly sessions and the results of pre-test and post-test. Therefore, an ERP can be recommended for developing all four language skills among teacher trainees who study English.