

# **Learner Beliefs and Expectations: A Case Study of English Language Usage in a Sri Lankan University**

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Learner beliefs and expectations of using a language make an individual a confident user of that language. It has been investigated that efficacy beliefs and expectations influence performance (Bandura, 1986; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Multon, Brown & Lent, 1991; Schunk, 1995), particularly, in relation to the English language usage. Efficacy beliefs and expectations are considered to be having a larger impact on the academic performance of university students. The transition from school where most of the students learnt in their mother tongue to the university where the medium of instruction is usually English except for a few degree programmes in Humanities and Fine Arts (Navas, 2016), has made the life of undergraduates far more complex. In such situations, the beliefs and expectations about the usage of the English language help undergraduates survive and progress in their chosen field of study as well as in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. This study took the shape of a case study and was established in a strong qualitative epistemological position. Two undergraduates from each of the four Faculties: Medicine, Engineering, Management Social Sciences & Humanities and Law from a Sri Lankan university were considered as the sources of information from whom the data were gathered through in-depth interviews. The data were analyzed using thematic approach.

Five major themes; adjusting to the new environment, teacher expectations on student performance, determination & willpower, emulating role models and transforming mistakes into learning opportunities emerged from the data analysis. The overall results indicated that the efficacy beliefs in performing well in English as well as in other modules and the future expectations of using English assisted all respondents irrespective of their field of study and the Faculties. The inferences indicated that efficacy beliefs and future expectations of undergraduates play a major role in adjusting to the university environment, enhancing the level of confidence to use English and in performing well in English at oral and written examinations.

**Key words:** *Learner beliefs, Expectations, English as a Second Language, University context*