

## **Food science and nutrition undergraduates' expectations in English language and IT learning during their university undergraduate education**

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English language proficiency and fluency in Information Technology have become essential elements of undergraduate education in Sri Lanka as these skills are highly valued by employers. The food science and nutrition degree programme at Wayamba University of Sri Lanka is entirely conducted in the English medium. In addition, English language courses have been included into the curriculum throughout the study programme, to enhance English language proficiency of graduates. The degree programme also offers a general IT course.

The present survey was carried out to find out students' expectations in IT and English language learning. 62 undergraduates in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> academic years of the degree programme were surveyed using a pre tested questionnaire.

Most of the respondents believed that they did not have opportunities to speak English with other people (80.52%) during the English lessons at school. The difficulties they faced at the university was the inability to speak English fluently (71%), difficulties in reading scientific texts (48%) and difficulties in presentations (36%). The most desired abilities of the students in the undergraduate English programme was the ability to speak English fluently (82%) followed by the ability to make presentations in English (77.5%). The opportunities students missed at school, their present difficulties in English and the abilities that they claim to have in English seems to be correlated with their ability to speak English. 78% of the respondents believed that the present English language programme conducted by the English Language Unit of the university was at or above satisfactory level and 22% of them were dissatisfied mainly due to irrelevant lesson materials and unproductive learning activities. Most of them preferred to practice speeches and oral presentations (79%), carry out listening exercises on radio and TV news broadcasts (64%) and express opinions on various matters (58%) in their English lessons.

72 percent of the respondents were familiar with the MS Office software packages before they entered the university while they were less familiar with other areas of the IT course in the degree programme. 93 percent of the respondents were willing to follow another well structured IT course which covers Management Information Systems and advanced aspects of the contents in the IT course they had already followed, e – commerce, Project Management, Graphic Designing and Web Development.

It is recommended that the outcomes of the present survey be considered in the revision of the curriculum of the faculty in the future.