Effectiveness of using technology to enhance the English communication skills of students in the vocational stream of newly introduced 13 years of guaranteed education program: a case study of selected schools in the Kelaniya education zone

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In Sri Lanka, the lack of knowledge and skills in English language competencies is one of the key reasons for youth unemployment. Further, youth dropping out of schools creates a youth population that lacks skills and qualifications relevant to finding decent employment. As such, the Government of Sri Lanka introduced the 13 Years of Guaranteed Education Program to address an array of issues including the above related issue among school children. This program creates a space for students to learn vocational subjects along with Business and Communication English in a technology-based setting. As such, this study aimed to understand the effectiveness of using technology in teaching English language in the vocational classroom. Based on the review of literature, it was identified that Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) can be a key resource that could be utilized to teach English for Vocational Purposes (EVP) and Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL). There are many techniques such as learner centric models that could be adapted in an EVP classroom to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning experience. The methodology was based on questionnaires and proceeded with qualitative and quantitative questions. The analysis of the data collected suggested that the program has been effective in integrating technology in the language classroom. Both students and teachers show satisfactory levels of interest and very minimal resistance to using technology in the language classroom of the 13 Years of Guaranteed Education Program. However, few ways of improving the effectiveness of using technology such as better coordinated training programs, orientation programs and restructuring of syllabi were suggested as part of this study based on the data collected. Given the small size of the sample, it is recommended to conduct an in-depth comparative study on the program in different Divisional Secretariat Divisions to obtain a better understanding on the overall effectiveness of integrating the program.

Keywords: Computer assisted language learning, English as a second language, English for specific purposes, English for vocation purposes, Vocational English as a second language