

Course Contents of the English Language Textbook for Advance Level Students in Sri Lankan Government Schools and Their Relevance to Learners' Culture

Sumudu Embogama

Lecturer in English Language, University of the Visual and Performing Arts
sumuduembogama@gmail.com

The importance with regard to the acquisition of the English language was highlighted to a greater extent especially since the 1990s as it was crucial in maintaining open channels of communication between the Sinhala and Tamil speaking communities. The ethnic conflict that ravaged Sri Lanka for almost a decade mainly due to linguistic differences is testimony to the importance of using English when communicating with different ethnicities so that there is little room for conflicts as a result of the communication gap. Therefore, apart from the notion that the English language is a highly prestigious language which provides access to all kinds of privileges in the multi-ethnic context of Sri Lanka, it is also regarded as the language that connects our people. In such a context, the new GCE A/L English syllabus was revised in 2000. The main objective of the course was to provide students with a reasonable command of the target language in the areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing and further to help students acquire language and communicative competency so that they may be able to function effectively in contexts in which the English language is actively used. The study analyses the Advanced Level English text book used by government schools in Sri Lanka by focusing on its portrayal of local nationalities. An evaluation of the book reveals that it radically deconstructs the glorification of the WASP culture (White Anglo Saxon Protestants) by using culturally appropriate authentic materials for teaching the English language. It makes references to the learners' cultural environment, their history and traditions whereby the gap between the students' world and that of the European world perspective is minimized. The overall analysis, therefore, stresses on the extent to which the writers are aware of the pedagogical implications of bringing the "Other" to the Centre.

Key words: Culture, textbooks, Eurocentricity, national integration, Second language acquisition