

Language, Literature and “Learning”: Linking Culture and Religion
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Abstract: There is a shortage of Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka who can preach *dhamma* in English. The problem begins with their inability to communicate in English during the course of their day to day lives, leading to a lack of confidence in their ability to preach *dhamma* in English. Teaching *dhamma* to the community is the main duty of the *Sangha*, the Buddha’s disciples. Since the majority of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community are Sinhalese, the need for English in *dhamma* preaching seems distant. As a result, Sri Lanka is no longer producing monks who can disseminate *dhamma* in English. It is rare to find monks who are conversant in English as some of the great Buddhist monks like *Walpola Rahula Thero* or *Narada Thero* were. These monks helped to disseminate the teachings of the Buddha to the larger world. As a leading Buddhist country, Sri Lanka needs to equip the *Sangha* to take *dhamma* to the whole world. In order to develop the English language skills of Buddhist monks for dissemination of *dhamma*, a course was proposed at the request of monks at the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo. It has been envisaged that monks would develop their basic communicative skills first and then higher cognitive skills that are required to preach *dhamma* in English later in the course. The proposed curriculum is three-tiered, with specific objectives for each tier:

- 1) To develop the basic communication skills of *Sangha* to build confidence to speak in English
- 2) To develop skills to link the *dhamma* as a way of living to the *jathaka* stories
- 3) To improve higher order skills for preaching deep *dhamma* in English, with an overall aim of disseminating *dhamma* to other cultures in the world.

The course has Jim Cummins (1979) BICS and CALPS theory as the overarching theory while within the framework two other theories operate: the Speech Act theory (Bach and Harnish, 1979) and Deconstruction theory (Derrida, 1967).