

Somananda, B.L.
ELTU, University of Colombo

Paper: Equity

Developing writing competency of final year undergraduates of law

Writing, which is one of the four main skills of language learning, is an essential component in academic programmes. However, a large number of second language (L2) learners cite writing as a difficult skill to acquire. This is partly due to the nature of writing itself. Writing is a complex activity which requires a number of skills including proficiency in spelling, syntax, lexical resources, metacognitive strategies such as audience awareness and familiarity with different genres of writing.

Although it is a difficult skill to master, for undergraduates of law, developing an ability to write fluently and confidently in English is essential for academic as well as professional success. The impetus for this research was provided by what appeared to be a significant problem identified by the academic staff of the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, in terms of the second language academic writing ability of the final year undergraduates of law. The purpose of this study is to propose a theory of teaching writing by integrating the three major approaches to writing, i.e. product, process and genre approaches as well as reading and study skills in English.

A variety of research instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, tests and observation were used in order to conduct a needs analysis. The main findings of the study as well as the insights gained in a review of literature were used to design a writing skills course for the final year undergraduates of law.