

# **Progress Report – the First Seminar in English Conducted for the Students Sitting for the Pirivena Final Examination - 2015**

5/12/2015

**English Literary Association  
Department of English  
Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka**



**Activating  
Leadership**

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Objectives
3. The First Seminar in English
4. Benefits
  - To the University
  - To the Students
  - To the *Pirivena*
5. Next Step
6. Steering team
7. Memories in Print
8. Note of gratitude

## **Seminar in English for the Students Sitting for the *Pirivena* Final Examination – 2015**

### **Introduction**

An English seminar was organized by the English Literary Association in collaboration with the Department of English on the 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2015. The seminar targeted the *Pirivena* students who are sitting for the *Pirivena* final examination in late December, 2015.

The suggestion to organize a seminar to revise important English lessons in English grammar and literature was made by the students of the English Literary Association (ELA). Even though such seminars on various subjects relevant to the *Pirivena* Final Examination are conducted by the student unions of some other universities, our university has not focused on such so far. Since, the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka prioritizes the education of the Bhikkus, the students of the ELA emphasized the importance of conducting a seminar as an aid for the *Pirivena* students who are sitting for the *Pirivena* Final examination this year.

Moreover, the seminar was also organized to provide the third year students who are following English as a main subject under the Department of English with an opportunity to practice the second language teaching skills. Thus, the practical segment of ENGL 32033– Teaching English as a Second Language was also covered through the seminar.

### **Objectives**

This seminar was organized,

- to aid the *Pirivena* students sitting for the *Pirivena* Final Examination this year in their English paper
- to make English an interesting subject for the *Pirivena* students
- to train the students to answer the questions on English Literature section of the examination paper well as English literature is largely ignored in the *Pirivena* education
- to complete the practical aspect relevant to the ENGL 32033- Second Language Learning and Teaching
- to enhance the organizing, leadership and teaching skills of the undergraduates
- to make an initiative for the seminars of this nature which are to be organized by the ELA and the Department of English every year

## The First Seminar in English

The seminar to cover up certain important English grammar and literature lessons relevant to the *Pirivena* Final English syllabus was conducted on the 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2015 from 8.30 am to 5 pm at the Library Auditorium of the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka. Grade 5 students from eight *Pirivenas*; Sri Bodhi Vihara Pirivena-Nugegoda, Vidya Shanthi Maha Pirivena-Piliyandala, Sri Pagnnodaya Pirivena-Nugegoda, Sri Negroda Pirivena-Kosgama, Sri Poorvarama Dharma Vijaya Pirivena-Kalutara South, Thakshila Maha Pirivena-Kaduwela, Sri Sumanananda Pirivena-Mulleriyawa and Sri Pagnnananda Pirivena, Maharagama participated in the seminar.

The lesson material was prepared by the third year students following English as a main subject in the university, practically applying the methods of lesson material preparation they studied in ENGL 32033- Second Language Learning and Teaching paper. The lessons were planned and handouts were prepared under the strict guidance of Ms. M.N.S. Dilani (Lecturer, Probationary). A revision paper was also set by closely examining the *Pirivena* Final Examination papers of the past five years with the support and guidance of Ms. Tharangi Madhushika Sirisena (Lecturer, Temporary). Three Organizing Committees of students were formed for the arrangements of the logistics, food, and registration and team leaders were appointed for each committee including an overall leader who was responsible for planning the whole event.

While revision was done on some main grammar lessons, the students were given some exercises which were corrected by the undergraduates, especially those who are following English as a main subject in both second year first and second semesters. Thus, their errors were pointed out and discussed the correct usages. The students were taught some English literary poems in their text books, based on which questions had been set in all the past papers but had been largely ignored in their *Pirivena* English classes. So the students were taught these poems effectively using illustrations and videos.

The last session of the seminar was a counseling lecture by Mr. S.A. Sunil, the Director of Counseling at the National Institute of Education, Maharagama. The students found the session inspirational and the counselor was of immense help for them as he guided them well in the questions posed by the students during the Question and Answer session, mostly about the learning habits, preparation for the exam, answering the paper, etc.

The students enjoyed the seminar other than learning English as some ice-breakers were also organized by the organizing committee. The ice-breakers were also related to English lessons so the students spoke and wrote in English even during the relaxing times.

The organizers had arranged refreshments and lunch for the *Pirivena* students.

The feedback given by the participated students was encouraging for the undergraduates who organized this event. At the closure of the seminar, a student from Sri Poorvarama Dharma

Vijaya Pirivena-Kalutara South Rev. Kaluthara Sumangala Thero, made a speech and thanked the organizers for organizing such an important and effective seminar in English. He emphasized on the importance of having the seminar in the university premises as it became a motivating factor for the students who wish university entrance and he also was firmly determined to enter a university one day.

## **Benefits**

### **a. To the university**

This seminar in English for the students doing the *Pirivena* Final Examination this year (2015), marked an initiative taken by the Department of English for the enhancement of the Bhikku education in Sri Lanka. Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka, with its vision to be the best Buddhist University in the world has prioritized the education for the Bhikkus. In order to be successful in this vision, the undergraduate Bhikkus in the university as a major constituent of the success should be skilful and visionary. To attract such a group of young Bhikkus, the *Pirivena* system of Sri Lanka has to be supported in creating a competent and well qualified monk for the university education. This seminar thus focused on one consequential examination conducted for the *Pirivena* students to be qualified for GCE A/L.

By initiating seminars of this kind, the Department of English expects to comply with the mission of the university; to disseminate the Dhamma worldwide. These workshops extend the opportunities for the internal students to enhance their fluency in English, thereby making the students equipped with needed language skills to engage in the Dhamma dissemination services. Moreover, on the one hand, the seminar demonstrates our contribution to national education; on the other hand contribution to enhance the *Pirivena* education means contributing to preserve Buddhism and Buddhist education.

### **b. To the students**

The seminar provided the undergraduates with the opportunity to get multiple soft skills such as event planning, coordination, communication, leadership and teamwork improved. Further, qualities such as collaboration, adaptability, problem-solving, critical observation, etc., which are needed for their personality development as monks of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are enhanced through the seminars of this nature. Moreover, the students

experienced the exact procedure of the second language teaching in lesson material preparation, teaching and lesson planning. The undergraduates enjoyed their participation in the seminar and have already made plans to conduct a similar seminar next year as well.

**c. To the *Pirivena***

Research on the English education of the *Pirivenas* shows that English receives step-motherly treatments in the *Pirivenas* and thus it has been immensely neglected. Thus, the undergraduates share many bad experiences with regard to this situation at their respective *Pirivenas*. Thus, in the seminar, revision was done on most of the important grammar lessons and the students enthusiastically learnt them. Their feedback shows that they were motivated to see the undergraduates, who were mostly monks talking in English. Through the ice-breaking games, the students were also made to talk in English and this was a new experience for them as in the *Pirivenas* they are not exposed to English speaking environments.

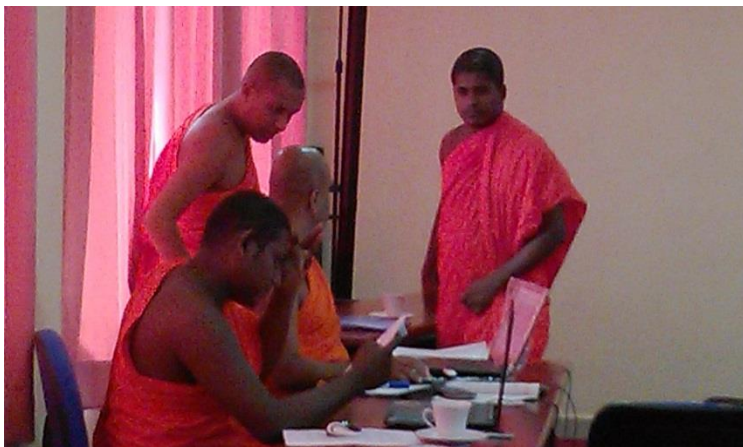
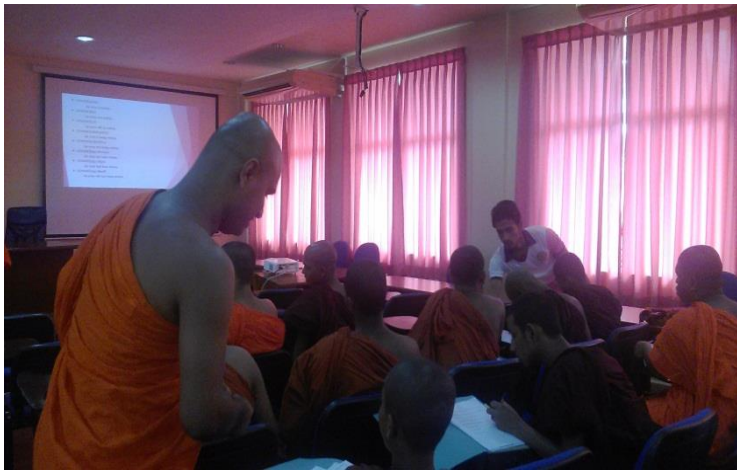
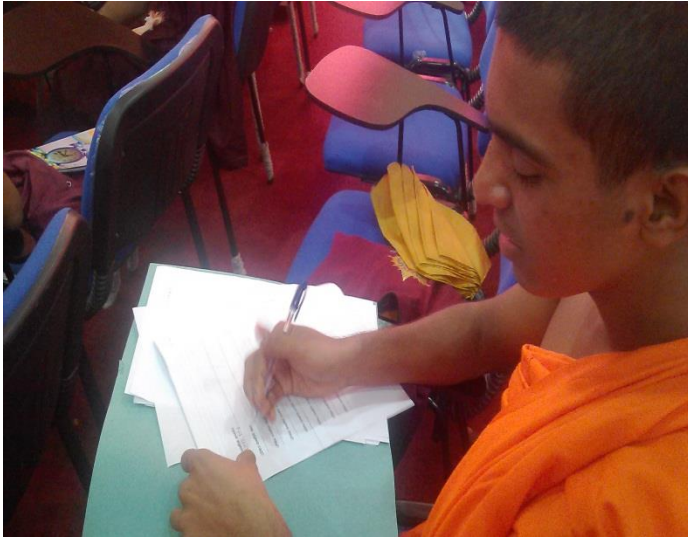
**Next Step**

The ELA and the Department of English expect to continue this seminar next year as well, with the participation of more students. The next seminar can be made more successful if the financial support of the university could be gained.

**Steering Team**

1. Rev. Talawe Pagnnananda Thero - LS/2012/05
2. Rev. Kosgama Dhammadassana Thero - LS/2012/06
3. Rev. Handugala Amarawansa Thero - LS/2012/08
4. Rev. Medirigiriye Gnanaloka Thero - LS/SA/2012/52
5. Rev. G. Rathanawansa Thero - LS/2013/41
6. Rev. M. Sugathananda Thero - LS/2013/42
7. Rev. Pelawatte Sudhamma Thero - LS/2014/12
8. Mr. R.M. Leelananda - LS/2014/14
9. Rev. Kataragama Sumanadewa Thero - LS/2014/40
10. Rev. M. Somananda Thero - LS/SA/2014/65
11. Mr. G.S. Charith Priyadarshana - BS/2013/38

## Memories in Print



## Note of Gratitude

- I would like to acknowledge with much appreciation the support extended by Ven. Vice Chancellor, Ven. Prof. Gallele Sumanasiri Thero in permitting work of this nature, having confidence in the students and the staff.
- Ms. M.N.S. Dilani and Ms. Tharangi Sirisena, lecturers of the Department of English without whom the event would not be fruitful.
- My sincere thanks go to the students of the ELA, especially the following;
  - Ven. Medirigiriye Gnanaloka Thero – the President of ELA, for planning the event and teaching.
  - Ven. Thalawe Pagnnananda Thero – the Secretary of ELA, for planning the event, preparing the lesson material and teaching.
  - Ven. Kosgama Dhammadassana Thero - the overall leader of the organizing committees for steering the event, teaching and sponsoring lunch for the students, organizing committee and the staff.
  - Ven. Handugala Amarawansa Thero – for lesson material preparation and teaching.
  - Ven. Makulalle Sugathananda Thero – for contacting the *Pirivenas*, maintaining contacts with the *Pirivena* Branch to get the past papers and the text books.
- Many thanks to Mr. S.A. Sunil, Director, Counselling Unit, National Institute of Education (NIE), for the inspiring counselling lecture.
- Special thanks to Ms. Indika Samaraweera for her enormous contribution to plan this event successfully and her support in all the ‘emergency’ situations and Munendra Kumara for his wholehearted cooperation.
- Thanks to Ms. Manori Samarakoon and her staff for arranging the Library Auditorium for the seminar.
- Thanks to Ms. Malka Hewawitharana for arranging the transport facilities.
- Thanks to everyone who was appreciative and critical of our attempt.