

Ragging and Its Impact on Learning English as a Second Language; a Qualitative Study with Special Focus to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ruhuna

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Fluency in English is considered as a key component in the academic life of the university students in achieving the best results. However, English within the context of Sri Lankan government universities is not just a language as English inhibits several ideologies given by the university subculture. Thus, fluency in English of the arts undergraduates of the university is highly criticized. Therefore, with the aim of finding the root causes for the issue the data was collected from 150 students of the first and second year of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ruhuna and 30 academics were also interviewed. The findings revealed that ragging was one of the major factors, which negatively affects the language learning process. Ragging has demotivated, discouraged and depressed not only the language learners but also the language teachers. The initial negative impressions created by ragging regarding language learning has paralyzed the language learners forming an unnecessary dislike in learning English that they remain passive until they leave the university. Student and teacher interactions have also collapsed. Undergraduates with language issues prior to the university entry had encouraged ragging to control the attitudes and mentality of the students. Hence, the students were not strong enough to discard the adverse influence exercised by ragging during their course of language learning. Therefore, it is essential to control the negative influence of ragging on language learning to success the efforts of the university to produce a set of challenging and marketable graduates. It is suggested that the faculty needs to conduct a sound intensive programme, establish language empowering bodies, arrange language events and competitions, introduce new subjects focusing language skills and go for new and innovative teaching strategies.

Key words: Academic life, Ragging, University Subculture, Undergraduates, Language learning