Cartoons as an Authentic Supplementary Teaching Tool in English as a Second Language Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

The present study seeks to find the students' performance towards the assigned tasks related to cartoons and their perceptions towards the use of it as an authentic, supplementary teaching tool to facilitate the process of speaking. A sample of thirty-five students was selected to involve in different tasks related to selected number of cartoons. The researcher conducted an empirical investigation by employing quantitative and qualitative research methods. Audio recordings and classroom observations were used to investigate the students' active involvement towards the assigned tasks related to cartoons and a well-structured questionnaire was employed to evaluate their perceptions towards the use of it as an authentic supplementary tool in teaching the speaking skills of ESL learners. The results of the study revealed that a majority of students actively involved in the assigned task related to cartoons. The students gave a comprehensive and controversial account of the assigned cartoons incorporating the clues given by the facilitator resulting to assure better learner motivation and participation, transforming the teaching and learning experience into an enjoyable, stimulating, and memorable experience. Furthermore, nearly 70% of students demonstrated a positive perception towards the use of cartoons in ESL classrooms as they believed it facilitates their speaking skills making the input more comprehensible and enhancing collaborative learning. Besides, they accepted that cartoons improve students' personal relationships with fellow students and promote peer learning. Based on the findings, it was concluded that cartoons can be effectively used as an authentic supplementary tool in ESL classrooms to teach speaking skills to Sri Lankan ESL learners.

INTRODUCTION

In Sri Lanka, English is considered the second language learnt by many Sri Lankans. Teaching English as a second language has been given utmost priority in the current education policy (Karunaratne,2008). Furthermore, the present education system in Sri Lanka focuses more on the knowledge and technical skills of students required for the competitive job market (De Lanerolle,1991; De Mel,2001, as cited in Karunaratne,2008). In this context, English Language Teaching (ELT) has played an impressive role in the country's development (Karunaratne,2009). It is being taught at elementary, secondary and tertiary levels. Nowadays, as a second language most urban schools used English as the sole medium of instruction to teach the curriculum. Other government schools consider English as a language to be learned separately by students (Makulloluwa,2013).

Despite the prominence given to English language yet there is a remarkable discrepancy in the proficiency level of the students from school to school and from region to region based on the factors like age, exposure and socio- economic variables (Karunaratne,2008). Having recognized the importance of English, the Department of Languages (DOL) of University of Moratuwa offers proficiency courses in English language to facilitate the students' language skills resulting to perform better in their academic activities. Students meet lecturers once a week and each session lasts for three hours. Each student is exposed to 45 hours of classroom instruction during the 15-week semester, which is inadequate. The National Education Commission (2003) justifies the fact that although English has been labelled as a compulsory second language from Grade 3 onwards the confinement of English to a one period a day in school would not provide ample exposure for students to communicate effectively in relevant contexts.

The present study focuses on the Faculty of Architecture of the UoM, where the medium of instruction is in English only. The majority of the undergraduates, especially rural students belong to the non-speaking English background; whose oral proficiency is not adequate enough to carry on their studies in English medium. Therefore, they feel stressed out to pursue their higher studies in English language and at the same time they feel that they have been trapped in this education system as they have difficulty in following the degree programme in English medium. Besides, the current teaching practices implemented in Sri Lankan rural schools

rarely comply with the communicative needs of learners'. This sort of a background, therefore prevents students from engaging in an effective and accurate conversation (Samaranayake,2016).

As a language teacher, I often feel that the existing teaching methods are inadequate to deal with some of the aspects of communicative needs of the learners. Nevertheless, an innovative and resourceful teacher can break this mechanical cycle of teaching incorporating innovative teaching strategies in ESL classrooms (Thakur,2015). Among these strategies, using cartoons as an authentic supplementary tool would be an innovative teaching strategy to be implemented in ESL classrooms. A cartoon is a graphic media containing interpretative pictures using symbols to create a brief message and quickly change an attitude towards people, situations or specific events (Amrizal,2015). Since, there is a dearth of research studies pertaining to the use of cartoons in the Sri Lankan context It has been felt important to explore the possibilities of the implementation of cartoons in the tertiary level of education.

Purpose of the Study

The present study seeks to identify the students' active involvement towards the assigned tasks related to cartoons and their perceptions towards the use of it as an authentic supplementary tool in teaching speaking skills to ESL learners.

Research Questions

The following two research questions were formulated for this study.
1) How students actively perform the assigned tasks related to cartoons in ESL classrooms?
2) What are students' perceptions towards the use of cartoons as an authentic supplementary tool to teach speaking skills in ESL classrooms?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to Cartoons

Thakur (2015) defines cartoons as "drawings that exaggerate some physical feature, action, or quality of a person or thing depicted" (p.4). Cartoons can be used as a teaching tool to improve the language skills of students and transfer human emotions, values and ethics to influence the thinking pattern of masses. Ziegler (1998) further states that cartoons exclusively possess the ability to explore social and political issues in contemporary society and they are rich enough to reveal the discrepancy between perception and reality of an identified or exaggerated issue (Witkin,1999).

Pedagogical Value of Cartoons

Thakur (2015) claims that the excessive amount of information packed in a picture create a solid platform for students to present, discuss and interpret one's viewpoint logically. This sort of activity in ESL classrooms break the monotony

and the stress of the classroom and promote critical thinking of students. The use of cartoons is one important way to ensure learner motivation and participation. An imaginative and resourceful teacher can work wonders with the help of cartoons. Then, why not bring the power of cartoons, the strength of their images and the force of their messages into our classrooms.

Several studies have focused on the pedagogical value of cartoons as an authentic teaching tool in ESL/EFL classrooms. Clark (2000) emphasized that the cartoons possess the capacity to grab the attention of students by presenting the information in a stress free atmosphere. This sort of a background created through cartoons has the potential to activate thinking skills and promote discussion skills of students. On the other hand, a study conducted by Doring (2002) on the impact of cartoons on students' learning confirmed the fact that the students who had ample exposure to cartoons responded effectively in diverse discussions. These students displayed a high degree of self -confidence mainly due to the low affective filter environment created through the incorporation of cartoons in classroom. The activities related to cartoons can be employed individually, in pairs, small groups and even in large classes. According to Bahrani & Soltani (2011) and Smith (1993) the visual impact of cartoons, captions and word clues persuade the learners to respond in a better way irrespective of their age, background or proficiency level. The fun, satire and the ethical or moral message interwoven in cartoons persuade the students to enjoy the tasks related to cartoons (Patil,1996).

Benefits of Cartoons in Classrooms

A number of studies have revealed the benefits gained by students after exposing themselves to the use of cartoons in their respective classrooms. Van Wyk (2011) states that the sessions related to cartoons are very interactive and students get an opportunity to discuss and share their opinion with their fellow students. The students' positive response rate eventually leads to refine and develop their own way of learning, understanding and higher order cognitive skills. Even Kroehnert (1999), reassures the fact that most of the tasks woven around cartoons are of great assistance to improve the lateral thinking, creativity, and to break down any preconceived stereotypes possess in the society.

Bahrani and Soltani (2011) commented that the incorporation of cartoons in classrooms promote understanding, attitudes, productivity, creativity and motivation of students towards learning. Additionally, activities related to cartoons create a stress free, relaxing atmosphere and enhance the relationship between teacher and student. The most notable feature is that cartoons encourage low proficiency level learners to get involved in group discussions with self-confidence which in turn resulting to promote a high level of involvement among learners. This strategy enables the students who are very reluctant to converse in English to express their ideas without any hesitation based on the clues and pictures depicted in cartoons.

When looking at all these studies, it is clear that a large number of past surveys focus mainly on students' perceptions

and pedagogical value of cartoons in ESL/EFL classrooms. Moreover, apart from Thakur's (2015) suggestive study on how cartoons can be effectively implemented in classrooms to ensure a positive teaching learning process a little research has been done focusing mainly on the performance or active involvement of students related to use of cartoons in EFL and Sri Lankan ESL classrooms. It is obvious there is a need to research this phenomenon in the Srilankan university context as the attempt would yield many feasible implications in ELT classrooms.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher conducted an empirical investigation by employing quantitative and qualitative research methods. Audio recordings and classroom observations were used to investigate the students' active involvement towards the assigned tasks related to cartoons and a well-structured questionnaire was employed to evaluate their perceptions towards the use of it as an authentic supplementary tool in teaching the speaking skills of ESL learners.

Sampling

Thirty-five first year students attached to the Department of Town and Country Planning of the Faculty of Architecture were identified for the research study. The sampling consisted of 31 students, who spoke Sinhala as a first language while 04 students spoke Tamil. These participants are from Colombo, Jaffna, Kurunegala, Galle, Kandy and Kalutara districts. They follow English as a compulsory proficiency course during their first year apart from the core subjects.

Research Instruments

Past surveys related to different types of cartoons were studied in detail to design research instruments of the above study. A likert type scale questionnaire was formulated to rate the perception of students in terms of the use of cartoons as a teaching tool. This questionnaire was designed based on the inputs received from Chin Su and Liang's (2014) questionnaire on animated cartoons and students' responses drawn from Van Wyk's (2011) interviews. The scale of the questionnaire was based on a 5-point Likert-scale, as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Apart from that, audio recordings were transcribed using google doc voice typing strategy related to the performance of students and the researcher's classroom observations were employed to record and analyse the active involvement of students in the assigned tasks related to cartoons.

Selection of Cartoons

Especially, the facilitator has to be mindful in selecting and implementing cartoons as a teaching activity in class. It is quite evident that facilitators encounter diverse groups of students in ESL classrooms. This diversity will emerge as cultural or ethnic differences, religious beliefs, personality traits and knowledge levels. In this context, the element of humour that is packed in cartoons might be interpreted in a racist or sexist point of view or perceived as a sense of ridicule or sarcasm. These seven cartoons were precisely and unbiasedly picked after carefully browsing through several printed Sri Lankan English newspapers like, "Daily News", "Daily Mirror" and social media like "Facebook". The current political, social and economic issues in Sri Lankan society are clearly manifested in these selected set of cartoons. These cartoons were selected based on the element of humour, language clues and the message conveyed to the society. Furthermore, I purposely selected a few cartoons that clearly demonstrate the present political status of Sri Lanka to create a platform for students to express, share, discuss and rebut their perception or controversial opinion on a selected cartoon. None of the selected cartoons were directed towards promoting the facilitator's point of view or to feel any individual in the class offended through any sort of misunderstanding. Lochrie (1992) further contends the fact that cartoons need to be carefully selected and used in an appropriate context to bring forward the humour that can be incorporated in a teaching setting. A few tasks related to cartoons in class were practiced prior to the implementation of the actual task. These practice sessions were of great support to utilize the cartoons productively in ESL classrooms.

Procedure

First of all, M.D Weerarathne's cartoon (Figure 1) depicting the plight of civilians trapped in the escalating cost of living was displayed on the screen and students were asked to comment or express their opinion on the displayed cartoon. This brainstorming session was of great assistance for students to form a concrete idea on the actual task they are going to perform.

After that, the class was randomly divided into seven groups, each group comprising 5 members. The selected cartoons were assigned to each group with necessary guidelines related to cartoons. Some of the guidelines were formulated based on the tasks on cartoons suggested by Thakur (2015) giving much focus on the improvement of English language skills. Thus, I precisely picked the tasks related to speaking skills, adapted and included those as guidelines to facilitate the speaking process of the target sample. I instructed the appointed group leaders to divide the tasks based on the guidelines among group members to avoid free riding in groups. Then, each group was asked to express their opinion in the form of a speech including the given clues/guidelines where necessary.

- What does the cartoon mean?
- What kind of a message does it convey?
- Do you agree/disagree with the cartoonist's opinion?
- What techniques are used to make it funny?
- Do they use irony or slap stick humour?
- Are political figures made fun of?
- Write a caption on your own for the assigned cartoon.

The speeches delivered by each group were carefully observed and recorded for further analysis. Finally, a likert type scale questionnaire was distributed to evaluate the perception of students with regard to the use of cartoons as a teaching aid to teach speaking skills for ESL students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

RQ 01- How Students Actively Perform the Assigned Tasks Related to Cartoons in ESl Classrooms?

After giving necessary instructions related to the task I observed how students actively involved in the assigned task. The most prominent aspect I witnessed was the collaborative learning fostered among group members of each group. The group leader divided the task equally among group members. Especially, low proficiency learners displayed a high level of involvement in these discussions. They tend to speak in English during group discussions. Furthermore, I witnessed how low proficiency level learners got benefitted from the high proficiency level learners. They exchanged opinions with "good ones" and learned to ask and receive help from the group members. Bahrani and Soltani (2011) asserts the above mentioned fact stating that cartoons could be resourcefully utilized in classrooms to improve the language aspects of low proficiency learners as well as to promote their active involvement in group discussions.

Apart from that, during the implementation of the tasks related to cartoons I observed how students were more active and focused on the assigned tasks. They were highly motivated to participate in group discussions and presentations related to cartoons. Students' interpretation of political cartoons was creative and interesting. Comparably, a study conducted by Doring (2002) on the impact of cartoons on students' learning reiterated the fact that the students who had ample exposure to cartoons responded effectively in diverse discussions. When listening to their speeches, I felt that they had obtained the maximum advantage out of the visual impact and the word clues mentioned in the cartoon. This echoes in the studies of Bahrani & Soltani (2011) and Smith (1993) who discovered the visual impact of cartoons, the provided captions and word clues were of great assistance for students to respond in a better way irrespective of their age, background or proficiency level. Besides, the given guidelines were of great support for students to organize their ideas effectively in delivering the speech. Next, I would like to mention some key excerpts from selected two oral presentations.

1. "I have named that cartoon (Figure 2) as future of university students. Actually, by looking at this cartoon I can identify that it is about ragging in universities. So, the cartoonist tries to convey a message like ragging in universities is a serious case to be concerned and it should be abolished. I totally agree with the cartoonist's opinion. Because students are going through so many hard work and hard time to come to a university. But, when they came to the university they have to face lot of terrible situations to get adapted to the university because of ragging. You all can see, how the cartoonist has drawn the physical features of a victimized student to highlight the negative impact of ragging underwent by freshers. The cartoon highlights how the student climbs the ladder of education by passing various turning points in the journey of education without any hurdles. But, when he enters the higher education he comes across a monster who is getting ready to gulp him or compel him to leave the university. The word clues given here are really helpful for the readers to understand the message. So, I think the cartoonist has given the idea that the society needs to think about this issue further".

2. "I totally agree with the cartoonist's opinion. This is a political cartoon This cartoon (Figure 3) represents the confused mentality of a JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) party member. Because JVP has begun their journey under the socialism principles to create equitable society and achieve fairness for everyone in the society. But, today with the open economy all these socialism principles of the party have been changed. Most of the politicians are narrow minded and they have changed their party principles into a capitalism perspective. Therefore, their supporters haven't clear idea about the political vision of their party. Awantha Artigala is talented enough to convey this message through a simple map. This map symbolizes how JVP is trapped in their own political theories. You all can see, the socialism concept is depicted in the map through the phrase "you are here". But, the member of the bell party is totally confused on which route to be taken. The irony of this cartoon is that the JVP who is always against socialism and criticizing the principles of fascism and capitalism is confused on which political principal to follow. I must say the words used by the cartoonist are really helpful to understand the irony behind the cartoon. The words like socialism, capitalism and fascism provide a clue for the readers to connect and build the storyline in the cartoon".
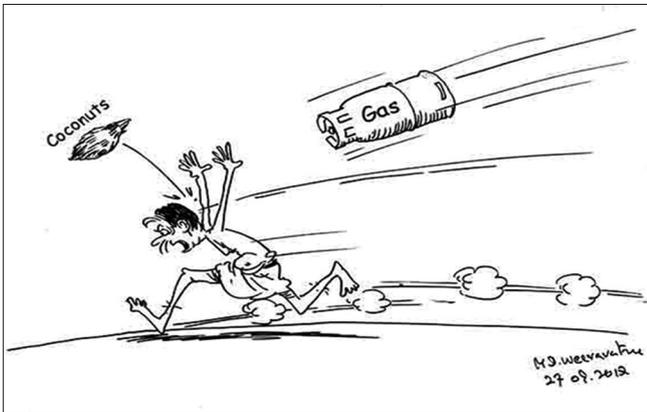
Application of Bloom's taxonomy in cartoons

The Bloom's taxonomy is hierarchical and divided into six levels: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, Create. A student needs to possess a required knowledge and skills at the lower levels to learn at the higher level. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to guide students from Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) to Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). The Bloom's taxonomy is used most frequently by educators in preparing tests, designing learning outcomes and increasing the cognitive levels of activity (Cullinane,2009).
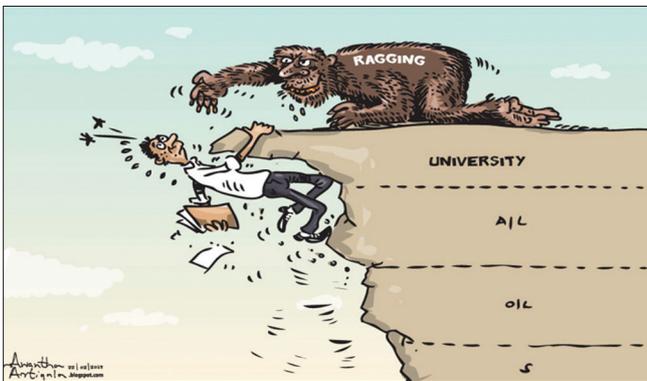
I made use of the Bloom's taxonomy (Figure 4) to direct the students from LOTS to HOTS. It is a quite clear fact that students are reluctant and sometimes they find it difficult to apply their higher order thinking skills at the very outset to present an authentic, factual and a well-structured opinion. The audio transcripts and the classroom observations of the assigned cartoons highlight how students have improved from LOTS to HOTS.

At the very outset, the brainstorming session I implemented for a selected cartoon helped the students to retrieve the relevant knowledge from their long term memory. They were trying to recall and list down the points related to the given cartoons. I observed how they underlined the pictures and captions on cartoon to relate the story with the present political scenario. Then, gradually I directed the students to
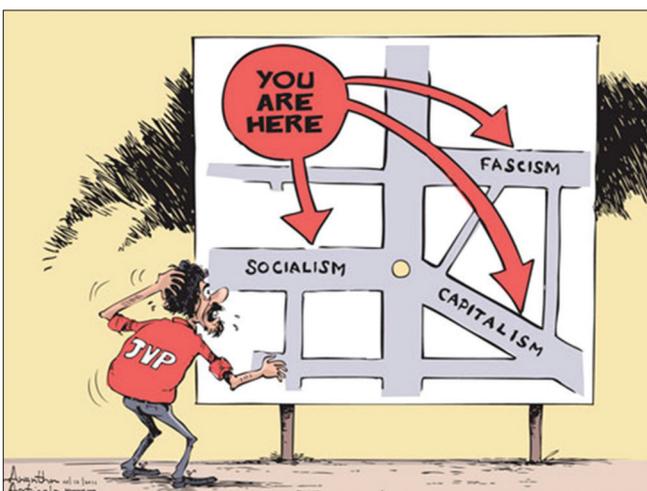
the next step of Bloom's taxonomy, "Understand". Students displayed a great tendency of constructing meaning from the written and graphic communication. Then, they started to recognize and discuss the features of the cartoon and initiate a discussion within the group members. The next level of Bloom's taxonomy is "Application"; the first level of HOTS. In this level students could move one step beyond

Figure 1. Cartoon on escalating cost of living
Source: https://blog.dzone.lk/tag/cartoon-mdweerarathna

Figure 2. Cartoon on university ragging
Source: http://life.dailymirror.lk/article/youth/The-ragging-culture-in-Sri-Lanka-s-education-system/133/16653

Figure 3. Cartoon on the unstable political ideology of JVP
Source: http://awanthaartigala.blogspot.com/2011/12

the explanation. The group discussions facilitate the students to interpret the message conveyed through cartoons. Having applied the information, they have identified students spontaneously moved to the next level of HOTS; "Analysis". The set of guidelines given by the lecturer prompted the students to analyze each and every section precisely to present a complete and concrete interpretation (Refer audio text transcripts). Moreover, students compared and contrasted the diverse opinions of their colleagues centered around the cartoon. Finally, all groups composed their own version of a well-balanced interpretation for each assigned cartoon. Two groups were talented enough to develop their own version of cartoons related to the interpretation of cartoons on university ragging and unstable political ideology of JVP party.

When comparing students' version of cartoons with the drawings of the cartoonist it is quite clear that students have gone one step beyond their stereotypical thinking process to unveil the prevailing social and political issues. The students' version on university ragging (Figure 05) clearly identifies the difference between the perceived and real notion of university life in contrast, the cartoonist's version focuses only on one aspect; so called initiation ritual or ragging of university life. Witkin (1999) precisely justifies this fact stating cartoons possess the ability to create a discrepancy between perception and reality of an identified or exaggerated issue. Adding on to this, the first part of the drawing emphasizes the perceived mindset of a fresher who enters the university possessing heaps of expectations about the degree and the most exciting academic journey they are going to experience whereas, the second part depicts how this perceived notion of a fresher gets shattered in real life due to extreme forms of ragging. When looking at the second cartoon "unstable political ideology of JVP" (Figure 6) it is quite obvious students have viewed the issue in a new and unusual perspective. Generally, this ideological shift of political parties is brought forward by many cartoonists in various contexts. Yet, the confused mentality of masses is rarely depicted through cartoons. Thus, students have clearly sketched how this unstable political ideology of the JVP party has led the JVP supporter to be utter confused and prevent the individual from selecting the most appropriate political ideology. All in all, it is proven that most of the tasks woven around cartoons are of great assistance to improve the lateral thinking, creativity, and to break down any preconceived stereotypes possess in the society (Kroehnert,1999).

The above findings related to the performance of students in ESL classroom clearly reinforce the role played by cartoons to direct students from LOTS to HOTS. Delineating this further, Clark (2000) confirms that application of cartoons in classrooms create a stress free atmosphere, resulting to activate higher order thinking skills; cognitive skills and discussion skills.

RQ 02- What are Students' Perceptions Towards the use of Cartoons as an Authentic Supplementary Tool to Teach Speaking Skills in ESL Classrooms?

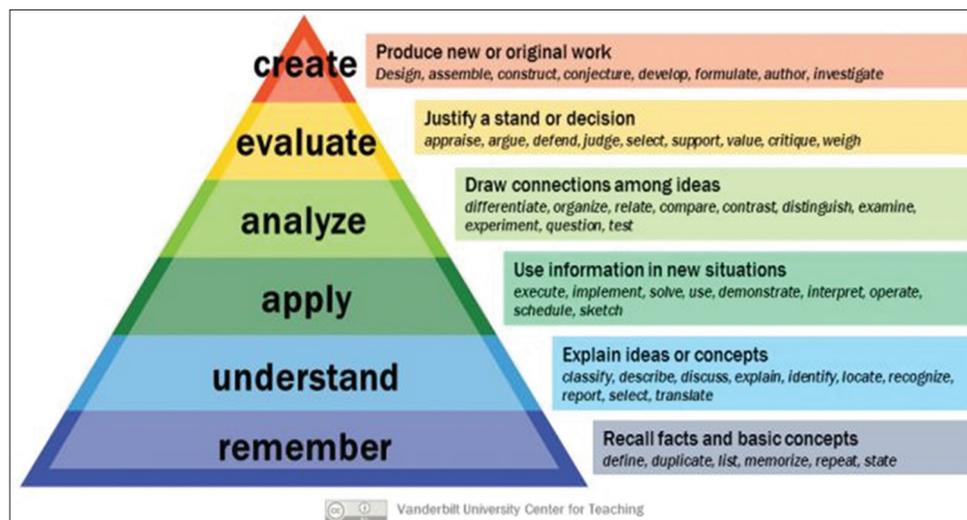In sum, the following data showed students' perceptions towards the use of cartoons in ESL classrooms.

Figure 4. Bloom's Taxonomy
Taken from: https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/

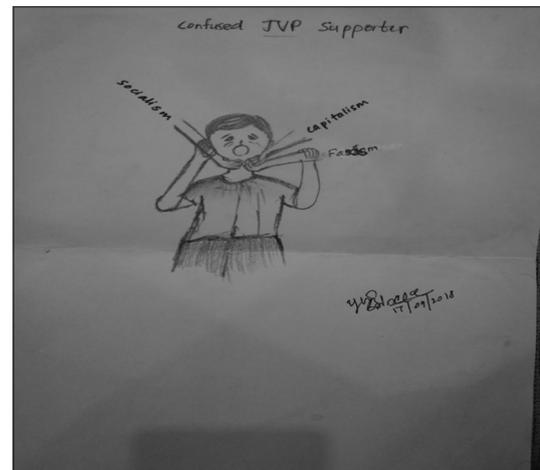**Figure 5.** Students' version on University ragging

Figure 6. Students' version on unstable political ideology of JVP

Analysis - Learning attitude questionnaire

The following Table 1 clearly analyzes the number of responses obtained by each statement related to the likert type scale questionnaire.

The results of the statement 01 (Figure 7) could be interpreted quite clearly as a strong majority of the participants agreed that the use of cartons in ESL classrooms increased students' interest towards English speaking. Out of the 35 respondents 27 respondents (77%) agreed over this statement versus three (9%) had disagreed with this statement bringing forward the fact use of cartoons in ESL classrooms hardly increase the interest towards English speaking.

Statement 2, (Figure 8)" I could improve my vocabulary related to the assigned cartoon when drafting the speech" was answered by 35 students. 18 students strongly agreed with this statement. As a percentage it is 51%. 31.1% students agreed with the above statement. According to the results only three respondents (9%) disagreed with the statement confirming the fact that the cartoon related activity in classroom rarely improve students' vocabulary.

Third statement (Figure 9) has got the least percentage 69% with regard to the positive response rate of the selected sample.24 students agreed that the cartoon related activity motivated the students to participate in the group discussions related to cartoons versus four students (11%) took a neutral position, while seven persons (20%) responded with the students being not motivated to participate in the group discussions related to cartoons.

The results of the statement 4 (Figure 10) have obtained the highest percentage of 88% (31 students) in comparison with the positive response rate of the remaining statements. Four respondents (12%) took a neutral opinion in terms of statement 4. It is noteworthy to mention that none of the respondents have picked the "disagree" and "Strongly disagree" categories to respond the above statement.

The 5th statement (Figure 11) "This cartoon related activity promoted class discussions, collaborative learning and individual accountability" has obtained a percentage of 85%. 30 students agreed and five students mentioned that this cartoon related activity hardly promoted class discus-
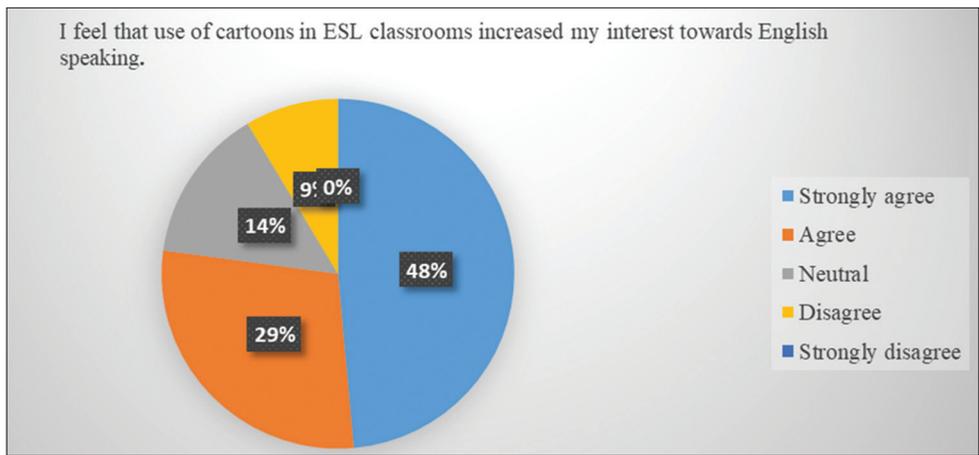
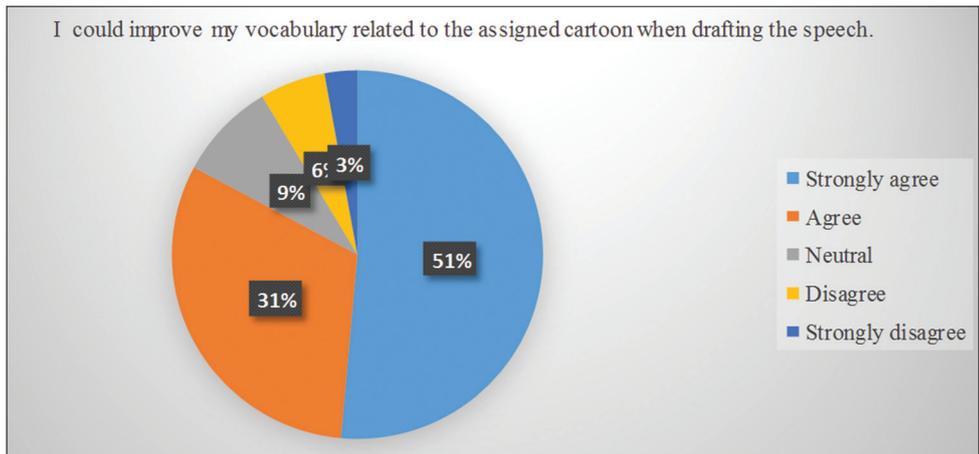**Figure 7.** Learning attitude questionnaire - Statement 01

Figure 8. Learning attitude questionnaire - Statement 02
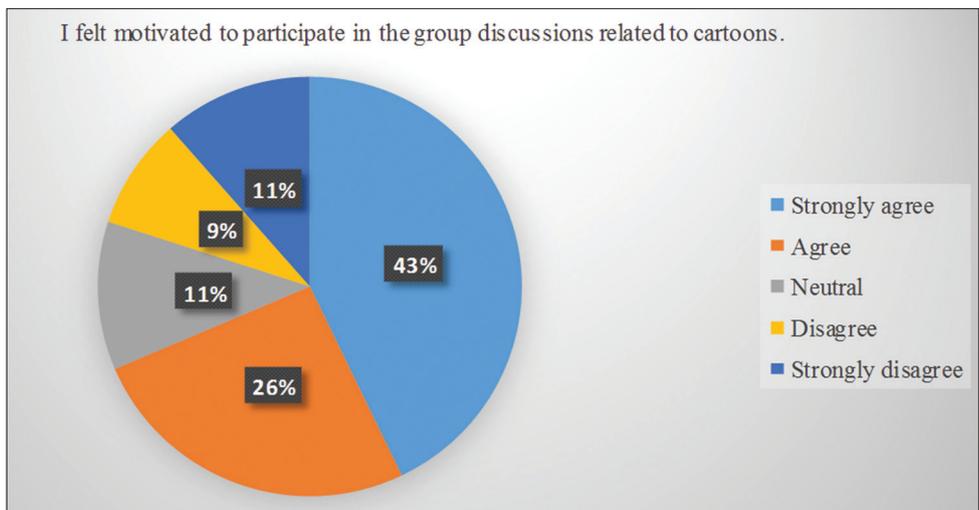

Figure 9. Learning attitude questionnaire - Statement 03

sions, collaborative learning and individual accountability. It is important to state that this is the only statement in which none of the respondents have picked the neutral category to respond the statement.

71% respondents agreed with the 6th statement (Figure 12) and only 9% showed their disagreement towards the above statement. 07 students were possessing a neutral opinion in

terms of the above statement. It is noteworthy factor to mention that the 6th statement recorded the highest number of neutral responses which is 20% as a percentage in comparison with the neutral responses of the rest of the statements.

The results of the learning attitude questionnaire clearly reinforce that a majority of students yield a number of positive benefits involving in this cartoon activity resulting changes

Table 1. Students' attitudes towards use of cartoons in ESL classrooms

#	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		5	4	3	2	1
1	I feel that use of cartoons in ESL classrooms increased my interest towards English speaking	17	10	5	3	0
2	I could improve my vocabulary related to the assigned cartoon when drafting the speech	18	11	3	2	1
3	I felt motivated to participate in the group discussions related to cartoons	15	9	4	3	4
4	This cartoon related activity improved personal relationships and interactions with other group members	20	11	4	0	0
5	This cartoon related activity promoted class discussions, collaborative learning & individual accountability	18	12	0	3	2
6	I feel that use of cartoons in ESL classrooms improved my communication skills and creativity skills	10	15	7	2	1
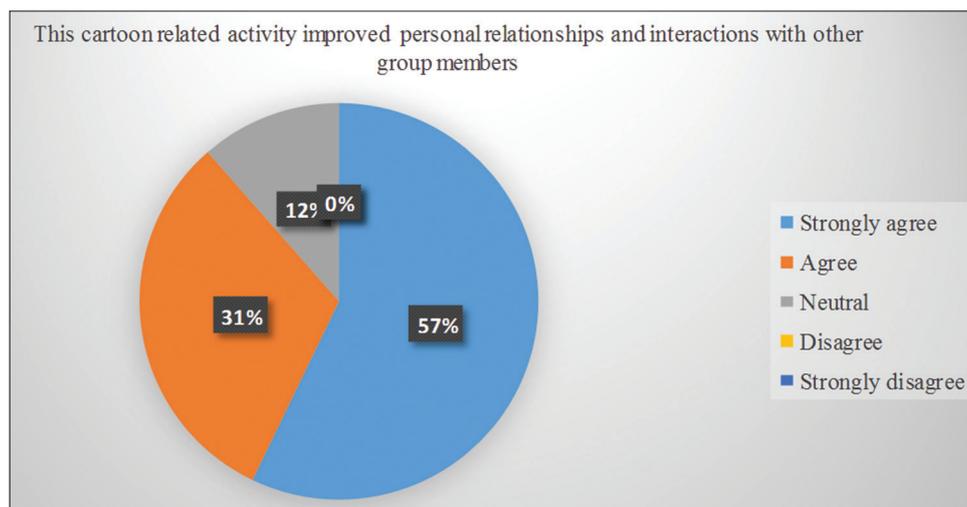
Figure 10. Learning attitude questionnaire - Statement 04

in student behavior. Furthermore, respondents mentioned in the informal class discussions held after the completion of the class activity related to cartoons that the application of cartoons in ESL classrooms enabled students to acquire and improve their social skills. These social skills can be labelled as interpersonal situations where students got the opportunity to bargain, persuade, collect and categorize information in a manner that facilitate decision making, competition, cooperation and command. Some of the groups mentioned that the feedback received from rest of the group members during group discussions provided a positive reinforcement for working with others to accomplish the goal of the assigned activity. Similarly, Van Wyk (2011) justifies that the sessions related to cartoons were very interactive and students got an opportunity to discuss and share their opinion with their fellow students. Adding on to this, Bahrani and Soltani (2011) commented that the incorporation of cartoons in classrooms promote understanding, attitudes, productivity, creativity and motivation of students towards learning.

Moreover, these respondents further stated that the peer interaction these group members experienced within one's learning group enabled in promoting high quality thinking through guidance and support of group members. Research on peer learning (Cohen,1994; O'Donnell and King,1999; Webb and Palinscar,1996) have clearly demonstrated the interaction between and among the group learners influences one's cognitive activity resulting for a better learning process.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to identify the students' active involvement towards the assigned tasks related to cartoons and their perceptions towards the use of it as an authentic supplementary tool to facilitate the process of speaking. A quantitative and qualitative research method was employed to investigate the above purpose of the study. Audio recordings of the students and classroom observations clearly depict the active involvement of students towards the assigned tasks related to cartoons. A majority of students actively involved in group discussions related to the assigned cartoon. Low proficiency learners received immense benefit from high proficiency learners
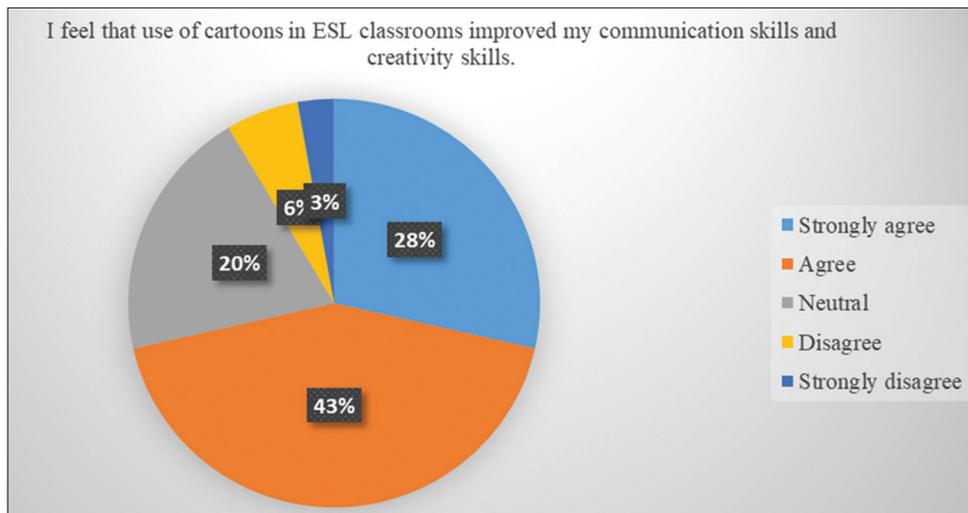
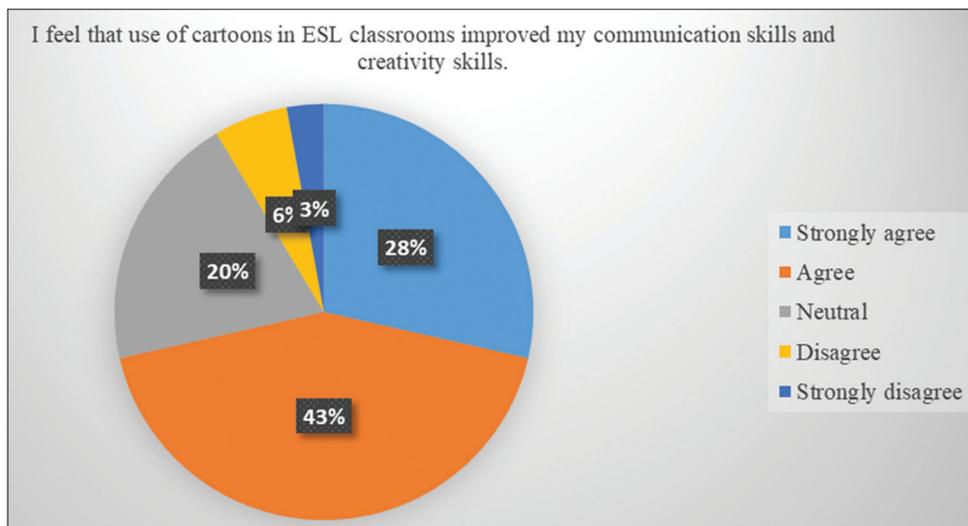**Figure 11.** Learning attitude questionnaire - Statement 05

Figure 12. Learning attitude questionnaire - Statement 06

when clarifying matters of doubt. In addition, students' interpretation of the political cartoons was creative and interesting. Some of the groups went into the extent of creating their own captions/cartoons for the given theme of the assigned cartoon.

The overall percentages emanating from the likert type scale questionnaire, provides a clear implication on the positive perception of a majority of students towards use of cartoons as an authentic supplementary tool in teaching speaking skills in ESL classrooms. Further, discussions reported that cartoons as a teaching tool positively enhanced constructive learning, cooperative and collaborative learning amongst peers. Students mentioned that the cartoon related speaking activity improved their personal relationships such as positive interdependence, individual accountability, personal interaction and socialization with fellow students through mutual support. In conclusion, this study concurs the fact that cartoons can be productively incorporated as an authentic supplementary tool in ESL classrooms to teach speaking skills to Sri Lankan ESL learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made on the basis of the reported results and the discussion on the use of cartoons in ESL classrooms.

1) Respondents noted that use of cartoons in ESL classrooms needs to be contextualized in relationship to their core subject fields. For instance, cartoons can be used as a tool to teach some difficult concepts related to town planning concepts and models of urban planning.

2) Cartoons can be used to initiate classroom discussions, debates, role playing, dialogues and essay writing to promote a deeper level of engagement with issues via 'critical thinking'. For example, when students get exposed to wider themes such as, unemployment, youth unrest, pitfalls in current education system these individuals tend to apply their reflective thinking to gather, interpret and evaluate information in order to formulate an informed opinion or judgment on cartoons.

3) Students need to be exposed to extended academic opportunities by instructing them to draw a cartoon based on their own issue. For example, stress, semester work-

load, university ragging and so on. Moreover, these extended tasks can be implemented as a continuous assessment to check whether the learners have achieved the outcomes of the proposed continuous assessment.

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