

**INTRODUCING COLLABORATIVE  
LEARNING INTO ENGLISH EDUCATION IN  
A SRI LANKAN UNIVERSITY: AN  
EXPLORATORY CASE-STUDY**

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## Keywords

Bourdieu, capital, collaborative learning, collaborative group activities, curriculum, *doxa*, EGAP, instructional curriculum, emotions, English as a second language (ESL) learning, ESL teaching, field, habitus, *illusio*, institutional curriculum, macro skills in the English language, programmatic curriculum.

## Abstract

The teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) plays a vital role in Sri Lankan universities because inadequate English language proficiency impacts adversely upon students' achievements; yet Sri Lankan university students often struggle to achieve expected levels of proficiency. In the context of attempts to improve the outcomes of ESL learning, a limited attempt has been made to examine learners' commitment in ESL learning in Sri Lanka. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case-study, therefore, is to investigate an enactment of a re-designed English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) curriculum with collaborative activities in a Sri Lankan university setting. In theoretical terms, this involved re-designing the instructional curriculum for the EGAP classroom.

Two ESL teachers and two focus groups of six students each from the EGAP groups of these teachers were selected as the participants. Before the enactment of the re-designed collaborative curriculum, initial semi-structured teacher interviews and planning discussion were conducted and student focus-group data were gathered to understand the challenges and possibilities participating teachers envisaged and the student experience of learning English before introducing collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes. After the enactment of the collaborative curriculum, final semi-structured teacher interviews were conducted and student focus-group data were gathered to understand what EGAP teachers and students thought of the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes.

First, inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was utilised to analyse planning data, pre-and post-activity teacher interviews, and student focus group data. Second, conceptual tools from Bourdieusian *theory of practice* were applied to the themes that came out of the inductive thematic analysis (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986). The Bourdieusian concept of *illusio*—learners' commitment to active participation in the field of ESL and their *investment* in its 'stakes' - was highlighted in the study (Bourdieu, 1996). These concepts were articulated with curriculum theory (Deng, 2018). Luke's Bourdieusian sociological template for language education reform (2009) was adapted and applied in *re-designing EGAP enactment with a collaborative learning curriculum*. This was utilised as the theoretical framework to interpret the data.

This study specifically demonstrates the potential use of a less institutionalised environment for ESL teaching and learning, where ‘collaborative peer social capital’ and ‘peer inculcation’ can be built up. By re-regulating the field with collaborative activities, student habitus was re-made by building *illusio* and *investment* in English and linguistic capital in English in all four macro skills. The teacher habitus was also re-made with the teachers’ realisation of the success of the re-designed instructional curriculum. The results of this study are expected to offer insight to ESL/ EFL courses in other contexts. The intent of the study was to help Sri Lankan ESL learners to overcome negative emotions and social barriers to English language learning. The study has the potential to contribute empirical findings to an under-researched area and will be helpful for practitioners and policymakers interested in university ESL curriculum development and teaching.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AEQ	Academic Emotions Questionnaire
AV	Audio-visual
CA	Continuous Assessment
CAT	Continuous Assessment Test
CITES	Centre for IT Educational Service
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DE	Distance Education
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EGAP	English for General Academic Purposes
ELT	English Language Teaching
ELTD	English Language Teaching Department
EOT	Emergency online teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
FFG	Final focus-groups
FL	Foreign Language
FSI	Final semi-structured interviews
GCE (A/L)	General Certificate of Examination of Advanced Level
GCE (O/L)	General Certificate of Examination of Ordinary Level
HETC	Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century
IFG	Initial focus-groups
ISI	Initial semi-structured interviews
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language

LAD	Language Acquisition Device
LLRC	Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation
LMS	Learning Management System
LSD	Department of Language Studies
MST	Microsoft Teams
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
PD	Planning discussion
PUSL	Premier University of Sri Lanka (pseudonym)
SEUSL	South-Eastern University of Sri Lanka
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SP	Student participant
TP	Teacher participant
UDG	University Development Grant
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZDP	Zone of Proximal Development

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This exploratory case-study investigated the introduction of collaborative learning into English education, where English is taught as a second language (ESL) in a Sri Lankan university setting. Amongst other things, student involvement in ESL learning at tertiary level can be seen in terms of the level of attention, interest, enthusiasm, and passion that learners indicate in their learning - phenomena often subsumed within the psychological concept of 'motivation'. This study is sociological, drawing on the theoretical perspective, conceptual tools, and methodological thinking of Pierre Bourdieu (1984), and educational perspectives were applied through curriculum theory (Deng, 2018; Deng & Luke, 2010; Doyle, 1992a, 1992b).

This introductory chapter outlines the research context; this is followed by a section on the background to the study. A description of my professional context and associated issues in the research situates the study contextually and professionally, identifying the interests that drive it; this is consonant with the methodological assumptions of the Bourdieusian framing of the study and with curriculum theory. The purpose of this exploratory case-study, the aims and objectives of the study and the research questions are discussed, followed by a discussion on the anticipated significance of the study. Finally, the last section includes an outline of the remaining chapters.

### **1.1 The Research Context**

The study was conducted in an English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom at a Sri Lankan university. Although at present Sri Lankan students are given the opportunity to learn English in their primary as well as secondary education, at the end of their tertiary education the majority do not have the communication skills in English required for the job market or for the continuation of higher education in the English medium (National Education Commission, 1997). Until 1999, Sri Lankan students were given opportunities to learn English as a subject from Grade 3 onwards (although some schools teach it from Grade 1) to General Certificate of Examination of Ordinary Level (GCE O/L) or Grade 10. From 1999, with the recommendations of General Educational Reforms, students have been allowed to learn English up to GCE Advanced Level (A/L), which is the last stage of secondary education in Sri Lanka. At

present English is therefore taught as a compulsory subject from Grade 3 to Grade 13 (GCE A/L) and students are expected to complete two term tests followed by the year end test. However, the pass rate as well as the participation of the students in the A/L General English are not satisfactory (Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). As a result, Sri Lankan universities have to bear an enormous burden in teaching English language to undergraduates in addition to their main subjects. It is unfortunate that these university students have not obtained the required proficiency level of English for their academic purposes at university, as well as for their future career opportunities, despite having spent a considerable amount of their study time over many years on English language learning at school as well as at university. The problems do not arise because students are unaware of the importance of the requirement of English for higher education, upward career mobility, and better career prospects. Indeed, once university students commence their tertiary education, they clearly realise that their academic achievements and future career opportunities are hindered by inadequate English proficiency (Ranasinghe, 2012). Moreover, poor English outcomes are of national as well as individual importance because the Sri Lankan government has made considerable investment in English language teaching across the educational spectrum including both school and tertiary level.

The classroom has been one focus of research by scholars seeking to explain the poor English learning outcomes of Sri Lankan students (Gunawardana & Karunaratna, 2017). Amongst other things, this research has suggested that collaborative activities - which are not commonly found in Sri Lankan classrooms due to teacher-centred traditional teaching approaches - might engage students more effectively in their language studies than do more traditional activities. Such pedagogic change, it is suggested, might improve student outcomes. This explanation assumes that collaborative activities are engaging and that engaged students learn better. This study addresses the first assumption. In general terms, it investigates how Sri Lankan undergraduates who learn English as a second language (ESL) engage in classroom activities designed to generate collaboration amongst language learners.

The next section discusses salient background details for the study. These include the status of the English language in Sri Lanka and English as a link language; Sri Lankan ESL learners and their experience, including their perceptions of learning English in higher education contexts; my own professional context and associated



issues as an ESL practitioner in the study; and the overall purpose and significance of the study (Canagarajah, 1999; Gunasekera, 2005; Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016).

## **1.2 Status of the English language in Sri Lanka**

ESL teaching and learning in the Sri Lankan university classroom setting provides the background to the current study. It is therefore important to pay attention to the historical and contemporary status of the English language in Sri Lanka and to the learning experiences and perspectives of ESL students in Sri Lankan university ESL classrooms.

The history of the English language in Sri Lanka goes back more than 200 years. Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) came under British rule in 1815. With British colonisation, English became the language of administration and also acquired ‘official language’ status (Gunasekera, 2005). Subsequently English-medium fee-levying schools were established in the country, with access limited only to the elite. In the meantime, proficiency in English became a prerequisite for obtaining an administrative position in the country (Coperahewa, 2011; Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). Hence, during the colonial period of Sri Lanka, English became the language of power in administration and the higher social echelons, while the importance of the vernacular languages was lowered.

The British language policy in Sri Lanka during the colonial period, especially in relation to education and administration, led to acute socio-economic stratification. Goonatileke (1983) refers to this situation as a ‘love-hate relationship’ on the grounds that it developed social mobility (for some) as well as social discrimination (for others). By making English the medium of instruction in education, the British rulers tried to promote their language and religion in Sri Lanka. Coperahewa explains that,

[t]he colonial administrators realized the functional value of English in the creation of a class of English-educated officials who would serve as an essential link between the British rulers and the masses. (Coperahewa, 2011, p.31)

Therefore English became the language of education, administration, and the Courts of Law in Sri Lanka. It was mandated for Sri Lankans to be educated in English if they wanted to be an employee under the British rulers in the government or private

sector. However, since the majority of the people were not proficient in English, certain official activities were maintained in vernacular language (Sinhala<sup>1</sup>) at the lower levels of administration.

At the beginning of British rule, English education was provided by the missionaries. The first mission was established in the 1820s in the northern part of the island where the majority speak Tamil<sup>2</sup>. The intention of the mission was to provide a thorough level of English knowledge to local youth (Coperahewa, 2011). Gradually, other missionaries commenced educational activities throughout the country while propagating Christianity among Sri Lankans. However, these missionaries realised that the most effective language for spreading their religion was the vernacular, hence missionary education used the vernacular languages (Sinhala and Tamil) to teach Christianity. Later on, missionaries had to change their vernacular language practices and pay more attention to teaching English due to government language policy (Coperahewa, 2011). As a result of the establishment of strong missionary education in the northern district of the country where more Tamil-speaking people live, Tamils had more opportunity to learn English. At the same time, this provided them with an opportunity to compensate for the minority status of their vernacular and to seek better employment opportunities.

Sri Lanka gained its sovereignty in 1948. Since then there have been many policy changes in relation to language in Sri Lanka. Table 1.1 presents these changes briefly. When considering the colonial and post-colonial periods of the country, some decisive phases can be noticed regarding the language policy and educational system of Sri Lanka (Coperahewa, 2011; Goonetilleke, 1983). With the Bill of Free Education in 1945, the vernacular languages became the medium of instruction in primary and secondary education, with a decline in English medium education (Gunasekera, 2005). This change of national policy which promoted mother tongue instruction in secondary education impacted very badly on tertiary education where the one medium of instruction was English (Raheem & Devendra, 2006). However, in 1959, due to the nationalist movement in Sri Lanka, vernacular languages, namely Sinhala and Tamil, became the general medium of instruction in education. As a result, during the 1960s

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<sup>1</sup> Sinhala is the majority vernacular.

<sup>2</sup> Tamil is a minority vernacular.

the medium of instruction in the Arts stream at university level became vernacular language (Sinhala), and it was consequently decided to teach English as a second Language (ESL). These decisions seem to have resulted in diminished levels of English knowledge amongst Sri Lankan learners (Allen, 1993). Meanwhile the importance of English persisted in the fields of social and economic development and for the acquisition of information in science, technology, commerce, and industry. Courses in Science, Medicine, Engineering and Science-related subjects continued to be taught in English (Raheem & Devendra, 2006). More information regarding the medium of instruction of the university degree programmes will be provided in Chapter 3, Section 3.4.3.

**Table 1.1**  
**Post-colonial Milestones of the English Language in Sri Lanka**

<b>Year &amp; Event</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>
<b>1948 Dominion Status</b>	Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) gains independence from Great Britain. English remains the only official language of independent Ceylon.
<b>1956 Official Languages Act</b>	Sinhala becomes the only official language of Sri Lanka. English is dethroned.
<b>1956 &amp; 1958 Language riots</b>	Language riots to protest against the Sinhala Only administration.
<b>1971 Youth Insurrection</b>	Rebellion by non-English speaking youth.
<b>1972 Constitution</b>	Sri Lanka is declared a Republic. Sinhala remains the only official language, with Tamil as a national language.
<b>1978 Constitution</b>	A new constitution is adopted by the government of Sri Lanka. The official language of Sri Lanka is Sinhala. Sinhala and Tamil are declared national languages.
<b>July 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord</b>	Sinhala, Tamil, and English are declared official languages of Sri Lanka.
<b>November 1987 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution</b>	English is the link language, Sinhala and Tamil are the official languages of Sri Lanka.
<b>1997 Education Reforms</b>	English is introduced in Grade 1 in schools. English medium instruction from Grade 5 is permitted in schools with the means to do so. General English is introduced as a new G.C.E. Advanced Level subject.

(Adapted from Gunasekera, 2005)

During the post-colonial period many national insurrections by Sri Lankan youth occurred due to changes of language policy and practice in the country. As shown in

Table 1.1, in 1956, with the Official Language Act, Sinhala became the only official language of Sri Lanka, consequently creating linguistic conflict between the Sinhala and Tamil speaking communities. Subsequently, this linguistic conflict resulted in a civil war from 1983, which lasted for more than 25 years, ending only in 2009. In 2011, the Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) recommended that the learning of each other's languages should be made a compulsory part of the school curriculum. This initiative opened the way for teaching Tamil as a second language (L2) to Sinhala students and vice versa as a remedy for attitudinal problems. The intent was to lead to better understanding of each other's cultures. The other important recommendation related to implementation of language policy and trilingual education (Sinhala, Tamil and English), which is thought to help create a better understanding of each other from childhood (Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation, 2011). Further, English was recommended as a *link language*. Thus teaching and learning English in Sri Lanka has become as important as teaching and learning of the vernacular languages (Canagarajah, 1999; Gunasekera, 2005; Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016).

### **1.2.1 English as a link language (lingua franca)**

During the 1970s critical changes took place politically in Sri Lanka. These changes impacted upon both language policy and practice. As Table 1.1 depicts, at the beginning of the decade there were 'National People's Movements', along with Sri Lanka becoming a Republic (Gunasekera, 2005). Subsequently, Sinhala (the language of the majority) was given prominence, whereas the importance of other languages, such as Tamil and English, waned. However, in 1977 a change of government resulted in policy changes whereby the government was leading towards a more open economy. The focus of the new government policies was "global rather than indigenous realities" (Raheem and Ratwatte, 2004, p.28). With the development of many fields such as foreign investment, private sector employment and the tourist industry, demand for English proficiency also increased. Some changes in language policy were made also. In 1978, Sri Lankan constitutional provisions recognised both Sinhala and Tamil as national languages and English as a link language (Canagarajah, 1999; Gunasekera, 2005; Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). Although recognition of English as a link

language was made possible by the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution in 1978, it was only carried into effect in 1987 (Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016).

At present, English in Sri Lanka is considered as an international language as well as a link language (Gunasekera, 2005) - '*link language*' or '*lingua franca*' being a language that facilitates communication between groups with no other common language. Walisundara and Hettiarachchi (2016) define the term in relation to the local context, being a language that "would lead to better communication between the different ethnic groups in the country" (p. 2). They further explain the term in relation to the broader context: a link language "could also be representative of a more open economic system leading to the link between Sri Lanka and the world" (Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016, p.2). Within Sri Lanka, a multiethnic country, English is not only an international language, it can also be considered to interlink different ethnic groups because it has become a mediator in inter-ethnic communication. For example, there are some instances where English has played the role of a unifying force among different communities, as De Silva (1993) points out:

[...] while English education had become a badge of social and cultural superiority and had elevated English education to the position of a privileged minority "the national establishment", the English language served a politically useful role as an important unifying factor in the country. (De Silva, 1993, pp. 276-77)

This suggests that English as a link language has an impact upon national political decisions. Although English was limited to an elite group who held the positions socially as well as culturally in the colonial period, the government of the Republic that came to power in 1977 tried to provide common opportunities to learn English through the government schools.

At present, Sinhala and Tamil are both official languages in which government functions are carried out and in which services are made available by law. At the same time, these two languages have been declared as national languages that have special status within the nation. However, it is still questionable whether all local official functions are carried out in the vernacular languages, as declared in the Constitution. On the other hand, despite being a country which uses the vernacular languages as official languages, Sri Lanka needs to use English in many internationalised fields for

the purpose of social and economic development and gaining information in the domains of education, medicine, engineering, business, and industry. Canagarajah, (1999) who speaks about linguistic imperialism, claims that,

[t]he international hegemony of English still looms over the Colombo government's ministries of education, commerce, and communication. It serves as a link language between these institutions and the civilian population, so the Education Ministry, for instance is forced to use English, rather than Sinhala, when corresponding with Tamil parents, teachers and education officers. The Tamil community also needs English as a bridge to the symbolic and material rewards that are tied to the international education and professional centres. (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 71)

Canagarajah's claim indicates that although Sinhala and Tamil have both been declared as the official languages, in reality only Sinhala is functioning as the official language in most instances. Further, Sinhala is not in a position to cater to the different ethnic communities of the country, especially to the people who speak Tamil. As a remedy, Canagarajah (1999) points out that the English language can function as the lingua franca in order to minimise the social, political, and economic issues of the country. The main reason for this is that, as "the language of education and the rich" in Sri Lankan society, English serves "as a class marker" (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 72). English has been deeply ingrained in the society and continues to have an impact on socioeconomic stratification.

It is worth examining whether the Sri Lankan government has given due recognition to English. As shown in Table 1.1, the July 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord signed by the Indian and Sri Lankan governments with an intention to resolve the Sri Lankan civil war, declared Sinhala, Tamil and English as the official languages of the country. However, four months later, in November 1987, with the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, English lost its recognition as an official language, becoming only a link language (Gunasekera, 2005). This suggests a contradiction between government language policies and language practices, as English is still used both within and outside the country by Sri Lankans, although the language has lost its status as an official language (Canagarajah, 1999, 2005; Raheem & Ratwatte, 2004).

The following section describes Sri Lankan ESL learners in the university setting and their experiences in learning ESL. Learning English plays a vital role in the Sri

Lankan university system as most degree programmes are offered in the English medium.

### **1.2.2 Sri Lankan ESL learners and their experience in learning English in higher education**

Fifteen national universities are funded and monitored by the government through the University Grants Commission (UGC), the main organization in Sri Lanka. Most of these universities are in the main cities of the country, although some are in rural areas. In general these universities offer certificate programmes and undergraduate programmes. Some also have their own postgraduate institutions and offer postgraduate programmes. Most offer courses in English as the medium of instruction, whereas a few particularly Faculties of Arts offer their courses in vernacular languages, Sinhala and Tamil. Even though some of the universities offer their courses in vernacular languages, most of the time it is mandatory for undergraduates to complete English as a subject, as English proficiency is one of the main requirements in the job market.

Teaching English as a second language to undergraduates has therefore become important in all Sri Lankan universities, irrespective of subject streams of all courses. A needs analysis was conducted by De Silva and Devendra (2014) to investigate the needs and expectations of Sri Lankan ESL undergraduates who follow degree programmes in the medium of English. First year science undergraduates enrolled in English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) were selected as the participants of the study as it is mandatory for these students to complete this course in order to obtain their degree. The study revealed that the category of *academic needs* was the major reason why students wanted to improve their English, which demonstrates that these students have understood the requirement of English in relation to the “development of scientific knowledge” (De Silva & Devendra, 2014, p.12). These students had also recognised *social needs* as one of the reasons why they need to learn English, particularly for the purpose of communication. However, it is important to pay attention to the point these students had not mentioned: the requirement of using the English language for communication within the institution, including with their peers/colleagues. This suggests that while students are aware of the fact that it is necessary to have English proficiency once they move into society beyond the

university, they do not necessarily see themselves as being required to communicate in English within the classroom or the institution (De Silva & Devendra, 2014).

De Silva and Devendra's (2014) study did, however, reveal that ESL students identified the requirement of English for social needs such as communication, recreational and personality development purposes. They identified the fact that under the 'social needs category' the ESL students mentioned that knowing English helps in "developing self-confidence and dealing with challenging situations" (De Silva & Devendra, 2014, p.14). Accordingly, the results of this study show how English enjoys greater status and power than vernacular languages. Sri Lankan undergraduates who follow their degree programme in English are aware that English has more power than their own vernacular language, even though Sinhala and Tamil languages are the official and state languages. Sri Lankan graduates know that academic qualifications alone do not support them to compete in the world outside the university. They must also be equipped with other capacities, particularly competency in English. With respect to occupational needs, students believe that they will have good employment opportunities if they are proficient in English. On the Sri Lankan job market, most highly paid jobs exist in the private sector, where competency in English is considered as a fundamental requirement. In this sector university graduates are expected to have a good command of English in addition to their specific educational qualifications.

It is important to consider ESL undergraduates' requirements when planning and delivering English courses at Sri Lankan universities. The study conducted by De Silva and Devendra (2014) showed that other stakeholders – namely academics in the faculty - were of the opinion that students in the Science Faculty need to have more reading and writing than speaking and listening skills in English. They see the main focus of the faculty academics as being the need for English for academic purposes, whereas students saw themselves as needing English for a wider range of requirements. Some academics did acknowledge the importance of also improving listening and speaking skills in English, as these skills are also necessary for some academic activities such as note taking, viva interviews and presentations. De Silva and Devendra (2014) argue that in Sri Lankan universities it is more appropriate to have ESL course programmes and materials designed in accordance with students' needs, that is, to cater both to academic purposes as well as to more general purposes, including career prospects. They further suggest that teaching approaches can be



adapted appropriately as these students need to practise all language skills, including communicative skills, in the classroom itself.

In Sri Lankan universities, a diverse range of English language programmes, curricula, and pedagogies are implemented to support language learning and development. These initiatives aim to equip students with the necessary linguistic skills to navigate academic, professional, and social contexts effectively. Understanding the breadth of these programs provides insights into the approaches used to facilitate English language acquisition and proficiency.

English language programmes in Sri Lankan universities encompass both general English courses and specialized programs that cater to the needs of specific disciplines or professions. These programs often consist of multiple levels, allowing students to progress from foundational to advanced language proficiency. The curricula are designed to cover essential language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Additionally, language programs may include components that focus on academic writing, critical thinking, and presentation skills to enhance students' academic competence (Wijewardene, Yong, & Chinna, 2014).

Curricula in Sri Lankan universities are influenced by various factors, including local educational policies, international standards, and institutional goals. The development of curricula takes into account the specific needs and expectations of the students, considering their academic disciplines, career aspirations, and the broader demands of the globalized world (Karunaratne, 2012). Regarding pedagogies, Sri Lankan universities employ a variety of approaches to facilitate English language learning. Traditional methods, such as grammar-translation and audio-lingual approaches, may still be utilized to varying degrees. However, the university English language teaching units are becoming aware of the necessity of moving towards learner-centred approaches and communicative language teaching (CLT). Learner-centred approaches encourage active student participation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. CLT emphasizes meaningful communication, authentic language use, and interactive learning experiences. These pedagogical approaches often involve student-centred activities, group work, role-plays, discussions, and project-based assignments, promoting active engagement and language practice.

In general, English language teaching is typically conducted at the beginning of students' degree programs in Sri Lankan universities, aiming to provide them with the necessary language skills to effectively follow their core subjects. These English language programs are designed to support students in improving their English proficiency and bridging any gaps that may exist between their existing language skills and the requirements of their academic studies. However, the allocation of time and the course curriculum for English language programs can vary across universities and disciplines. Each university has its own set of requirements and academic priorities, which influence the extent and structure of English language instruction. Some universities may offer intensive English language courses that span a semester or an academic year, while others may integrate English language teaching throughout the students' degree program, with shorter language modules offered alongside their core subjects.

These empirically based understandings of Sri Lankan ESL learners' experiences in learning English in university classrooms inform this study. The teacher participants and I as the researcher needed to consider the students' real requirements in re-designing the instructional curriculum. De Silva and Devendra's (2014) findings provide background to the study. The perceptions of students themselves in ESL learning are also important and are discussed in the section below.

### **1.2.3 Perceptions of Sri Lankan university learners in ESL**

As mentioned in the above section, the English language has a higher position than the vernacular languages in some contexts in Sri Lanka, especially when it relates to higher education and career mobility. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, education in the English medium dominated in Sri Lankan society as English became an elite language "as a means for acquisition of power and privilege in society" (Ranasinghe & Ranasinghe, 2012, p.204). Sri Lankans who had an English-medium educational background were able to obtain better positions in the government as well as the private sector. These people belonged to an economic upper-class. As previously noted also, with the implementation of the Official Languages Act of 1956, the medium of instruction in schools was changed to that of the vernacular languages (Ranasinghe & Ranasinghe, 2012), with a consequent decline in opportunities that most Sri Lankans

had for learning in English. However, during the last two decades, with the impact of globalisation, English has regained a higher position, with some reforms being made in the educational sector in relation to the medium of instruction and the school curricula. Most universities changed their medium of instruction to English, with English becoming a core subject in school education (Ranasinghe & Ranasinghe, 2012; Raheem & Devendra, 2006).

Inadequate communication skills in English have been identified as one of the factors impacting the capacity of Sri Lankan graduates to access better employment opportunities (World Bank, 2009). Ranasinghe and Ranasinghe (2012), who investigated the perceptions of Sri Lankan undergraduate and postgraduate students of the role played by English language proficiency in their career choices and mobility, concluded that the perception of undergraduates of the importance of English in obtaining better employment and successfully completing their studies depends on their social backgrounds and attitudes towards education in English. It is important to note that although Sri Lankan undergraduates as well as postgraduates have a favourable attitude towards learning the English language, the assistance they get from schools and universities in improving their language proficiency seems unsatisfactory (Ranasinghe & Ranasinghe, 2012). Students from a rural school background were particularly of the opinion that they were at a disadvantage in relation to improving their English at university level (Silva & Devendra, 2014; Ranasinghe & Ranasinghe, 2012; Raheem & Devendra, 2006). This suggests that when students do not have a favourable background in learning English at school level, they will need extra support at the university level if they are to succeed alongside their urban peers. It would seem to be important then for universities' English language teaching units/departments to take measures to adapt their teaching curricula and methodologies according to the needs of their students.

Rameez (2019), who investigated English language proficiency and the employability of undergraduates from the Faculty of Arts and Culture of the South-Eastern University of Sri Lanka (SEUSL), found that these students did not have the expected levels of English language proficiency. The students in the study came mostly from a rural background and had not experienced a quality English language learning environment at school level, nor did they have adequate awareness of the importance of learning English before commencing their university education.

When considering the experience of ESL learners in higher education in Sri Lanka it is noted that issues other than learning itself also impact students' outcomes (Ranasinghe & Ranasinghe, 2012). These are related to physical and human resources, teaching methodologies and attitudes towards learning English. However, in those studies that do relate to ESL teaching and learning, a noticeable gap relating to alternative pedagogies can be identified.

My interest in alternative pedagogic approaches should be understood with respect to my own trajectory through and position in the education system in Sri Lanka. One of the tenets of Bourdieusian methodology that informs this study is that it is essential to manage bias by drawing to attention the ways in which the social, scientific, and intellectual location of the researcher bears on every research decision (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Accordingly, in the next section I discuss my direct connections to ESL teaching-learning at the university level in Sri Lanka.

### **1.3 Professional context and issues in the study**

As an ESL practitioner I know that it is important to look into the obstacles that affect learners in their second language learning because it cannot be assumed that the problems of undergraduates stem from individual cognitive weaknesses. Sociological barriers experienced by learners, along with cultural differences, may be a primary problem.

As a university academic, I have more than 15 years experience in teaching ESL in tertiary education. During this period of teaching I have noticed that students who have not had extensive exposure to the language at school level have to work very hard in a university ESL classroom; and these students tend to gradually lose interest in learning English as an L2. Even though they participate in the ESL sessions, they are reluctant to take an active part in classroom activities. It is demonstrated that these students may not gain the maximum potential benefits of ESL teaching expected by university English Language Teaching (ELT) departments or units.

I have also noticed that classroom practices and ESL course materials have adapted conventional methods. For example, most activities are organised as individual learning experiences; that is, they do not often entail pair or group work. Due to the sizable number of students in a classroom, the teacher may not have an opportunity to provide feedback or monitor students individually during class time. Moreover, even if the teacher does incorporate conventional group activities, the

students who have stronger prior exposure in English tend to be more active than their less advantaged peers. As a member of the ESL course material development team, I have also noticed that the main concern of unit materials is to cover a particular macro<sup>3</sup> or micro<sup>4</sup> level language skill; the intent is not to promote students' active participation in classroom learning activities.

There is little in the research literature which directly addresses the practical problems of my professional context. ESL studies undertaken in the Sri Lankan context pay very little attention to how or the extent to which students become involved in their ESL activities and learning. I was therefore interested in addressing this research gap, in investigating how ESL learners commit to learning English in a collaborative learning environment, and how teachers and students respond to a collaborative curriculum introduced into Sri Lankan university English education.

#### **1.4 Purposes of the study**

The main aim of this exploratory case-study was to investigate how ESL learners' commitment in learning ESL can be promoted through the adoption of a collaborative learning approach in a Sri Lankan university. This aim was to be investigated through three related objectives:

- to explore teachers' thoughts and actions when re-designing and introducing an EGAP curriculum with collaborative activities
- to examine the learning challenges students perceived in their university ESL classes before introducing a collaborative learning curriculum into their EGAP classes
- to investigate how Sri Lankan ESL learners and teachers perceived collaborative ESL learning in the university setting.

In the literature, students' involvement in learning has generally been theorised in terms of engagement - a construct characterised by multiple dimensions and theorisations (Astrid, Rukmini, Sofwan & Fitriati, 2017; Christenson, Reschly, &

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<sup>3</sup> Language *macro skills* are the general language skills. The four English-language macro skills most frequently identified are listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

<sup>4</sup> Language *micro skills* are specific language skills, such as fluency, discourse competence, function, style, cohesion, and they come under the language *macro skills*.

Wylie, 2012; Early & Marshall, 2008; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Janosz, 2012; Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Reschly & Christenson, 2012). All such analyses are of interest in the current study, although its specific approach is sociological in orientation, informed by Bourdieusian theory. In order to achieve the objectives specified above, the following main research question was addressed:

*In what manner is collaborative learning valuable to university-level learners of English in a Sri Lankan ESL classroom?*

The above key research question was further addressed by the formulation of the following sub questions:

- RQ1. What challenges and possibilities did teachers envisage before introducing collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes in a Sri Lankan university?
- RQ 2. What was the student experience of learning English before the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes in a Sri Lankan university?
- RQ 3. How did EGAP teachers in a Sri Lankan university appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes?
- RQ 4. How did EGAP students in a Sri Lankan university appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes?

## **1.5 Research Design**

A qualitative exploratory case-study method was adopted in this study. As the study was aiming to explore how to promote student involvement in their learning through group activities in a collaborative environment, it involved working with the participating teachers to support improved pedagogical practices. Qualitative exploratory case-study method is suitable for research such as this, that is, research which is practitioner-oriented and addresses an under-researched domain (Imai, 2010; Stahl, King & Lampi, 2019).

As noted earlier, the study was framed within a Bourdieusian sociology, the theoretical framework drawing from articulated concepts from the *theory of practice* developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1977). These concepts are discussed in detail in

Chapter 3, section 3.3. Theorization of curriculum and curriculum change also involves the conceptualisation of teachers' involvement in relation to classroom level re-designing and enactment of the EGAP curriculum, identified as *instructional curriculum* (Dooley, forthcoming); this concept is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.4. Qualitative data were gathered through initial and final focus-groups with the students and semi-structured interviews with the teachers before and after conducting collaborative group activities in the ESL teaching-learning sessions. Inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was utilised during the first phase of data analysis, and curriculum theory and the conceptual tools developed by Bourdieu were applied to interpret the themes derived from the inductive thematic analysis during the second phase of data analysis. This is an approach which has been used internationally in studies applying a Bourdieusian theoretical frame in settings different to those of Algeria and France where they were originally developed (e.g., Zhao, Selman & Luke, 2019).

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

Although many studies have been conducted in relation to ESL curriculum, pedagogy and methodology, a very limited attempt has been made to examine ESL learners' active participation and involvement in the learning process specifically in the Sri Lankan ESL context. It is important to examine very closely how ESL learners in this context behave and interact in the classroom, given that English is a link language in the country (Canagarajah, 1999; Gunasekera, 2005; Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). In addition, research previously undertaken in relation to student involvement in language learning, especially that regarding English as a second language or English as a foreign language (ESL/EFL) learning, has focused only on one micro skill at a time, rather than on the macro and micro language skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening taken collectively (Astrid, Rukmini, Sofwan and Fitriati, 2017; Hirvela & Du, 2013; Huang et al., 2017). Again, although Applied Linguistic research has identified the importance of different dimensions of engagement such as the cognitive, behavioural, social and emotional, these dimensions have tended to be viewed separately, not together (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Christenson & Reschly, 2012; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Also, many studies of student engagement have worked primarily with quantitative data, which limits results

to quantitative measures (Fedrick, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004; Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Svalberg, 2009).

It is in this context that the current study involved an exploratory case-study approach which included the collection of qualitative data to investigate Sri Lankan ESL learners' involvement in classroom activities. More specifically, it has explored the possibility of identifying and responding to causes and effects of negative emotions associated with the use of English in the classroom through collaborative group work. The intent was to help Sri Lankan ESL learners to overcome negative emotions and social barriers in their English language learning context, and to improve their levels of commitment to and involvement in ESL learning (Wilson, 2016). The outcomes of the study may contribute to an under-researched area and will be helpful for both practitioners and policymakers concerned with ESL curriculum development and teaching methodology in the university ESL teaching context. The sociological approach, framed by Bourdieusian theory, to investigating student commitment in their ESL learning has drawn upon concepts such as *illusio*<sup>5</sup> and *investment*<sup>6</sup>. This approach provides a broader and more sociologically informed approach to investigating ESL teaching and learning more broadly. The model, *a sociological template for re-designing EGAP enactment with a collaborative learning curriculum*, provides a means of understanding student commitment in learning, with particular attention paid to the sociological dynamics of learning in a collaborative environment, and of understanding how to apply institutional strategies in the context of the English education of university students.

In the existing literature on English language teaching and learning, various terms such as EFL, ESL, EFL/ESL, and English as an additional language have been utilized as required, as supported by the literature. However, for the purpose of my study, I have specifically chosen to focus on English as a Second Language (ESL).

## **1.7 Structure of the thesis**

This first chapter has explained the research context, background, aims and objectives, research design, and the significance of the study. Chapter Two provides

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<sup>5</sup> *Illusio* is the belief of students in the value of what they are learning.

<sup>6</sup> *Investment* is the students' implicit acceptance of the value of their learning.



a review of relevant literature on engagement, emotions, and collaborative learning in the context of ESL/EFL learning. Chapter Three outlines the theoretical framework underpinning the study, based on a Bourdieusian *theory of practice* (1977) in education and on curriculum theory. It also presents Luke's Bourdieusian sociological template for language education reform, which provided the basis for the conceptual model used in the current study (Luke, 2009). Chapter Four outlines the methodology adopted in the study, including details of the research design, participants, data site, data sources and production and data analysis methods, followed by a statement relating to ethical considerations associated with the study. Chapter Five discusses the data analysis of planning discussion and initial interview data from the teachers and the initial focus group interview data from the students that were collected during the Phase One. Chapter Six discusses the process of data analysis, involving final teacher interview and student focus group data that were collected during the Phase Two. Finally, Chapter Seven discusses the significance of the findings, the implications and contributions of the study, its limitations and recommendations for future research. The chapter highlights the importance of curriculum designers' consideration of the concerns of the teachers who actually implement classroom level curriculum, and teacher consideration of student diversity and peculiarities in designing instructional curriculum in the ESL/EFL teaching and learning context.

The next chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the current study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically evaluates literature relating to the issue of second or foreign language learners' engagement, which the current study theorises in Bourdieusian terms as commitment, drawing on such concepts as *illusio* and *investment* (as discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.3). This chapter also considers literature related to English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) and learning through collaborative group activities. This provides a basis for locating the present study of students' commitment in their ESL learning through collaborative activities in the Sri Lankan classroom in the field of associated existing scholarship. In the literature, English language teaching and learning have referred to EFL, ESL, EFL/ESL, and English as an additional language as needed, based on the literature. However, in my study, I am specifically using English as a Second Language (ESL).

This choice of terminology in my study allows for a focused exploration of the teaching and learning of English in a context where English serves as a second language. By utilizing ESL as the designated term, I am able to provide a clear and consistent framework for examining English language education within this specific context.

The chapter begins by appraising the literature related to ESL learning in Sri Lankan higher education classrooms, to highlight the importance of ESL teaching-learning in Sri Lanka and to identify current gaps in the literature relevant to this context. The second section of the chapter then defines the term 'engagement', with a specific focus on research related to engagement and ESL/EFL learning. As the term 'engagement' has different dimensions, particularly regarding ESL/EFL learning, literature associated with cognitive, behavioural, social, and emotional engagement is discussed, along with definitions of these dimensions. This section also discusses the concept of 'engagement as a multidimensional construct'. In the third section of the chapter, the focus turns to literature connected with emotions and ESL/EFL learning. Review of literature in this section suggests that the emotional dimensions of engagement will be of particular significance in the current study, appearing to be

closely connected with student commitment in the context of learning a second language (L2). The section frames this analysis through the pedagogical models developed by Pierre Bourdieu. Finally, in Section Four, the focus is on literature related to collaborative learning in the ESL/EFL context, beginning with a discussion of features of the ‘communicative strands’ in foreign (FL) or L2 learning, namely *cooperative learning*, *collaborative learning*, and *interaction*. This section is followed by consideration of the literature related to ESL/EFL learning in a collaborative environment. This literature review chapter can be arranged in terms of the questions to be considered or objectives/purposes outlined in the Introduction Chapter.

## **2.2 ESL learning in Sri Lankan higher education**

Studies have been conducted regarding ESL learning and teaching in the Sri Lankan higher education context (De Silva & Devendra, 2014; Rameez, 2019). One such study which investigated the identified needs and expectations of Sri Lankan ESL undergraduates found that the majority of the students studying in English as the medium of instruction realised the importance of English for their academic activities as well as for their career aspirations (De Silva & Devendra, 2014). They were seen to understand the advantages of knowing English in connection with their academic, social, and future career prospects. However, another study conducted by Rameez (2019) claims that students who had chosen their vernacular language of Tamil (used by the minority group in Sri Lanka) as their medium of instruction had not realised the importance of English until they entered the university. They had not paid attention or engaged with learning English at school as being important for their university studies “due to the lack of proper coaching throughout the course of their school” education (Rameez, 2019, p. 202). Other students reported feeling that they had not received adequate support in learning English at school - or at university (Ranasinghe & Ranasinghe, 2012); and evidence was provided of the fact that students with no previous background in learning English faced significantly more difficulties in improving their English at university level than did other students (Ranasinghe & Ranasinghe, 2012). The availability of physical and human resources and teachers’ attitudes and awareness of students’ learning processes were also shown to impact on ESL learning in Sri Lankan university classrooms (Rameez, 2019).

Research relevant to this study has included documentation of the experiences of Sri Lankan ESL learners in higher education, of the needs of ESL learners, and of

learners' perceptions of learning ESL. Interestingly, Rameez (2019) reveals that some sociological and psychological factors - such as negative perceptions and unnecessary fear of the English language - led to some university students performing poorly in English. This study also provided evidence that students were very reluctant to communicate in English with teachers due to shyness and fear. Rameez (2019) concluded that typical conventional classroom settings have a negative impact on ESL learners, with students having negative feelings about communicating with their peers or teachers. No research, however, has as yet been undertaken into the potential of collaborative learning as a means to building Sri Lankan students' *illusio* and *investment* in their ESL learning. This study will therefore contribute to the extant evidence base by focusing on Sri Lankan ESL students' *illusio* and *investment* in ESL learning, through the lens of their involvement in their ESL learning in a collaborative learning environment.

The next section discusses literature relating to the significance of students' engagement in the English language learning experience.

### **2.3 Engagement and ESL/EFL learning**

Philp and Duchesne (2016) claim that there is little principled understanding of the term 'engagement' in the applied linguistic research literature, although in their view the term is commonly overused with respect to learning. They further claim that in most research the term *engagement* is used simply as a synonym for learning. While different dimensions of a rigorous conceptualisation of the term *engagement* are used in such studies, they are investigated in isolation rather than in interaction with each other. This study takes the position that these dimensions cannot be considered separately, as they all contribute variously to student commitment and involvement. Invoking theorisations of engagement, Philp and Duchesne (2016) explain the term in relation to ESL and EFL as "a multidimensional construct that includes cognitive, behavioural, social, and emotional dimensions of engagement among second (L2) and foreign language (FL) learners in the classroom" (Philp & Duchesne, 2016, p. 50). They further claim that other characteristics, such as interest, effort, concentration, active participation, and emotional responsiveness, are closely connected with student engagement. In other words, "[e]ngagement is the term frequently employed to talk broadly about learners' interest and participation in an activity" (Philp & Duchesne,

2016, p. 50). Bourdieu refers to these characteristics as students' *illusio* and *investment*, terms defined and detailed later (Chapter 3, Section 3.3.4.2).

In other relevant work, Astin (1984; 1993), who developed '*Student Involvement Theory for higher education*' in 1984, renaming it '*Engagement Theory*' in 1993, defines student involvement or engagement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1993, p.297). By this definition, an engaged student spends a substantial amount of time and energy in learning, not only through physical energy, but also psychological effort. Astin describes more active students as being more engaged and subsequently more successful in learning.

Student commitment to their learning is currently considered an important phenomenon in studies of ESL teaching and learning. Szanajda and Chang (2015), for example, who investigated student involvement in ESL writing classes in Asian classrooms, claim that Asian students generally lack motivation and involvement in ESL learning due to what they identify as cultural differences. They emphasize therefore the importance of the provision by teachers of explicit and intentional support to improve learner outcomes. The particular focus of Szanajda and Chang's work is ESL writing, which they see as a critical skill that students will require during their entire lives. While Asian students need English knowledge and proficiency for academic purposes, especially in higher education, these capabilities are also needed for future opportunities. They point out that student improved involvement in ESL will not only positively impact their academic activities, but it will also develop their capacity for independent learning. Szanajda and Chang (2015) make a call for leaving conventional ESL teaching approaches behind and moving towards more student-oriented teaching that involves real-world learning tasks. With such an approach it is likely that students will engage more effectively in their learning as they feel the skills and knowledge that they gain will be useful in their future endeavours. Finally, Szanajda and Chang (2015, argue that "the essence of student engagement" (p.272) is to make "students want to learn and want to excel" (p.272). In Bourdieusian terminology, students need to develop their *illusio* and their *investment* in their learning - *illusio* referring to emotional investment in daily challenges to achieve the rewards of the field and to achieve objectives, and *investment* relating to emotions, time and effort spent in the pursuit of these achievements (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Astrid et al. (2017) conducted a study of student engagement in learning activities and of ESL undergraduates' writing anxiety in Indonesia. Fredricks et al.'s (2004) multidimensional aspects of engagement (*behavioural, emotional and cognitive*) were considered in this study. Qualitative data collected through classroom observation and student interviews revealed that while most students showed positive behavioural and emotional engagement in their learning activities, irrespective of whether they experienced low or high writing-related anxiety, students did demonstrate negative cognitive engagement in learning activities. Astrid et al. (2017) provide evidence that indicates that the combination of teacher and peer feedback becomes more effective when teacher intervention occurs through sharing and feedback sessions. The study further showed that collaborative group activities and student-centred learning provided opportunities for low and high writing anxiety students to work together and so increase their engagement or commitment (*illusio and investment*), supported by the mediation of the teacher. This research evidence also highlights the need for ESL/EFL curriculum design that is practically oriented and supported by effective teacher enactment.

Various research studies have shown that the use of authentic materials in the EFL beginner classroom also enhances student commitment to learning (e.g., Erbaggio, Gopalakrishnan, Hobbs, & Liu, 2012). This study was conducted in China to improve EFL students' engagement through the use of authentic materials in the classroom. It revealed that this did in fact increase EFL learners' motivation and generated more positive attitudes towards the culture of the target language. Erbaggio et al. (2012) also emphasize the importance of selecting authentic materials which are more relevant to real life situations in order to create more meaningful, social and enjoyable learning environments and experiences. They suggest that if EFL learners are to be more involved in their learning then it is necessary to consider altering classroom activities as well as texts, and to align the suitability of learning activities to their learners' competency. The critical importance of the instructional curriculum - the classroom level curriculum - requires teachers to alter activities according to the level and interests of the students.

Setiawan, Munir, and Suhartono (2019) investigated student engagement in EFL classrooms through creative teaching in a different context. The subjects were selected from seventh grade junior high school EFL students from Nigeria. Qualitative data were collected through classroom observations of the enactment of creative

teaching and learning experiences and of behavioural aspects of student learning which were classified as ‘actively engaged’, ‘passively engaged’ and ‘disengaged’. The results showed that in this situation a higher number of students were reported as being actively engaged, with fewer students reported as passively engaged or disengaged. Setiawan et al. (2019) provided support for the proposition that teachers’ creativity contributes to creating meaningful teaching and learning experiences in an EFL classroom. They further claim that in order to support active learner commitment, the teacher needs to be creative and active in their pedagogical practice when employing the main curriculum at classroom level.

Student engagement (commitment) in ESL/EFL learning has been identified as a multidimensional construct which consists of more than one component, including the emotional, cognitive, behavioural and social (Philp and Duchesne, 2016). This concept will be further discussed in detail in Section 2.3.2. However, related literature shows that most ESL/EFL studies have investigated different engagement dimensions in isolation, not together (Setiawan et al., 2019). These studies focused on student engagement only regarding one selected micro skill in ESL/EFL (Astrid et al., 2017).

The following section will describe different dimensions of the concept of engagement as used by scholars in engagement studies.

### **2.3.1 The construct of engagement**

The review of literature on engagement in this section shows that studies have over time considered student engagement as multidimensional. That is, research has come to utilise more than one dimension to indicate student engagement. Moreover, different dimensions of engagement have been found to be interrelated and interdependent (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012). As this is the understanding adopted in this study, the next section will map the development of thinking in this regard.

As described in the above section, engaged students do not just go through the process of learning; rather, they pay attention, direct attentive energy to the task and exhibit emotional engagement (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Skinner and Pitzer (2012) have included characteristics such as constructiveness, enthusiasm, willingness, positive emotions, and cognitively focused participation in learning activities as characteristics of student engagement. Crucially, the construct of engagement now assumes that different dimensions of engagement such as the cognitive, behavioural,

social, and emotional are interdependent (Philp and Duchesne, 2016). However, it is important to know the special features of the individual dimensions before discussing their interdependence. The following section therefore discusses these dimensions individually with reference to related literature.

### ***2.3.1.1 Cognitive Engagement***

*Cognitive engagement* refers to the learner's sustained attention, mental effort, and self-regulation strategies (Helme & Clarke, 2001; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Researchers have recognized a number of indicators of cognitive engagement in collaborative activities, including learners' oral interactions such as completing peer utterances, questioning, exchanging ideas and explanations, giving directions, making evaluative comments, and justifying an argument, as well as using facial expressions and gestures (Helme & Clarke, 2001; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). This shows that cognitive engagement is represented through verbal as well as nonverbal communication. At the same time, some researchers have considered cognitive engagement as representing thoughtfulness and willingness to make an effort to comprehend complex ideas and to obtain necessary skills in order to learn (Mahatmya, Lohman, Matjasko & Farb, 2012); however, Svalberg (2009) considers these characteristics as affective aspects of engagement. In her expanded definition of engagement with language, she says that,

affectively, the engaged individual has a positive, purposeful, willing, and autonomous disposition towards the object (language, the language and/or what it represents). (Svalberg, 2009, p.247)

Svalberg (2009) further points out that the cognitively engaged learner is attentive and constructs their own knowledge through focused attention.

Generally speaking, the wide range of factors implicated in cognitive involvement are not taken into consideration in language classrooms as there is a tendency to evaluate or judge language learners' proficiency only through their verbal communication. When researching students' cognitive engagement therefore, it is important to analyse audio as well as visual data. This can be done through a combination of classroom observations and lesson transcripts (Fredricks et al., 2004; Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Svalberg, 2009). Indirect and extended data can also be collected through retrospective questionnaires and stimulated recall interviews



(Gass & Mackey, 2000; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). In the course of the review of previous research focused on cognitive engagement it became apparent that there is qualitative research (Early & Marshall, 2008; Gass & Mackey, 2000) as well as quantitative research (Darr 2012; Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick, 2012) on the topic. In other words, multiple approaches are available in the extant literature for studying cognitive engagement. The current study collected qualitative data through student focus-groups and teacher semi-structured interviews; however, the study could not gather visual data as the enactment of the re-designed curriculum took place in an online classroom because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***2.3.1.2 Behavioural Engagement***

*Behavioural engagement* denotes learners' time on task or their active participation in classroom activities. In other words, it refers to the amount of time a learner is actively engaged in their academic activities. Philp and Duchesne (2016) refer to the term '*on-task*' as a synonym for behavioural involvement, whereas others interpret it as a dichotomy, that is, '*engaged behaviour*' and '*disengaged behaviour*' or '*off-task behaviour*' (Anderson, 1975). Other researchers (e.g., Mahatmya et al., 2012) view behavioural engagement as a *continuum* which depends on the degree and quality of participation. They refer to *participation* as involvement in academic as well as social or extracurricular activities and they consider the amount of effort, determination and active involvement as indicators of participation, with behavioural engagement indicating the extent to which learners engage or disengage with academic experience and achievement, which is directly related to learning outcomes (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Classroom observations help to understand students' participation and the effort that they make; as do teacher reports and student self-reports or interviews, which contribute qualitative data (Fredricks & McColsky, 2012). On the other hand, quantitative measures of data collection can also be utilised, such as student surveys (Darr, 2012). These various means of data gathering presented a range of methodological possibilities for the present study. A qualitative approach was adopted, using data collection via student focus-group discussion and teacher semi-structured interviews.

### ***2.3.1.3 Emotional Engagement***

The definition of *emotional engagement* varies depending on the research focus. In the context of the classroom and a task, emotional engagement indicates the extent

of the learner's motivated involvement in the academic activity (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). Interest, enthusiasm, and enjoyment are key indicators of positive emotional engagement, whereas frustration, anxiety and boredom are negative emotional engagement indicators (Lazarus, 2006; Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). Purposefulness and autonomy can also be considered as aspects of emotional engagement (Baralt, Gurzynski-Weiss & Kim, 2016). Philp and Duchesne (2016) propose that students' feelings of connection or disconnection in relation to their peers or their activity interlocutor can also be included in consideration of emotional engagement. In the context of language learning, group or pair activities can provide the learner with a positive learning environment if their peers are supportive. On the other hand, if peers are not supportive, the learner may become disheartened and experience negative emotions. Irrespective of whether they are positive or negative, emotions impact on students' learning strategies and the degree of effort they put into their learning (Méndez López & Peña Aguilar, 2013; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). A further insight gained from extant literature is that the emotional dimension of learning is interdependent and linked with social, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Section 2.4 discusses further detail related to studies on the relationship between emotions and ESL/EFL learning.

#### ***2.3.1.4 Social Engagement***

Finn and Zimmer (2012) refer to social engagement at school level as “the extent to which a student follows written and unwritten classroom rules of behaviour” (p.102). Socially engaged students are seen to come to school on time and to interact with teachers, peers, and others in appropriate ways, while avoiding antisocial behaviours such as withdrawing from academic activities or disrupting the teaching and learning of others. The higher the level of social engagement, the more learning takes place, while a lower level of social engagement may delay learning. Social engagement can therefore be seen to function as a facilitator between academic engagement and achievement (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Svalberg (2009) argued that in the context of instructed language learning (e.g., the classroom), the social dimension should be prioritized as a key dimension of engagement. Philp and Duchesne (2016) support this view, also believing that the social dimension should be foregrounded in language learning engagement. Yet curiously, social engagement is not included in all

engagement models, although it is observed to be fundamentally connected to interaction and learners' initiation and continuation of such engagement (Svalberg, 2009).

Social engagement and emotional engagement are seen to be closely linked due to an 'affiliation' which acts as an influential social goal for learners and is characteristic of the unique context for learning provided by peers (Hartup, 1992; Philp & Duchesne, 2008). This is particularly relevant to the language learning context, where social engagement provides an important opportunity for learners to interact in the target language. This particularly enhances two major language skills, namely listening and speaking, at the same time supporting the development of the other skills. Social engagement plays a vital role in collaborative group learning activities, where the success of the task depends on effective interaction between peers (Philp & Duchesne, 2008; Storch, 2002). Several studies have provided evidence that language learning takes place more effectively when learners are socially engaged by interacting and providing feedback to each other (Moranski & Toth, 2016; Sato & Ballinger, 2012; Storch, 2008). Svalberg (2009), for example, explains the social dimension in her definition of engagement with language in the following terms: "... socially, the engaged individual is interactive and initiating" (p.247). Svalberg (2009) also argues that in the setting of instructed language learning the social dimension should be prioritized, which aligns with the view of Philp and Duchesne (2016), who similarly argue that the social dimension should be foregrounded in language learning although it is not included in all models. It is fundamentally connected with interaction (Svalberg, 2009).

Since the current study took place in a collaborative ESL learning environment, the social dimension was a key focus. Students were provided with more opportunities than previously to interact with each other. To support understanding of this dimension, the following section reviews dimensions of engagement. After describing different dimensions of the concept, I discuss how engagement has been viewed as a multidimensional construct over time by scholars in engagement studies.

### 2.3.2 Engagement as a Multidimensional Construct

As noted previously, Philp and Duchesne (2016) observe that although the field of Applied Linguistics has recognized the importance of cognitive, behavioural, social, and emotional dimensions in relation to instructed language learning, these dimensions have tended to be viewed individually, not together. However, educational literature has shown that it is important to consider them collectively as they are interdependent and overlapping. They are not isolated or independent concepts (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). For example, when a student is interested in a task, they will become emotionally engaged, whereas if a student is bored or disinterested in the activity, emotional disengagement is more likely. If a student in a group activity does not connect with other group members, they may disengage socially. This student may consequently be off-task behaviourally (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Table 2.1 demonstrates possible ways that different dimensions impact on each other both favourably and unfavourably (Reschly & Christenson, 2012).

Furthermore, dimensions can have negative or positive effects on each other as they sometimes compete with each other. For instance, language learning group activities - usually designed with a focus on social and emotional engagement - may either support cognitive and behaviourally expressed emotions or they may side-track learners (Early & Marshall, 2008; Méndez López & Peña Aguilar, 2013; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Further, unlike pair activities, group activities may allow some members to complete the task without being either cognitively or behaviourally involved.

Philp and Duchesne (2016) argue that researching only one dimension may result in a partial picture of engagement. It is important, rather, to investigate multiple dimensions if a fuller understanding of students' engagement in their learning is to be achieved. Janosz (2012) extends the above argument, postulating that it is important to investigate relationships between different dimensions in order to see how each influences and mediates the effect of the others. Svalberg (2009), who identifies the study of the complexity of different engagement dimensions by some applied linguists, also proposes that it is necessary to examine individual dimensions of engagement while also researching them holistically, as all are equally important and they are interrelated.

**Table 2.1 Mediating effects of dimensions of engagement**

Dimension of Engagement	Mediating Effect on other Dimensions	Activating or Strengthening Engagement	Deactivating or Inhibiting Engagement
Emotional	Cognitive	High interest in topic or task prompts concentrated thinking.	Student is so excited that she or he can't focus or so anxious that she or he can't think.
	Behavioural	Interest and excitement prompt student to keep working on the task in spite of difficulties.	Boredom or frustration leads to no work on task.
	Social	One peer's excitement about or interest in a task draws others in.	Mismatch of emotional engagement leads to lack of social connection between peers on a task.
Social	Cognitive	Peers working together support each other's thinking (mutuality, reciprocity).	Student switches off from task because his or her partner isn't working with them; or peers distract each other from thinking about the task.
	Emotional	Student enjoys the task because of the social element.	Student doesn't enjoy the task because social relations aren't working.
	Behavioural	Student spends time on task because of social aspects.	Social goals are more important than doing the task.
Cognitive	Behavioural	Students are intent on "solving the puzzle" and keep working until it is done.	Students are so focused on one aspect of a task that they neglect others.
	Emotional	Student's interest is caught by a particular idea or cognitive challenge.	Cognitive challenge results in frustration.
	Social	Students are prompted to work with or seek help from others by the ideas or challenges of the task.	Student works on the task individually and doesn't want input from others.
Behavioural	Cognitive	Task itself focuses attention, prompts deep thinking.	Students focused on task completion at a superficial level: surface approach to learning limits cognitive engagement.
	Emotional	Successful task completion prompts student to want to do more.	Task is boring or frustrating to complete, so student approaches this kind of activity negatively in future.
	Social	Cooperative tasks strengthen social links.	Competitive tasks may disrupt social relations.

(Adapted from Philp & Duchesne, 2016, p.60)

The next section examines more closely the importance of emotions in relation to ESL learning. It provides a rationale for the prominence given to the emotional dimension in the current study. Emotions are seen to be of particular salience for learners of a second or foreign language.

## 2.4 Emotions and ESL/EFL learning

Scholars who are interested in emotions claim that it is important to attend to their role in academic settings (Méndez López & Peña Aguilar, 2013; Parrott, 2007; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002; Pishghadam et al. 2016). Although some issues remain in relation to defining the term, most scholars are in agreement with the idea that emotion is an *affective* response which can influence behaviour, thinking and expressions of a person (Pishghadam et al. 2016; Scherer, Schorr & Johnstone, 2001). As noted, motivation in learning a foreign or a second language can be impacted by both positive and negative emotions (Ismail, 2015; Lopez & Aguilar, 2013; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002; Pishghadam et al. 2016). Teachers have long grappled with the emotional dimension of language learner engagement, while researchers have turned to the topic more recently. There remains much work to be done. Turner (2009) claimed that emotions would traditionally have been given a very general definition by referring to terms such as *feelings* and *affects*, rather than providing a specific definition *per se*. He argued that emotions function at different levels, namely the biological and neurological, the behavioural, cultural, structural, and situational. In line with this understanding, varied definitions may be used depending on the focus and the field of study. As Turner (2009) points out, the most appropriate definition of emotions should go beyond general definition by referring it to other terms such as *feelings* and *affect*.

Imai (2010) is one researcher who does not refer to *affect* and *emotion* as the same term, considering as he does that *affect* is an umbrella term that encompasses emotional, motivational, and personal aspects of human behaviour. He subsequently describes emotions and moods as two essential components of *affect*. *Emotions* are strong but quick cognitive content that has a specific cause, for example, anger or fear. In contrast, *moods*, such as ‘feeling good’ or ‘feeling bad’, have less significant cognitive content and are less powerful, but they persist for a longer time, without a clear reason (Forgas, 1992; Imai, 2010). Imai (2010) recognises affect as one of the

vital constituents of learning outcome differences demonstrated by individual learners. While most SLA researchers consider emotions as the primary component of affect, together with feelings and moods, (Arnold & Brown, 1999; Brown, 2000; Imai, 2010), Imai (2010) emphasises that they are not just a by-product derived as a result of social interaction, they are rather the means of strengthening human social interactions, to helping people to organise themselves and be active in society.

Imai (2010) and Pavlenko (2005) both claim that although SLA research has recognised emotions as the principal component of affect - together with moods and feelings - they have not been given due recognition. The term is frequently poorly defined, often listed alongside other socio-psychological terms, such as motivation, attitudes, anxiety. At the same time, most of the socio-psychological concepts have been studied in isolation, which has prevented the gaining of better research-informed understanding of the role and meaning of emotions and affect in relation to second language acquisition (Imai, 2010; Pavlenko, 2005).

Imai (2010), who investigated emotions in second language learning, postulated that for a better understanding of the concept it is essential to integrate interpersonal and communicative dimensions, although the former are conventionally seen as the inner and private experiences of a person. Swain (2013, p.196), who referred to Imai (2010) in her study on ‘the inseparability of cognition and emotion in second language learning’, has argued that emotions are not private or “*intrapsychic*” aspects: they are rather interpersonal and derived socially as well as culturally, together with cognition; and both Imai (2010) and Swain (2013) claim that emotions do in fact facilitate learning outcomes, particularly in the context of language learning through collaboration. Zeng and Huang (2016) also referenced the work of Imai (2010) in their study on the “role of sentiments and co-regulation in online collaborative learning” (p.65) when studying undergraduate and postgraduate students in China. They too support the viewpoint that emotions can mediate and facilitate the functioning and development of the inner cognition of an individual in the context of learning (Zeng & Huang, 2016).

As Imai (2010) has observed, most SLA studies on affective factors including emotions have primarily been quantitative, focusing frequently on anxiety, motivation and learning outcomes. Researchers have not paid much attention to affect-emotions as an essential element of SLA research, nor have they examined them qualitatively. In contrast, this study has collected qualitative data through the use of semi-structured

interviews with ESL teachers and student focus-groups, rather than collecting quantitative data on students' emotions through administering a questionnaire.

Imai's (2010) exploratory study of the social aspects of emotions in the context of language learning draws upon the concept of '*emotional intersubjectivity*', which represents emotions as a social phenomenon (further discussed in Chapter 3). During social interactions, including group learning activities, participants are understood to perceive what they are each thinking, and to have better understanding of each other (Denzin, 1984; Imai, 2010; Greeno, Collins and Resnick, 1996; Scheff, 1973). In addition, Imai (2010) points out that *emotional intersubjectivity* has a close connection to Vygotsky's *sociocultural theory of mind*, where social interaction is understood to contribute significantly to establishing a foundation for learning (Vygotsky, 1980; Wertsch, 1985) and to the concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD)<sup>7</sup>, which refers to what a learner can do with or without the help of more capable others (Donato, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). The current study uses Bourdieu's *theory of practice*, which looks at aspects of learning or being through a sociological lens (as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.3); this theory connects with Vygotsky's *sociocultural theory of mind* through the application of a socio-constructivist perspective.

Imai (2010) argues that it is more important to make *sense* than to make *meaning* in language learning, as learners' knowledge construction happens when they confront the necessity of their participation in task completion. Language learners need to experience the sense that they have to interact and negotiate with each other in order to complete the given task. Imai (2010) demonstrates how learners' knowledge construction happens when they are faced with the need to participate in order to complete the task. The point made here is that learners have to harness their emotions, whether positive or negative, in order to complete the task, understanding that their contribution is needed in order to complete the activity. Imai (2010) claims that research on the role and meaning of emotions in relation to SLA should go beyond merely establishing whether a particular emotion affects language learning negatively or positively when investigating learning as an interpersonal transaction, emphasizing the role of teacher involvement in the enactment of curriculum at classroom level -

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<sup>7</sup> The concept of the '*Zone of Proximal Development*' (ZPD) refers to the gap between what a student can learn and what a teacher can teach (Vygotsky, 1980).



where curriculum content is transferred to the students (Deng, 2018; Dooley, forthcoming; Doyle, 1992a, 1992b).

Swain and Miccoli (1994) conducted a case-study with an adult Japanese ESL learner at tertiary level in order to explore emotional and social aspects of ESL learning in a content-based collaborative learning environment in Canada. The results of their study revealed that the participant initially experienced negative emotions due to her negative self-perception 'as a poor language learner'. Her emotions were reported in three phases, with the first two being marked by negative feelings of anxiety and depression respectively. The evidence indicated that negative emotions were caused by the nature of the material used in classroom activities and by communication difficulties due to the fact that her English proficiency level was lower than that of other group members. However, during the third phase of the course, the participant reported feeling happier as she had overcome her negative emotions and was able to improve her English proficiency. Swain and Miccoli (1994) reported that their regular interviews with the participant had helped her to overcome her negative emotions through a process of constructive "conscious reflection" (p.19). A further finding from this study was that the cultural background of the participant also impacted her adaptation to collaborative group activities, as she belonged to a culture where learners worked individually in a teacher-fronted classroom, so adapting to collaborative and peer group work presented a challenge for her. As Swain and Miccoli (1994) suggest, this research evidence re-emphasizes the importance of familiarising students with the social aspect of the collaborative learning environment, as awareness and support is needed to make such an adjustment to the learning environment and to their reactive emotions.

Imai (2010) and Pishghadam (2009) identify the limited nature of research into the emotional dimension of English language learning; and most of this research (Imai, 2010; Ismail, 2015; Pishghadam, Zabetipour, & Aminzadeh, 2016; Saito, Dewaele, Abe, & In'nami, 2018) into associated affective factors and emotions has mainly focused on negative emotions, especially on anxiety. This is perhaps unsurprising, as learner anxiety associated with speaking in a foreign language is often obvious in classrooms and in other language learning contexts. Researchers such as Saito, Dewaele, Abe, and In'nami (2018) note that it is only very recently that researchers have proposed a more holistic view of emotions, one which includes positive emotions associated with L2/FL learning. The most current cross-sectional and longitudinal

study conducted on this issue indicated a positive impact on second language (L2) acquisition where the L2 is frequently used with positive emotions, which counteract negative ones and support L2 development. However, since the data analysis of this study was solely quantitative it would not have been possible to establish more comprehensive understanding of learners' emotional changes or the interaction of these emotions with the language learning context (Imai, 2010).

A study by Pishghadam et al. (2016) suggests inadequate research attention has been paid to the emotions of ESL/EFL learners with reference to their experience of learning different language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking). The focus of this study was on how different language skills impact on EFL learners' emotions, by measuring emotional experiences in relation to the different skills. They identified the fact that no comprehensive instruments had been developed to assess emotions until Pekrun, Goetz and Perry developed the *Academic Emotions Questionnaire* (AEQ) in 2005. This is “a self-report instrument which has been designed to assess the relationship between achievement, emotions, and students' learning and academic performance” (Pishghadam et al. 2016, p.510). Pishghadam et al. (2016) utilised this instrument while validating a scale termed the *EFL Skills Emotions Scale* in order to measure emotions experienced by EFL learners in relation to different language skills, and their evidence established that each of the language skills is associated with specific emotions - although anxiety is associated with them all. Their findings support recognition of the importance of creating a learner friendly classroom where students can experience more positive and fewer negative emotions in order to benefit from an effective L2/ FL learning experience. This conclusion leads back to the potential of collaborative learning activities to create such a positive learning environment and experiences. The following section discusses literature related to collaborative learning and ESL/EFL learners.

## **2.5 Collaborative learning and ESL / EFL learners**

When talking about collaborative ESL/EFL learning it is important to talk about the context in which the collaboration takes place. This section therefore discusses the three main *communicative strands* in foreign (FL) or second language (L2) learning, and how the theory of *social constructivism* is reflected in a collaborative learning approach.

### 2.5.1 Communicative strands in second language (L2)/ foreign language (FL)

When considering group or pair activities as a teaching-learning technique, there are three main *communicative strands* in the foreign (FL) or second language (L2) learning context to be considered (Oxford, 1997a). As demonstrated in Table 2.2, these are *cooperative learning*, *collaborative learning*, and *interaction*. In general terms, the three terms collectively indicate the process of working together with others; but while they share certain surface similarities, they have their own characteristics in a teaching-learning context (Oxford, 1997a). It is important to identify similarities and distinguishing features between cooperative learning and collaborative learning, as each varies in terms of distinctions, implications, and classroom applications (Oxford, 1997a). Table 2.2 provides a comparative overview of the main aspects of the three strands.

The focus of cooperative activities is to enhance cognitive and social skills, whereas that of collaborative activities is to assimilate learners into knowledge communities (Table 2.2), and the main purpose of interaction activities is for learners to communicate with others. Oxford (1997a) suggests that cooperative learning is more suitable for primary and secondary school learners rather than for post-secondary or adult learners, with teachers providing well-structured and more prescriptive and targeted instructions; and that interaction, on the other hand, takes place when learners, teachers and others act upon each other in the making of meaning, although it might not always entail learning new concepts (Oxford, 1997a).

Collaborative learning may be more suitable for tertiary level learners than for primary and secondary learning, as learners get the opportunity to interact with more capable others and to benefit from their assistance and guidance (Bruffee, 1999, Oxford, 1997a). As shown in Table 2.2, in cooperative learning all group members are equally accountable for their group work, whereas collaborative learning provides scaffolding within the ZPD - assistance provided by teachers and peers to learners who need help in order to achieve their learning goals (Jacobs, 2001; Rasmussen, 2001). Compared to cooperative learning, therefore, collaborative learning is an acculturative practice in which learners get an opportunity to adapt themselves according to the properties of the new knowledge community to which they are gaining membership (Bruffee, 1999; Oxford, 1997a). The current study uses collaborative learning as it is considered appropriate for university students, providing them with chances to interact

with more experienced individuals who can assist, help and share their knowledge with them (Bruffee, 1999, Oxford, 1997a).

**Table 2.2**  
**Conceptual Comparisons between Cooperative Learning, Collaborative Learning, and Interaction**

Aspects	Strand 1: Cooperative Learning	Strand 2: Collaborative Learning	Strand 3: Interaction
Purpose	Enhances cognitive and social skills via a set of known techniques	Acculturates learners into knowledge communities	Allows learners to communicate with others in numerous ways
Degree of Structure	High	Variable	Variable
Relationships	Individual is accountable to the group and vice versa; teacher facilitates, but group is primary	Learner engages with “more capable others” (teachers, advanced peers, etc.), who provide assistance and guidance	Learners, teachers, and others engage with each other in meaningful ways
Prescriptiveness of Activities	High	Low	Variable
Key Terms	Positive interdependence, accountability teamwork, roles, cooperative learning structures	<i>Zone of Proximal Development</i> (ZPD) <sup>8</sup> , cognitive apprenticeship, acculturation, scaffolding, situated cognition, reflective inquiry, epistemology	Interaction-producing tasks, willingness to interact, learning styles, group dynamics, stages of group life, physical environments

(Adapted from Oxford, 1997a, p. 444)

All these three strands are used in the L2/FL classroom. The following section discusses the connection between collaborative constituents and *social constructivism*

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<sup>8</sup> The concept of the ‘*Zone of Proximal Development*’ (ZPD) refers to the gap between what a student can learn and what a teacher can teach (Vygotsky, 1980).

theory, a currently widely adopted theoretical frame in discussions of student learning in countries around the world.

### **2.5.2 Collaborative learning in relation to Social Constructivism**

John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky are key theorists in the development of the theory of social constructivism (discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1). According to Dewey, there is a triangular relationship between the individual, the community, and the world in the social construction of ideas (as cited in Oxford, 1997a; 1997b). Socially constructed ideas are mediated by these three components (Oxford, 1997b). Dewey had proposed four conditions required for an idea to become meaningful: it needs to be i) part of an acceptable theory, ii) instrumentally useful for creating positive action, iii) constructed by participants in society, and iv) related to the guideposts or reference points provided by society (as cited in Oxford, 1997a, p.447). Dewey perceived teaching as a disciplined inquiry where the teaching is endorsed by the knowledge community, or the *community of learners* (Oxford, 1997a). In disciplined inquiry teaching is considered as a process, conducted through observation and sensitivity to learner requirements (Mason, 2009). In such disciplined inquiry, learner reactions are monitored by teachers and their behaviour is altered while they learn to adjust and harness their emotions accordingly whenever possible.

Oxford (1997a) regards the tendency to associate collaborative learning with social constructivist theory on the part of many scholars as reflecting the move to create a constructivist epistemology, describing epistemology as “the field of study that deals with what is known and how it is known” (1997a, p.447). Oxford points out that from a social constructivist perspective, individuals do not learn alone; learning takes place within a community that the learners belong to; individuals and community cannot be considered separately. Scaffolding is a feature of collaborative learning and a key element of social constructivism. The teacher is considered as a facilitator who helps students when required, who scaffolds this help until they become self-directed (Oxford, 1997a). In a similar manner, other more advanced students/peers are also there to assist learners when they require help to complete tasks (see Table 2.2).

Social constructivism emphasises the learning process rather than the product or the completion of the task. Acculturation is a characteristic of this process and of collaborative learning; learners should have the opportunity to adapt themselves to the relevant knowledge communities (Bruffee, 1999; Oxford, 1997a) (see Table 2.2), to

become part of the community while they develop their learning. This element of community can be considered as a fundamental requirement in L2 or FL learning; learners need to be given opportunities to use the target language, and to experience the associated culture(s). The collaborative learning environment, which has an epistemological foundation, provides L2/FL learners opportunities for social interaction in the target language between peers and the teacher (Oxford, 1997a). The following section discusses how social constructivism is reflected in L2/FL learning in a collaborative learning context.

### **2.5.3 Applying Social Constructivism to Collaborative Learning in the L2/ FL learning context**

When learning a second (L2) or a foreign language (FL), the learning environment is an important factor as part of the culture of the target language. The classroom is the immediate social context which constitutes the cultural context of the learning community (Oxford, 1997a). Particularly in the FL context, the classroom may be the only learning community and language context experienced by students; and the teacher may be the only representative or point of connection with the target language culture. Social and cultural contexts are vital elements of L2 or FL learning.

Oxford (1997a) claims that social constructivism lays “the foundation for collaborative learning” (p. 449) in the L2/FL classroom. According to Table 2.1, unlike cooperative learning, collaborative learning is more flexible in its use of techniques and instructional methods because it puts more focus on the acculturation of learners in relation to the target language and associated culture (Oxford, 1997a). It incorporates the understanding that while communication in a social group happens as a result of individual cognition it cannot be separated from social interaction (Oxford, 1997a; Vygotsky, 1986). This interaction between group members facilitated by the collaborative learning environment is scaffolded by the teacher and the more advanced students. Collaborative group activities support the development of target language proficiency, while simultaneously acculturating learners in relation to the learning as well as the target culture. The next section discusses how collaborative learning has been utilised in L2/FL learning.

### **2.5.4 Collaborative learning in the L2/ FL context**

As discussed in the previous section, social interaction is an important factor in a second or a foreign language learning context, a core element of a learner-friendly

environment (Oxford, 1997a; Vygotsky, 1986). Nunan (1992) emphasizes the fact that in a collaborative learning environment students work collectively towards achieving shared learning goals. He further argues that collaborative learning usually discourages competitiveness, although there is always a possibility of the co-occurrence of competition and collaboration in any classroom. This type of competition may happen between small groups in relation to completing the assigned task rather than between individual learners. It is likely that learners become more friendly and less anxious in a collaborative classroom learning environment.

Some scholars make no significant distinction between cooperative and collaborative learning, unlike Oxford (1997a) who treats them as different entities by categorising communication strands into three main categories of cooperative learning, collaborative learning, and interaction (see Section 2.3.1). Nunan (1992), for example, makes no clear distinction between the three categories, using them interchangeably under the umbrella term of ‘collaborative learning’ in his book, *Collaborative Language Learning and Teaching*. Imai (2010), who investigated the role of the emotions of tertiary level EFL students in a collaborative learning environment, similarly considered cooperative and collaborative learning as interchangeable; as did Wilson (2016) in his investigation into shame, which is considered as the master negative emotion, and collaborative learning in an L2 context. Kowal and Swain (2010), who conducted a collaborative learning study on learners studying French as an L2, also concluded that there is no great dissimilarity between cooperative and collaborative learning, adding that they did not want to use the term cooperative learning in order to avoid the situation where people use the term ‘group activities’ in general. They had subsequently used the term collaborative learning to describe group work where learners learn from more expert peers and help each other to complete assigned tasks. Kowal and Swain (2010) clarify that what they refer to as ‘collaborative learning situations’ is similar to Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (see Section 2.2.2 for detail). Generally, therefore, it can be seen that in the literature related to collaborative learning and L2 or FL learners it seems that researchers tend not to draw a sharp distinction between cooperative and collaborative learning, although they generally consider collaborative learning to have special features compared to conventional group activities.

Imai's study (2010) of emotions in a collaborative EFL environment suggests that collaborative activities encourage students to think collectively and to adjust their emotions as they work towards a common goal. During collaborative activities learners develop emotional intersubjectivity, learning to harness and adjust their emotions (explained in Section 2.4) as they communicate with each other while working towards a common goal.

Wilson (2016) postulates that a collaborative environment promotes more effective student engagement in L2 learning as it is more conducive to developing interpersonal relationships that help students to overcome perceived threats and challenges in the L2 learning experience, noting that shame typically functions as the master or dominant emotion among other negative emotions like fear, anxiety, anger and depression. He proposes a way to overcome the effects of emotions triggered by negative psychological and sociological factors in the L2 learning context by using a stress regulatory system: *tend-and-befriend* responses. He offers this strategy as a more constructive way of facing fear than *fight, flight and fright* defensive responses. (*Fight* deploying opposition to activation, whereas *flight* is considered as withdrawal or avoidance, and *fright* is associated with inactivity or freezing (Bracha, 2004; Wilson, 2016)). As Wilson points out, although fight, flight and fright are defensive mechanisms, they are not appropriate responses as they hinder effective L2 learning and performance.

The *tend-and-befriend* responsive model “offers an alternative perspective on how humans utilize interpersonal relationships within social groups to respond to threat” (Wilson, 2016, p.248). L2 learners who struggle with negative emotions are likely to respond destructively if they utilise the *fight, flight and fright* mechanism; but if they have the opportunity to work in a collaborative environment with a *tend-and-befriend* mechanism, they can receive support from other group members to help deal with their negative emotions. Wilson (2016) claims that this model applied in a collaborative learning context provides a remedial measure that can limit the destructive effects associated with negative emotions associated with L2 learning. He argues that through collaborative learning learners receive social support which strengthens their confidence to continue to try instead of withdrawing from the activity or suffering from reduced working memory span.



Kowal and Swain (2010), who conducted a study on L2 learning of French in a collaborative environment in Canada, also argue the importance of providing an opportunity for L2 learners to confidently produce the target language, developing their language proficiency while also developing good understanding of the L2 learning process. They demonstrate how collaborative group activities provide more opportunities for students to interact with each other than in a conventional teacher-fronted classroom. They propose two hypotheses that can be made in relation to functions of output in L2 collaborative learning, based on shifting from mainly semantic requirements needed in relation to comprehension to syntactic procedures necessary for production. Their first hypothesis is that when L2 learners get a chance to produce the TL they find out “what they do not know” (Kowal & Swain, 2010, p.75), that is, when they try to communicate, they discover the gap between what they need to convey and what they are capable of saying in order to communicate their intended meaning. Generally, in terms of comprehension we do not notice this gap as we get the meaning by utilising some word combinations without being concerned about syntax (Kowal & Swain, 2010; Krashen, 1982). For example, the gap noticed by the learner may be a vocabulary item or a grammatical structure needed to express the intended meaning. Kowal and Swain (2010) argue that in collaborative work students get opportunities to produce the target language as well as to notice gaps between what they want to say and what they can say. At the same time they learn from their peers, who assist in filling the gap, as the collaborative environment itself provides additional linguistic resources (Kowal & Swain, 2010).

Kowal and Swain’s second hypothesis (2010) is that the consciousness or awareness of language is developed through participation in conversations around collaborative activities. When learners engage in a collaborative group task they develop their awareness of what it is that they are learning, particularly of the grammatical structures, forms and rules of the target language. It is argued that consciousness is made and developed “through the mediation of another” (Kowal & Swain, 2010, p.75; Vygotsky, 1979). Tasks need to be designed so that learners are exposed to certain forms, rules and examples of the target language in ways that relate to their conversations (Kowal & Swain, 2010). For example, Kowal and Swain observed that students learning French as an L2 were able to construct unfamiliar grammatical forms while building on their existing knowledge and vocabulary in the

target language. This study highlighted the importance of paying conscious attention in designing collaborative tasks to the ways that learners are going to understand and complete the tasks while at the same time ‘noticing the gap’. The re-designing of the EGAP instructional curriculum for this study took account of both the university’s teaching schedule and the activities given in the existing coursebook, and the teachers ensured that the students needed to collaborate with each other in order to complete the tasks.

From the review presented above it is clear that previous researchers have used the concept of engagement to discuss the phenomenon which is of interest in this study, although the study uses the term ‘commitment’. This concept has been useful, as it has enabled researchers to understand student engagement and disengagement in learning in relation to different engagement dimensions. However, what it does not enable is investigation of student commitment in relation to sociological aspects of language learning. This is important for this study. As discussed in Chapter One, the history of English language in Sri Lanka, especially in education, has had profound social consequences. A sociological approach to the problem investigated in this study is therefore important, and elements of Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological framework are drawn upon to investigate the issue of student commitment in their ESL learning, drawing on concepts such as *illusio* and *investment*. An elaboration of these concepts is provided in the next chapter.

Two main bodies of empirical literature have been reviewed in this chapter. One was framed in terms of theories of engagement and was reviewed in relation to the commitment of ESL students to learning. The other related to the place of English in Sri Lankan society and to the role of schools in teaching English. As will be explained in the next chapter, these matters can be understood in terms of curriculum. Concepts of institutional, programmatic and instructional curriculum (Deng, 2018; Dooley, forthcoming; Doyle, 1992b) offer coherent theoretical purchase on these issues. The conceptualisation of curriculum is reviewed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4).

## **2.6 Summary of the major propositions derived from the literature**

This review of literature in relation to students’ engagement and collaborative learning, particularly in language learning as an L2 or FL, has revealed some

significant gaps in the literature. More particularly, a focus on these issues in the context of teaching and learning English as a second language in Sri Lankan contexts is particularly sparse. Closer investigation of collaborative group activities in ESL teaching in this context is needed. Studies of collaborative group activities in Japanese and Canadian contexts have been useful in terms of advancing ESL/EFL teaching (Imai, 2010; Kowal & Swain, 2010; Swain & Miccoli, 1994); empirical research in the Sri Lankan context can provide similar insights. Imai (2010) and Kowal and Swain (2010) have provided evidence of the effectiveness of peer interaction in target language learning, particularly in collaborative learning group activities where learners work collectively. Sri Lanka being an Asian country where ESL learners face some cultural challenges (Szanajda & Chang, 2015) will benefit from investigations into more collaboratively-based ESL learning, which holds promise of creating a more student-friendly environment than that of the conventional teacher-fronted classroom.

The literature reviewed in this chapter shows that the term *engagement* has been viewed from different viewpoints, and that definitions vary depending on the focus and context of a study. Consideration of the term has extended from academic learning time to various other aspects of academic involvement, including those associated with the behavioural, and social-emotional domains (Finn, 1989; Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Most recent conceptualizations have viewed engagement as a multidimensional construct, and it has been argued that these types of engagement are interrelated and interdependent. Skinner and Pitzer's (2012) multilevel engagement model does not, however, extend to examining tertiary or higher education level students' engagement, the focus selected for this study, which considers multiple aspects of what has been called engagement, although it does so through the Bourdieusian concepts of *illusio* and *investment* in practice.

To summarise, the literature indicates that although second language acquisition (SLA) research has recognised the importance of emotions in language learning, they have not been given due recognition and the term is on the whole poorly defined. In addition, SLA studies of affective factors associated with language learning have been primarily quantitative in terms of methodology, and have not tended to mine the exploratory potential of qualitative methods (Imai, 2010); hence the decision in this study to examine the relationship between emotions and L2 or FL learning through analysis of qualitative in-depth data in order to gain insight into the complexity of this dimension of the learning process (Imai, 2010).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, three-main ‘communicative strands’ in L2 and FL learning contexts - *cooperative learning*, *collaborative learning* and *interaction* – have been discussed in the literature (Oxford, 1997a), which has reported that collaborative learning is more suitable for post-secondary or adult learners than for primary and secondary-level learners. (Oxford, 1997a; Vygotsky, 1986). *Acculturation*, being a characteristic of collaborative learning, occurs when learners are given the opportunity to make adaptations according to their knowledge communities. This is an essential requirement in L2 and/or FL learning (Oxford, 1997a). In the current study, the classroom environment provided the immediate social and cultural context for the students, as almost all had very limited exposure to the target language outside the classroom. It is proposed that a collaborative learning approach represents a remedial measure in this learning context, with the potential to minimise destructive effects associated with negative emotions about learning the L2 (Wilson, 2016). Since there is a scarcity of studies related to collaborative learning in ESL in Sri Lanka, this study is intended to supplement knowledge of this context.

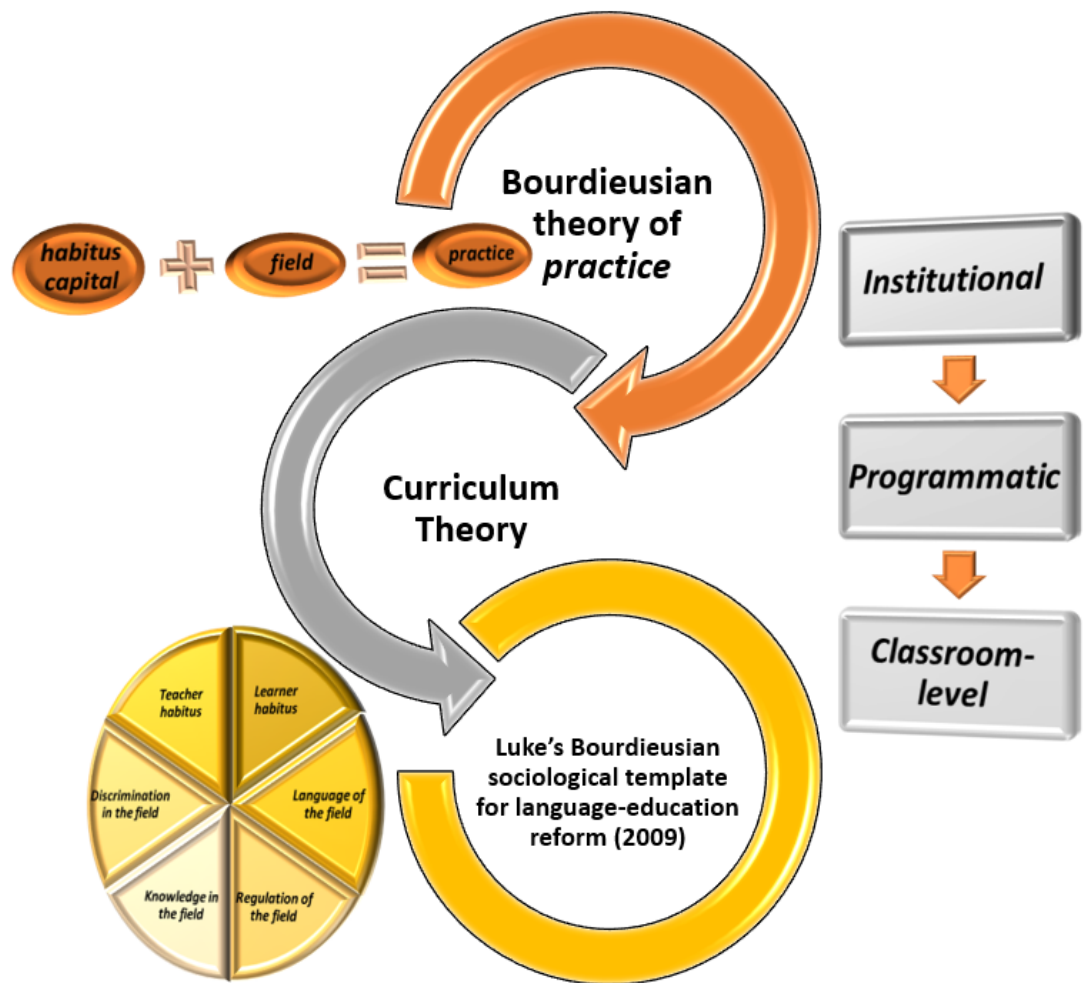
The next chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the study. It is built from Bourdieu’s *sociological theory* (especially, the conceptual triad of *habitus*, *capital* and *field*, and the concepts of *illusio* and *investment*) and from curriculum theory, with reference to the concepts of institutional, programmatic and curriculum (Deng, 2018; Dooley, forthcoming; Doyle, 1992b). These theories are applied in this study with the support of Luke’s Bourdieusian sociological template for language education reform (2009), which provides a means of understanding student commitment to learning with particular attention being paid to the sociological dynamics of learning in a collaborative environment.

## Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters it has been established that the research reported in this study investigates the problem of student commitment to ESL learning in a Sri Lankan university context. The specific research questions are concerned with how to promote student commitment through collaborative learning. The review of literature has indicated that a collaborative approach to classroom activities might be useful for addressing issues related to teaching and learning English as a second language in the university context. An exploratory case-study approach was taken to explore this proposition. This involved working with teachers to design a set of collaborative activities for teaching ESL to first year Sri Lankan university students taking an English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) course in their first year. As established in Chapter 2, the data produced through the design activities were analysed using a Bourdieusian theoretical perspective articulated with curriculum theory to obtain comprehensive theoretical purchase on the research problem. This chapter presents this theoretical framework.

The chapter involves four sections. In the first, I provide a description of *practice*, the Bourdieusian concept toolbox which enables me to describe and analyse the Sri Lankan ESL students' commitment in the collaborative group activity learning environment designed for the study. In explicating practice, I make use of Bourdieu's core triad of inter-related concepts: *field*, *capital* and *habitus*. In the second section of the chapter, I turn to discussion of *commitment*, drawing from a Bourdieusian understanding of this construct which is central to my research. In doing so, I explain the key concepts of *illusio* and *investment* (Bourdieu, 1996). The third section discusses curriculum theory and the three levels of curriculum planning, including relevant policy documents related to the target academic programme. In the fourth section, I bring together Bourdieu's concepts of *practice* and *curriculum theory* supported by Luke's Bourdieusian sociological template for language education reform (2009). The chapter closes with a summary of the Bourdieusian concepts in relation to learning in a collaborative/group activity environment and curriculum theory and the EGAP curriculum. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the theoretical framework of the study.



**Figure 3.1**  
Theoretical framework for re-designing EGAP Enactment with a Collaborative Learning Curriculum

### 3.2 Bourdieu's Concept of Practice

Bourdieu (1986, p.101) outlines the concept of *practice* in the following metaphorical equation:

$$[(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice$$

Before discussing the equation in detail, a brief definition of each of the terms is provided. By *practice* is meant what agents do as they play the social 'game'. This entails strategies that develop as the game unfolds - it is not a simple following of the 'rules' of the game (Bourdieu, 1984). As demonstrated in Figures 3.1 and 3.2, *habitus*, *capital* and *field* interact to produce practice. A *field* can be understood as a structured space of positions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). For example, in the education field

the positions of some are strong and some are weak. The strength of an agent's position depends upon how much *capital* in a particular position they have relative to others in the field. Extensive reserves of capital constitute a strong position, and little capital, a weak position. *Capital* can be understood as resources that are endowed with value in a given field (Bourdieu, 1986); while *habitus* refers to structures within the agent; it is comprised of schemes of perception and classification for viewing the world, and dispositions to action (Bourdieu, 1990). How these concepts are related to the Sri Lankan ESL context and the current study will be elaborated when each is expounded in detail later in the chapter.

Firstly, it is important to explain how the various concepts are seen to interact by Bourdieu himself. While there are overt rules in any social 'game', *practice* is about more than following the rules (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). It is primarily about the moves that agents make because of their 'feel for the game'. *Practice* involves a combination of *habitus* and *capital* in a *field* or social arena; and *habitus* does not function alone, being interrelated with the other two key concepts, *field* and *capital*. Evidently practice is not a consequence of *habitus* alone; it involves connections between habitus and the present situation (Bourdieu, 1977). *Habitus* in turn is structured by *field*, the social context of a domain of activity, and it helps individuals to understand and to direct their own way of life or action in that domain. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) postulate that "[o]n one side it is a relation of *conditioning*: the field structures the habitus" (p.127). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction because "[h]abitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, P. 127). The condition between *field* and *habitus* is that *habitus* is structured by the *field*, yet *habitus* makes meaningful context through cognitive construction. Bourdieu (2000) refers to this connection between *habitus* and *field* as connecting two changing *logics* or histories.

Bourdieu (1990) explains the concept of *practice* as follows:

You can use the analogy of the game in order to say that a set of people take part in a rule-bound activity, an activity which, without necessarily being the product of obedience to rules, obeys certain regularities. ... Should one talk of a rule? Yes and no. You can do so on condition that you distinguish clearly

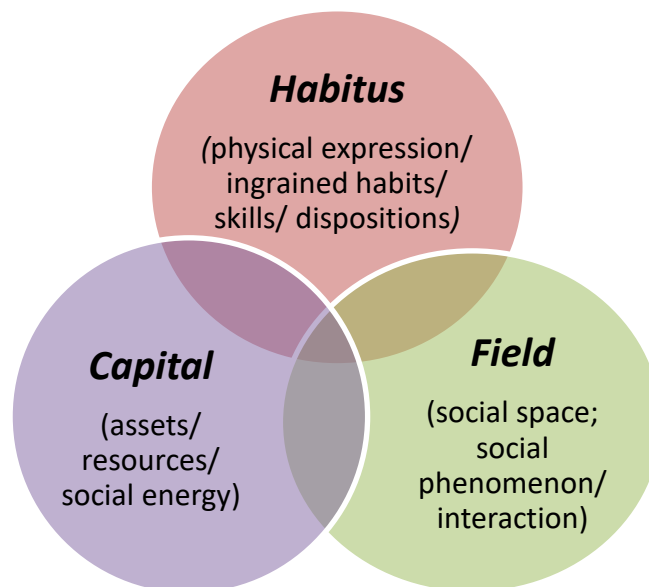
between rule and regularity. The social game is regulated, it is the locus of certain regularities. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 64)

In this context, Bourdieu (1990) claims that it is essential to connect *regularities* of a social field with the *practical logic* of social agents in that field in order to understand *practice*; and he argues the need to understand the difference between *rules* and *regularities*. In this context, *habitus* denotes the source of the *practical logic* of a field, while the “*feel for the game*” refers to *regularities* or probable actions in the game (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 63).

To further develop these understandings as they apply to this research project, I now discuss each of Bourdieu’s central concepts of *field*, *capital* and *habitus*.

### 3.3 Bourdieu’s conceptual triad

This section discusses the conceptual triad of Bourdieu’s action theory: *habitus*, *capital* and *field*, focusing on how each of these concepts informs analysis of student commitment in an ESL collaborative learning environment as designed for this study.



**Figure 3.2**  
**Bourdieuian theoretical triad**

The concepts of *habitus*, *capital* and *field* are conceptually as well as empirically interconnected (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). As shown in Figure 3.2, it is difficult to analyse *habitus* or to discuss *practice* without drawing upon *field*. Due to the



relational nature of *habitus*, it is essential to look at relations within the *field* in the process of analysing *habitus*; and it is particularly recommended to consider the fundamental structuring principles of *habitus* rather than just the surface level of practice, as this will enable deep insight into the relational structure of *habitus* (Maton, 2012). *Habitus* helps us to look at the social world differently.

### 3.3.1 Field

According to Bourdieu, it is necessary to investigate the social space or field of any social phenomenon or interaction in addition to seeing what occurred for fuller comprehension of that phenomenon, event, or interaction. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define *field* as

a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations, they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situ*) in the structure of the distribution of the species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97)

*Field* refers therefore to an arrangement of elements or positions in a particular form; and positions are defined objectively by the volume of capital available to agents at each position. From different positions, individuals see the world differently as they occupy a different space in the world. Moreover, different positions endow agents with different degrees of power, the capital which constitutes particular positions giving agents different degrees of power in the struggles that occur within the field. For researchers, this means that it is necessary to search the *object of the investigation* in fields, as well as to question the history of the event or the incident (Bourdieu, 2005).

Bourdieu (1985) defines fields as being relatively autonomous domains within social space and, explains the unit of *social space* as follows:

[...] the social world can be represented as a space (with several dimensions) constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation or distribution constituted by the set of properties active within the social universe in

question, i.e., capable of conferring strength, power within that universe, on their holder. Agents and groups of agents are thus defined by their relative positions within that space. (Bourdieu 1985, p. 196)

The position of an agent or institution in a field cannot be described in substantial terms as positions are relative; they must be described in relation to each other. They depend on the power and the capital possessed by the agent or institution occupying them. This capital is always specific to the field and is based on the purpose of a particular field. For instance, when talking about the field of ESL, it is important to talk about capital relating to language learning and the purpose of the field in relation to those of higher education or employment.

There are a number of analogies or metaphors used by Bourdieu in explanation of the concept of *field*. I now clarify these.

### **3.3.1.1 Analogies or metaphors used to explain the concept of field**

Bourdieu uses a number of metaphors in describing *field*. He compares social life to a game (1971), to a football game. He describes the social field as being made up of positions held by social agents (individuals or institutions), and as a result what occurs on the field is constrained. As they start playing, new players must learn the game's special regulations as well as certain fundamental skills. During the game, a player's field position determines what they can do and where they may go: there are limitations to what people or institutions can do, and the field shapes the actions of each. Similarly, as in a football game, the social space can be a competitive place, as agents compete, utilising different strategies to hold or improve their existing positions (Moore, 2012; Thomson, 2012). Further, Bourdieu compares a football player, playing on a well-maintained ground, to a person playing with a particular form of capital in the social field. If they start the game with a better form of capital, according to what is valued in a given field, they can be more successful than other players as those resources help to produce and accumulate more capital due to the capital advantage (Bourdieu, 1985). Different games played on the field therefore determine the shape of the field as they have their own background.

A science-fiction force field is another metaphor used to show that there is an hierarchical structure in the social order. For example, some people are more powerful as they have gained more decision-making power than others as a result of their more

extensive capital reserves (Thomson, 2012). The social world is compared to a little world which has its own rules to which differently positioned agents must adhere. Further, a social field is considered as adaptable, as is evident through consideration of its shape, operation and maintenance. For example, authorities in higher educational institutions have more decision-making power than the students because they wield more capital in relation to struggles over what is or is not legitimate in the field. Universities, for example, decide which language will be used as medium of instruction when offering its various courses and programmes. While student unions in Sri Lankan universities may make representation or demands for a change of medium of instruction, to offer programmes in their vernacular languages, the authority of the institution may not change its decision; and students have no choice but to accept the decisions of the institution in order to complete their studies.

A force field is another metaphor which relates to physics and which shows that “the forces are exerted by one object on another” (Thomson, 2012, p. 69). Bourdieu describes the social field as functioning in the same way. However, although a physical force field has no boundaries, a social field has its own competitions within itself based on its boundaries and capital values (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). However, although a *force field* stands as an individual entity, Bourdieu considers the *social world* as a combination of a number of fields, inclusive of subfields. In addition to education, these subfields include the economy, law, medicine, the family and other domains of relatively autonomous social activity. The power of each field vis-à-vis others can be discussed using the concept of the *field of power*.

### **3.3.1.2      *The field of power***

The *field of power* consists of the dominant players from specific fields (e.g., education, health, culture), and people may inhabit more than one of these. Each specific field has its own definition and functions under its own rules. Although each is relatively independent, structurally they each have the same relation; they become interdependent through the exchange of relationships. For example, students who have a better family background with respect to English usage will benefit in the field of higher education where they must learn in the medium of English. Further, when these students complete their higher education, with better English knowledge, they will be better positioned in the economic field. Accordingly, Bourdieu (1993) claims that

several fields are organised relative to each other in the structure of any social formation.

As noted, therefore, fields can be interdependent. Bourdieu (1993) suggests that there is in fact a continual process of co-construction and reciprocal influence. Specific fields are subject to the field of power which consists of the most powerful agents in each field. The struggles amongst these agents bear on the relative power and autonomy of the specific fields. In other words, what happens in the field of power and in various specific social fields is interdependent and can impact on other social fields. For example, the field of power has in recent decades been dominated by agents of the economic field; the most powerful agents of fields such as education have been subordinated. As a result, economic logic has infused education and other specific fields. As will be recalled from the introduction in Chapter One, the impetus for English learning in higher education is largely economic. Accordingly, the learning experiences of English learners in Sri Lanka are affected by the imperatives of the field of power as this plays out in the field of education. Moreover, the outcomes of education in this regard are linked to the positions that graduates are able to claim in the fields in which they seek work. This brings the discussion to the place and status of English in various fields in Sri Lanka.

### **3.3.1.3      *The place of the English language in various fields in Sri Lanka***

The English language as *linguistic capital* plays an important role in Sri Lanka in fields such as education, bureaucracy, and economics. When considering Bourdieu's *game* metaphor, it is useful to recall that the field is governed by both overt and implied rules, and that the people are contestants who are competing to enhance their capital (Wacquant, 2007). Further, games involve strategies that are used to win, and these strategies can be considered as 'unofficial' rules (Bathmaker, 2015). This means that when agents play a game, practice goes beyond the rules. Learning English in a Sri Lankan context is also a competition. Students who are good in English benefit in many ways at school level as well as in higher education. At school level they can achieve different positions, such as becoming a school prefect, or members of an English association or debating team. Such extra-curricular activities and responsibilities provide these students with an opportunity to build their confidence and develop personally - which becomes an additional 'qualification' for them in addition to their educational qualification in relation to higher education or

employment. Students who are competent in English benefit when they enrol in higher education, as most Sri Lankan universities offer their courses in English as the medium of instruction. These students do not need to pay extra time learning English, and it will be easier for them to perform well in their courses. On the other hand, students who have little prior English knowledge have to compete with the more competent students in learning English as a second language while learning their main discipline.

In terms of Bourdieu's theory (1971), therefore, the ESL classroom is a field in which a game is played out. Students who have acquired a certain level of competency in English are engaged in trying to improve their linguistic capital, whereas less competent students are striving to acquire the language. Strategies applied in the game may change depending on the teaching methodology employed and the facilities and resources that are available in the classroom. For example, if it is a conventional teacher-centred classroom, then the power is centralised, and students always depend on the teacher. If it is a student-centred classroom, however, where students engage more actively, they have more power and opportunities to exchange or to increase their linguistic capital within the group, in order to strengthen their English language competency.

In the field of bureaucracy in the Sri Lankan context, the English language is highly valued due to the historical British colonial background of the country. Canagarajah (2000) argues that Sri Lankans have not 'adopted' the English language into their culture, they are rather using the language "in order to qualify for bureaucratic jobs, while distancing themselves from the ideological constructs that came with it" (p. 122). Although most lower-level positions function in the medium of the vernacular languages, middle and top-level employment and administrative positions in Sri Lanka require English. The private sector and top-level government jobs all require work to be conducted in English, even though Sinhala and Tamil are nominated as official and state languages of the country. The importance of English in the Sri Lankan economy is therefore significant, the field of bureaucracy directly connecting with the field of economy. It can be said that the English language has considerable *linguistic capital* in both the bureaucratic and economic field as a medium of communication, interaction, and transaction.

In Sri Lanka as a multiethnic country, English also sometimes functions as a neutral mode of communication for various official purposes. For instance, when people go for an official service, such as banking, postal services or

telecommunications, they have to interact with officials orally as well as in writing. In most instances, the officials are competent in only one vernacular language, though two languages (Sinhala and Tamil) exist in Sri Lanka. In such situations English becomes the facilitator, functioning as a neutral language (Canagarajah, 2000). In addition, Sri Lanka has an open economy which now involves many more international economic relations; a common medium of communication between the country and foreign countries is therefore required. In these different ways the English language as an international language and as a form of linguistic capital plays a crucial role in the field of the Sri Lankan economy locally as well as internationally.

### 3.3.2 Capital

While the term *capital* comes directly from the domain of economics, Bourdieu uses it more broadly and sociologically. He describes *economism* as dominating the world by according value and recognition of everything based only on economic interest (1986), a system which relies on the principle of converting everything into *quantifiable* measures in the form of monetary value directly and immediately. This is the result of the current dominance of certain types of economic thinking in the field of power internationally, what is sometimes referred to as ‘neoliberalism’ and ‘globalisation’. It is apparent that every priceless thing has a price of its own, although this price may be misrecognised by the field of economy. Bourdieu therefore argues that price cannot be given only by economic value; that there are different types of *capital* or *power* which are recognised socially.

Specifically, Bourdieu theorises resources or assets other than the economic as forms of capital, the notion of capital being understood in relation to capitalism, the economic system which involves self-interest as it entails maximum economic profit-making processes, both objectively and subjectively. Within the system, social, cultural, and other non-economic forms of transaction are considered as disinterested *per se*. Bourdieu extended the notion of capital to the assets exchanged in these transactions (Bourdieu, 1986), explaining capital as,

accumulated labour (in its materialised form or its ‘incorporated’, embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 141)

To clarify, capital for Bourdieu consists of assets or resources that are built up through labour or work. The labour of the individual is transformed into one of two forms of capital: a material form (in this study, for example, language textbooks might be considered as a material form of capital) or an embodied or incorporated form (in this study, language proficiency might be viewed as an embodied form of capital). Capital refers to the value accorded to resources of one form or another; it is not the resource itself. Capital value is bestowed on resources in given fields. In the field of education in Sri Lanka, for example, English textbooks and the knowledge objectified in them carries high capital value. The value of that same asset in another field, for example, the field of literature, may be much lower. As noted above, capital is not the resources itself; it is the value of the resource in a given field; and it can be considered as both a weapon and a stake in that field. Consequently, people with more capital have more power in struggles in the field. For example, as suggested above, those entering the field of education in Sri Lanka with greater embodied and objectified capital in the form of English competence are at an advantage when it comes to struggles in that field for more capital – as in grades awarded by the university (an institutionalised form of objectified cultural capital). The important point here is that winning a struggle in the field depends to a considerable extent on the capital brought to that struggle.

### **3.3.2.1 Basic types of capital**

Bourdieu's theory of capital involves different types that have their own characteristics and are differentiated by subtle differences. The most fundamental form of capital is *economic capital*, and the main non-economic form is that of *symbolic capital*, which consist of several sub-types. These sub-types are differently named in Bourdieu's own work but are commonly described in educational research literature as *cultural capital* (in *embodied*, *objectified* or *institutionalised* form), *linguistic capital* (a type of *cultural capital*), and *social* and *symbolic capital*. The characteristics of these sub-types depend on the field in which they are wielded and won.

### **3.3.2.2 Economic capital**

The other term used for *economic capital* is *mercantile exchange*, as that which counts as capital only has intrinsic value through the act of exchange. *Economic capital* always has an instrumental value, as it is being measured quantitatively in the form of interest, profit, or wage, all of which carry monetary value. Bourdieu defines *economic capital* as a resource "which is immediately and directly convertible into money and

may be institutionalized in the form of property rights” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 106). He further points out that non-economic forms of capital can be convertible into economic capital on certain conditions. For example, *cultural capital* can be convertible by institutionalising it as an educational qualification that is then converted into economic capital through employment. This is one of the reasons why academic achievement is valued so highly by some students and families.

When the English language is convertible into economic capital, especially in a country in which that asset is considered as a second or a foreign language, it is important to consider its associated value locally as well as globally. English is an international language, as well as having been a dominating language during Sri Lanka’s colonial period which has gained more value economically as well as socially when compared to the main local languages of Sinhala and Tamil, which are nominated as official and state languages. Good English proficiency equates to better positioning in higher education, improved employment opportunities, and a higher social class position in Sri Lanka. In the field of higher education English is considered a valuable resource, an asset which accords considerable capital. Given that most higher education courses and programmes are offered in English, proficiency in the language allows the accumulation of much *institutionalised capital*, a valuable resource in relation to the job market, particularly in the private sector where employees are paid higher salaries. The cultural and linguistic capital of English is therefore convertible into multiple forms of highly valued capital for students in Sri Lanka, especially beyond their university studies, when it is convertible into *economic capital*. It is to a discussion of cultural and linguistic capital that this section now turns.

### 3.3.2.3 *Cultural capital*

Cultural capital exists in different forms, namely the *embodied*, *objectified*, and *institutionalized* state. The *embodied state* is “in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). Investment in this form of capital can only be effected personally; it cannot be conducted on one’s behalf. The “labour of inculcation and assimilation” (p. 244) of cultural capital happens individually, although it can be seen through the behaviour of the person in society (Bourdieu, 1986). Self-improvement takes place through an individual’s investment of personal commitment, although early domestic education may provide a positive and fertile background for the accumulation of this capital. It can be seen that embodied capital



which derives from external wealth is converted into an intrinsic part of a person. It cannot, however, be transferred instantly, like money or property. Time is needed for its acquisition, and this time factor functions as a link between economic and cultural factors, because only some agents have the economic resources needed to take the time to accrue much cultural capital.

In the *objectified* state, cultural capital is rendered material; it consists of a “form of cultural goods” (p. 243), such as schools, art theatres, laboratories, machines, and books (Bourdieu, 1986). It is not, however, the mere possession of material capital that matters; the individual must master the knowledge in the material. As Bourdieu (1986) explains, an individual needs to discover or come to the “realisation of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.” (p. 243), that are contained within the cultural object, for example, the rules of grammar objectified in an English textbook. One of the features of the *objectified* form of cultural capital is that this type can be converted into economic capital. In this case, the transfer between the forms of capital takes place through the means of possession or consumption. Cultural properties can therefore be assigned materially with presupposed economic capital as well as symbolically via presupposed cultural production. Further, Bourdieu (1986) explains that although it is sufficient to have *economic capital* to possess property or production, it is essential to have *embodied cultural capital* in order to operate or use the product, that is, to master cultural capital in its *objectified* form.

The third form of cultural capital is *institutionalized*. This form of capital exists in credentials. Through these, the state “confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). Even if an individual has acquired some qualification, the value of it has to be given by an institution. The person who has obtained the qualification cannot themselves decide the value of it, including the economic value; hence there are some limitations or restrictions in relation to individuals and this form of cultural capital. To clarify, the legal value of cultural capital that is gained through academic qualification is given by the relevant institution. In other words, the power of the institution imposes the recognition of the academic qualification through the *institutionalized* form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). However, any academic qualification is not meaningful unless academic investment gets a guarantee for the conversion of cultural capital into economic capital with a minimum conversion rate. For instance, some Sri Lankan universities offer some courses in the vernacular languages, whereas the majority offer

their courses in English. However, students who become degree holders in vernacular languages face many challenges in terms of finding employment, as the prevailing national economy positions English medium graduates as more valuable than graduates with less proficiency in the language.

The different forms of capital determine the position of a person in a hierarchical society and the value of the capital that individual holds. For instance, in Sri Lanka, a Pass result in the English component of a course offered by the university is a prerequisite for graduation. This is an example of the legitimation of the English language as linguistic capital by the institutionalised state of cultural capital in the university. Students who have better English proficiency have more power and opportunities in multiple workplaces in Sri Lankan society than less competent students of English.

#### **3.3.2.4 *Linguistic capital***

*Linguistic capital* is considered as a sub-type of cultural capital, more specifically, of embodied cultural capital. Knowledge of different languages is in many ways a resource. For example, in the Sri Lankan context competence in Sinhala or Tamil as the mother tongue is a very good resource for completing primary and secondary education, and competence in the English language as a second language provides access to more power in educational and other fields. Bilingualism, therefore, confers more capital and hence more power in certain fields than does monolingualism. Linguistic capital in a multiethnic country like Sri Lanka is valuable. Canagarajah (2000) notes that “English can have positive values for people whose local languages and identities suffer from discriminatory markings of caste, ethnicity, and gender” (p. 348). Although both Sinhala and Tamil are named as official as well as state languages, there are circumstances in which the two cannot function simultaneously; certain disruptive movements have been created in the country based on ethnicity and language. In some circumstances, then, English can function as a neutral link language, particularly in official contexts, to avoid the problem of real or perceived bias associated with the use of one vernacular language (Canagarajah, 1999; Gunasekera, 2005; Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). It is interesting to notice how speakers of Tamil, the vernacular language of the minority group, have obtained more bureaucratic positions in the public services of the country than the Sinhalese majority group during the post-colonial period (Canagarajah, 2000). Since Tamil people

believed that it was difficult for them to compete in the socio-economic situation of the country with their vernacular education, they determined to educate themselves in English, and eventually this minority group, which was more proficient in English than the majority of Sinhala speakers, came to occupy more privileged positions in socio-economic terms (Canagarajah, 2000). Meanwhile, due to power struggles over the linguistic capital value of the two vernacular languages, Sri Lanka suffered more than thirty years of ethnic conflict.

With respect to collaborative learning environments in the ESL context, students bring their language and learning resources, such as their previous experience and exposure to the target language, as capital to the classroom. Students from bilingual home environments or who have benefitted from better English language learning environments bring with them *linguistic capital* to learning English at university level, including (mis-)recognition of them as ‘superior’ learners. Other students with less prior knowledge bring assets of little capital value to the classroom. In the field of education, individuals exchange the capital that they bring to the classroom for the *institutionalized cultural capital* on offer in the classroom. For example, students with better English proficiency perform well and will be able to exchange their linguistic capital for the better grades which constitute part of *institutionalized cultural capital*. Their less well-capitalised peers may be less well rewarded.

In the Sri Lankan economy, graduates with good English language proficiency have the potential to win higher remuneration, greater economic capital in the job market, as academic capital in the institutional form of cultural capital is converted into *economic capital* through remuneration of higher monetary value.

### **3.3.2.5 Social capital**

Social capital is created through “the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). Social capital derives from the collective ownership of assets by a group of members in a less institutionalized environment (e.g., having an acquaintance who did well at English and is able to offer help as distinct from someone in the student’s class who can help). A person’s social capital is based on the size of their connected network, on how effectively they are mobilised in it, and on the resources of the other members of the

network they are connected to. Social capital, therefore, does not function independently of other forms of capital; it is mutually connected to economic, cultural or symbolic capital via network connections to these other resources. Social capital can be understood as the resources to which one has access through social connections; it is not the connection itself, the connection constituting a different type of capital which is not of relevance to this study. Furthermore, the ‘profit’ gained through network membership is the “solidarity” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248) that exists among the membership, with all members taking responsibility for limitations of the group.

Bourdieu (1993) details how members of a social group have opportunities to access social capital, valued resources, and possible support through their collection of contacts, and shared identities and responsibilities. In the Sri Lankan context, for example, ESL learners acquire social capital by becoming members of the ESL network. In the context of collaborative learning group activities, learners become members of those groups in which they share responsibilities and accrue social capital. As Bourdieu (1986) points out, “[t]he profits that accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity that makes them possible” (p. 248). In collaborative learning environments, students depend on each other in order to share their knowledge and experience to complete shared tasks. This is the context in which students with greater competency in English work with other members of the ESL community, establishing “less institutionalized relationships” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.247), relationships that are more informal than in a conventional classroom environment.

### **3.3.2.6      *Symbolic capital***

Symbolic power plays an important role as it is implicated in recognising or defining a person or a thing. Bourdieu (1986) explains that symbolic capital occurs where it is “to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition” (p. 18). The point made here is that misrecognition is key to the workings of symbolic capital. While economic capital may be the basis of power, this is often disavowed by a resistance to overt self-interest and self-centred calculatedness. In these conditions, economic capital is only efficacious if it is misrecognised, that is, if the root of the power of the agent is obscured by reputation (e.g., for generosity or status), that is, it is converted into *symbolic capital*. This is of relevance to the present study.

Symbolic fields create *hierarchies of discrimination* where things are compared with each other, one thing becoming better than another. As a result, one thing is accorded higher value than the other. For example, in the ESL classroom, more competent students are recognised as ‘better’ students than others, and less competent ones are recognised as weaker (Wacquant, 1989). Such *hierarchies of discrimination* are not created by physical force; they are rather created symbolically; and domination takes place as one thing becomes more powerful than the other. As has been referenced throughout this chapter, differences between students can be in part traced back to differences in economic capital, some having accrued the necessary cultural capital to be misrecognised as ‘brilliance’ in academic terms.

The process of creating domination, which happens arbitrarily, is referred to as *symbolic violence* by Bourdieu. It is a result of the misrecognitions associated with symbolic capital, “the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167). In Bourdieu's terms, symbolic violence refers to more than a form of violence that operates symbolically.

There are inequalities in the acquiring of cultural capital. Two distinctive ways can be seen in relation to the acquisition of symbolic capital. Firstly, forms of symbolic capital cannot be detached from a person; and secondly, there is a time factor which is needed in relation to acquisition. Unlike the gaining of economic capital, cultural capital acquisition cannot take place within a short period of time (Bourdieu, 1986).

In ESL contexts, *symbolic capital* is involved when students are labelled as more or less proficient. As Bourdieu notes, *symbolic capital* cannot be detached from a person. In the case of L2, as noted earlier, the students’ proficiency levels depend on their previous experience and background, both of which are invariably unequal; and from these unequal starting points, it takes time for students to improve their L2 proficiency, based on their commitment and the resources available.

Since the English language has significant symbolic value or capital, there is *misrecognition* in relation to English language proficiency. Bourdieu (1977) claims that the activation of *symbolic power* involves *misrecognition* of that power by considering it as ‘natural’ and legitimate. In the Sri Lankan context, English proficiency is therefore misrecognised, in the sense that more proficient students are considered to be ‘better’ or ‘excellent’ students. They are seen as more prestigious than the less proficient students. They are consequently accorded *symbolic capital* and *power* for being ‘good’ at English.

Discussion now turns to the third of Bourdieu's triad of concepts: *habitus*. This concept refers to that which is internalised through experience in fields.

### 3.3.3 Habitus

Habitus refers to the physical expression, ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions that individuals possess due to their life experiences. Bourdieu (1990) elaborates how external society and the inner self work on each other, defining *habitus* as,

systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53)

Habitus refers, then, to the structuring of structures within individuals as members of a group or an institution. The structure depends on the past and present experience of an individual, and it helps to shape the present and future. The building of the *structure of the habitus* does not take place at once; it happens systematically and gradually. Bourdieu (1990) explains habitus with reference to disposition, which is constructed socially and consists of feelings, thoughts, tastes, and bodily postures. It creates "thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 95), and these aspects function within the system of structure. Dispositions are long lasting and transportable, across situations and fields.

Since habitus is created through an individual's beliefs, tastes, interests, thoughts and their comprehension of their world, a person's family, culture, and educational background play a vital role (Pham & Pham, 2018). Primary experience comes from the home environment. It is connected to economic conditions, behaviours, education, and language. Experiences in all these realms influence and modify the habitus, further structuring the individual experience (Thomas, 2010). For

example, an individual who gets better family support in relation to school education is likely to follow further education opportunities and access a better career in the future. *Family habitus*, therefore, makes a vital contribution in creating the history of and impacting on the present and future habitus of an individual.

In relation to education, *institutional habitus* is an important concept. It is created through the impact and the mediation of a cultural or a social group or organization on the behaviour of an individual (McDonough, 1997). Bourdieu (1977) considers education as the primary institution which maintains class order. Social and cultural influences are clearly apparent in the educational system. The concept of *institutional habitus*, however, applies beyond the culture of the educational institution; more generally, “it refers to relational issues and priorities, which are deeply embedded, and sub-consciously informing practice” (Thomas, 2010, p. 431). In higher education, institutions enact their values by introducing and implementing rules and regulation and its own culture. Students are formed by these values and the culture of the institution which are required to do well in their studies. The role of both *family habitus* and *institutional habitus* is very important in relation to contexts where the medium of instruction is English, where students are learning and using the language as an L2. Differences between students with different levels of L2 proficiency create social gaps and inequities, and reinforce class order in the field of higher education.

As previously noted, in an ex-colonial country like Sri Lanka, proficiency in English in tertiary education represents important cultural capital; and as Bourdieu explains (1990), *habitus* is viewed as the internalization of the structures of the *field* and the *field* is viewed as the externalization of the habitus of the individuals in it. In this context there are clear differences among perceptions and judgements of different stakeholders. When a university makes it compulsory to learn courses in English, although students may not like this, teachers have to abide by the rules and regulations established by the authority irrespective of their personal opinions. Yet in ESL contexts teachers may have a different habitus based on their own experiences and exposure to the English-speaking world outside the institution.

It is important to see how *social structure* and *individual agency* function together through *practice*. In other words, it is necessary to discuss how the outside world and individuals influence and shape each other. As Bourdieu (1994) puts it, *habitus* is a “*structured and structuring structure*” (p. 170); and the structuring of an

individual - or a society - is based on family backgrounds and educational experiences; in this way habitus helps to shape the practices of an individual's present and future.

Another key concept in this analysis is that of *disposition*, which connects structure and other notions such as *tendency, propensity, or inclination*. Bourdieu (1977) explains the term *disposition* thus:

... it expresses first the result of an organizing action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 214)

Dispositions therefore provide meaning to structure; and they are long lasting. They are also *transposable*, as they can be activated due to different types of social circumstances. Hence habitus can be structured by the physical conditions of existence and produces behaviours, attitudes, perceptions and emotions according to its own structure.

Past and present experience and life situations help to consider and shape future possibilities; and past options help to understand society and the world. The structures of habitus are neither fixed nor constantly changing; and dispositions evolve through the past and are long lasting and exchangeable. They are not reversible. Practice, therefore, consists of the evolving field in which individuals are present and the evolving habitus, which enables individuals in relation to their field of practices (Bourdieu, 1990).

Musofer and Lingard (2020) speak of 'position-making', which occurs when the habitus is "out of place" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151) in a field that is changing. In their study on 'Bourdieu and position-making in a changing field: Enactment of the national curriculum in Australia', they identify the dynamic relationship that exists between teacher habits and the evolving curriculum setting as giving rise to new teaching strategies, and they refer to this as 'position-making'.

As the current study considers emotions as an important aspect of ESL learning in terms of student commitment, the next section discusses how emotions can be understood with reference to Bourdieu's theoretical triad.



### 3.3.3.1 *The generation of emotions through the experience of habitus in the field*

Bourdieu positions emotions and feelings as part of the habitus as he explains habitus with reference to *disposition*, which is constructed socially, and which involves both feelings and thoughts (Reed-Danahay, 2005). Emotions are generated by habitus, which is positioned in a field according to the agent's accumulated capital; and it is the experience of struggles for legitimation afforded the habitus by its position in the field which generates emotions and sentiment.

Bourdieu discusses the difference between bodily emotions and sentiments or passion. Shame, humiliation, timidity, anxiety, and guilt are considered as *bodily emotions*, while love, admiration, and respect are categorised under *sentiments* or *passion* (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 38). These emotions become powerful and visible to others physically, as in the form of “blushing, stuttering, clumsiness, trembling, anger or impotent rage” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 38). They are triggered as a result of experience of the effects of *symbolic power*, the ‘legitimate power’ strengthened by authority Bourdieu (1984). Emotions can be created due to internal conflict, the separation of an individual, or when a person loses control of consciousness. Emotions can remain or be extended due to disapproval by the social structure. Bourdieu (2001) discusses how emotions are created in the form of emotional reactions, led by dispositions, when a person loses control of their consciousness.

As previously reiterated, in Sri Lanka the English language is accorded significant linguistic capital; and it is *misrecognised*, so that students who are rich in linguistic capital are endowed with more *symbolic capital* (Bourdieu, 1990; 1977). Such students enjoy superior status in the classroom, and they are likely to engage in their learning confidently and without hesitation. Students who are weak in English may not have that privilege. They may feel embarrassed and try to hide from the students who have better proficiency, and particularly from the teacher. This is a key problem identified in ESL teaching and learning in Sri Lankan universities, as it is in foreign language contexts internationally. Given that English study is compulsory in most first-year tertiary courses, considerable effort is allocated to the teaching of English at this level. Unfortunately, students with a weak background in English do not always participate in their ESL classes regularly. It has become clear that universities need to revisit their teaching methods and strategies in order to engage all students.

The following section discusses student commitment and collaborative learning ESL environments in relation to Bourdieu's key concepts.

### **3.3.4 Commitment and collaborative learning through a Bourdieusian lens**

In Chapter 2 engagement, referred to in this study as commitment, was described as being multidimensional. The following section discusses definitions of the term *engagement* and an adapted model of commitment used in this study. It considers how Bourdieu's concepts can be applied to a collaborative group activity environment.

#### ***3.3.4.1 Key concepts of Bourdieu and a multidimensional understanding of engagement (commitment)***

In Chapter 2 it was noted that in general terms '*engagement*' refers to learners' interests and participation in a given classroom activity (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Most definitions of student engagement are connected to academic activities and tasks (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Christenson and Reschly (2012) point out that there is an extended history of research relating to the academic engagement time taken by students for the improvement of their academic activities. Previously, the term *engagement* was viewed in relation to school dropout and completion rates (Finn, 1989; Mosher & McGowan, 1985). Recently it has been conceptualised as multidimensional, relating to emotions, cognition, and behaviour, which includes participation and time on task in academic as well as extracurricular activities (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). This shows how the term engagement has been extended from academic learning time to include other aspects of academic involvement, including in the behavioural, and social-emotional domains (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Philp and Duchesne (2016) suggest that engagement in foreign or second language learning contexts is based on the use of the target language and/or development as a target language user. The current study looks at this issue through the lens of student commitment to learning ESL.

There can be some mediating effects of certain dimensions of engagement. Reschly and Christenson (2012) suggest that there are different dimensions of engagement which impact on each other either favourably or unfavourably, having

negative or positive effects as they compete with each other. For instance, in the language teaching context, group activities, usually designed to focus on social and emotional engagement, may support cognitive and behavioural expressions of emotions, or they may allow some members to simply complete the task without any cognitive or behavioural involvement (Early & Marshall, 2008; Philp & Duchesne, 2016).

Student engagement or commitment can be influenced by different factors; it does not occur in a vacuum (Godec, King, Archer, Dawson & Seakins, 2018). Internal factors could include students' own interest and motivation, while external factors could be associated with students' family background, teacher, or peer support and teaching-learning environment. Relationships within the learning context, the context itself, and opportunities offered can all impact on a student's degree of engagement or commitment. Positive experiences of student involvement shape dispositions for more engagement; lack of involvement can result in further disengagement on the part of the student (Godec et al., 2018).

In the current study, Bourdieu's three main concepts of *capital*, *habitus* and *field* were drawn upon in analysis of what has been theorised as the concept of student engagement in learning English as a second language (Grenfell, 2012). As previously explained, *capital* represents resources that a person possesses which can be utilised to achieve social or/ and economic benefits (Bourdieu, 1986). Further, as Bourdieu illustrates, this capital can be increased or built up. In the Sri Lankan ESL learning context, which is the context of this study university students' attempts to learn English and their uptake of available learning opportunities can be interpreted and theorised as enabling capital development. The context is inherently unequal. English, being understood as *linguistic capital* (Section 3.3.2.4) in the Sri Lankan context, is unequally distributed/acquired. Grenfell and James (1998) describe how inequality is created:

We do not enter fields with equal amounts, or identical configurations, of capital. Some have inherited wealth, cultural distinction from up-bringing and family connections. Some individuals, therefore, already possess quantities of relevant capital ... which makes them better players than others in certain field games. Conversely, some are disadvantaged. (Grenfell & James 1998, p. 21)

Students who possess ‘relevant capital’ are in a better position and acquire their learning more easily. Students lacking in ‘relevant capital’ are at a disadvantage. As noted previously, ESL learners who have gained better knowledge of and proficiency in English through home/educational background enter university with an advantage not enjoyed by others.

*Habitus*, which reflects dispositions that are internalised, can also make an impact on students’ interests and motivation (Godec et al., 2018). As Bourdieu (1977) explains,

... the conditions of existence which, in imposing different definitions of the impossible, the possible, and the probable, cause one group to experience as natural or reasonable practices or aspirations which another group finds unthinkable or scandalous, and vice versa. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78)

Sri Lankan students who have had strong prior exposure to the English language may feel it is possible for them to learn English, and that exposure may create a desire for them to engage in their ESL learning. Students who have internalised the idea that they do not need English in their lives, on the other hand, will have less positive dispositions towards ESL. They will be less motivated to learn English even though they do in fact need it in order to complete their higher education studies.

*Capital* and *habitus* are connected to a specific *field* (Figure 3.2): a *field* consisting of a set of rules, relations and regularities (see Section 3.2. for more details). For example, the educational setting of a classroom, including its structure, becomes the *field* - the structure involving relationships between teacher and students as well as between students and students. Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) uses the metaphor of a “*fish in water*” (p. 127) to explain how a habitus connects to a field,

[.....] social reality exists....in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a fish in water: it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127)

Those students who have relevant capital which fits the habitus of the field therefore feel as comfortable as “*fish in water*” (p. 127) when learning English in the classroom; those who do not align with the field will feel less comfortable (Bourdieu & Wacquant,

1992), and if they are less comfortable they may not engage with the learning. Pham and Pham (2018) analysed Vietnamese university students' group interactions through a Bourdieusian theoretical lens and they observed that when it comes to group activity learning environments in tertiary education the field may be “the space where the students performed their interactions like discussions, academic group tasks and non-academic group activities” (Pham & Pham, 2018, p.362).

### 3.3.4.2 *Concepts of Illusio and investment*

*Illusio* is another concept closely linked to *field* and *habitus*. When describing field by referring to the analogy of a game, Bourdieu conceptualises *illusio* as “interested participation in the game” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 228); the ‘interest’ which causes the agent to accept the ‘rules of the game’ and to feel that it is worth taking part in the game in order to obtain the benefits associated with the game. In Bourdieusian terms,

*illusio*, the adherence to the game as a game, the acceptance of the fundamental premise that the game, [...], is worth being played, being taken seriously. (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 284)

*Illusio*, therefore, is based on “the belief in the *importance* or *interest*” of the game by the agent (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 284). It underpins the *investment* that an agent makes in the field. It is “tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game and [...] practical mastery of its rules” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.77). For example, ESL students who have recognised the importance of learning English tend to take it for granted (*doxa*) that it is worth investing in as they will benefit from this and ultimately accrue *relevant capital*. Accordingly, players of the game connect their *habitus* with the *field* through *illusio*, leading to *investment*. Bourdieu (1984) explains that,

[t]he sense of good investment... dictates a withdrawal from outmoded, or simply devalued, objects, places or practices and a move into ever newer objects in an endless drive for novelty. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 249)

When *illusio* occurs, an agent will change their previous *habitus* and move with the rules to commit to the field (Griffiths, 2018). This phenomenon is very relevant to the current study as the EGAP students had moved to a new ESL field, shifting from their previous school ESL field. They need *illusio* in order to invest in the new field. It is

this that will help them to understand the real requirements of learning English in the new field and the mandate of acquiring the cultural capital that is the English language. Bourdieu's concept of *illusio*, therefore, is important to this investigation of a re-designed collaborative curriculum and the students' *investment* in the activities of that learning environment.

Material barriers can hinder *illusio* even when the agent is interested in achieving their targets (Noble and Watkins, 2003; Noble, 2004). Very real material barriers may drain a person's commitment or *illusio*, making it difficult to engage effectively and successfully in target activities. This experience is seen "as a form of symbolic violence" (Threadgold, 2019, p. 42).

The following section discusses moments of field analysis to indicate how the methods and principles of Bourdieu's theory inter-connect.

#### 3.3.4.3 *Bourdiesian three-moment field analysis*

Bourdiesian concepts and methodology are closely interconnected. The concept of *field* is a heuristic for exploring an area of social activity. Bourdieu developed a method for using this heuristic systematically: a 3-moment field analysis, which identifies how the moments are "necessary and internally connected" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 104-105). The analysis involves:

**Field analytic moment 1:** The position of the field vis-à-vis the field of power. In this study, the focal field relates to ESL education in Sri Lankan universities. The field of power consists of the strongest agents from the bureaucracy, the economy, and other dominant fields in Sri Lankan society.

**Field analytic moment 2:** The structure of the focal field: This involves relations between agents in the focal field. It homes in on the positions occupied by agents according to their wealth of capital and their struggles for legitimacy, dominance in the field and the profits on offer in the field.

**Field analytic moment 3:** Habitus: habitus in the focal field. The analysis at this moment homes in on the genesis and manifestations of the habitus that generate agents' practice in the given field.

The following chapter (Chapter 4) specifies the moments of field analysis in relation to the field of a collaborative ESL learning environment. These moments will also be articulated with curriculum theory. The following section provides details of

curriculum theory which assists interpretation of certain aspects of the data before and after the enactment of the re-designed curriculum.

### **3.4 Curriculum Theory**

Curriculum plays a significant role in any academic institution. The concept is understood differently by different curriculum theorists (Apple, 1990; Deng, 2010; 2018). For reconceptualist and post-reconceptualist theorists, curriculum refers to all the educative experiences of a life (for instance, the experiences of gender that form a person, irrespective of whether these occur in formal education or everyday life). In contrast, other curriculum theorists focus more sharply on the practices of deciding what to teach and study in a formal educational institution; in other words, they are interested in the subject matter or content of learning, 'subject matter' referring to singularly purpose-built educational enterprises that are created with and for the aim of educating others, rather than the content of academic disciplines *per se* (Deng, 2010; Deng & Luke, 2008). This is the theorisation which informs this research.

Three levels of curricular action relating to subject matter are of interest: the institutional, the programmatic, and the classroom levels (Deng, 2010; 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b). Interpretations of subject matter at each of these levels combine to form an enacted curriculum and an intellectual field in the Bourdieusian sense of knowledge for students (Deng & Luke, 2008).

The operation or the classroom practice of the curriculum, whereby teachers and students mediate subject content, is considered to be the 'curriculum-in-use' or the 'enacted curriculum' (Decastell, Luke & Luke, 1989; Deng & Luke, 2008; Zumwalt, 1988). In what follows, I describe each of the three levels of curriculum action in turn.

#### **3.4.1 Three levels of curriculum action planning**

An instructional curriculum does not take place on its own, as the curriculum planning occurs basically at three levels or domains (Deng, 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008; Dooley, forthcoming; Doyle, 1992a, 1992b): the institutional, the programmatic, and the classroom levels; and the three need to function across each other. These three-curriculum domains are demonstrated in Figure 3.3.

In the external literature, the term 'enactment' possesses both a general and specific meaning, which can be confusing. However, a recent study conducted by

Dooley (forthcoming) has successfully addressed this issue by providing a clarification. Dooley's study establishes a clear distinction by assigning the term 'enactment' to encompass the entirety of the curricular elements, including the institutional, programmatic, and classroom levels. In order to fill the specific space previously occupied by the term 'enactment', Dooley (forthcoming) introduces the term 'instructional curriculum'. This terminology adjustment offers a more precise and refined understanding of the specific actions and processes involved in the implementation and delivery of the curriculum within the educational setting. By adopting this new conceptual framework, researchers and practitioners can avoid confusion and accurately discuss both the comprehensive and specific aspects of curriculum enactment.

#### ***3.4.1.1 Institutional level curriculum planning***

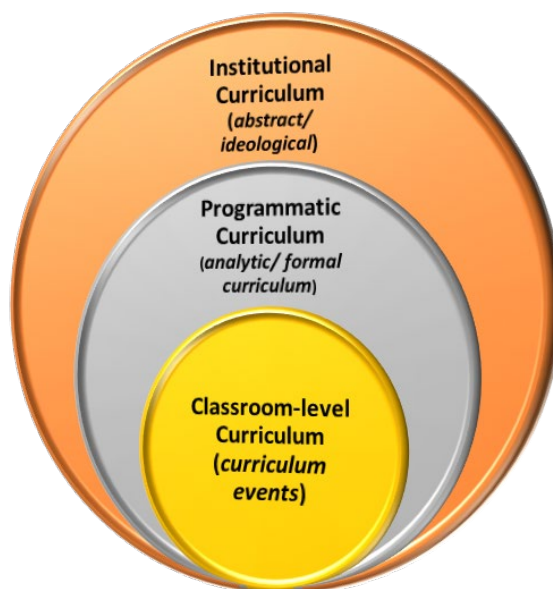
This level is also referred to as the policy curriculum, which is more abstract or ideological, and it establishes the link between education and society (Deng, 2010; 2018; Doyle, 1992a, 1992b). This level of curriculum work is played out in normative public policy debates and discussions about the purposes of formal education in a given society, for example, public and government discussion on the place of English in Sri Lanka. What counts as subject matter at the institutional level is linked to the normative, ideological foundations used for the selection and development of curriculum knowledge (EGAP Introductory Faculty Memo (2010) & EGAP Teacher-guide (Raheem, 2014))<sup>9</sup>. Institutional subject matter selection and classification requires careful consideration of not just the current state of academic knowledge (e.g., TESOL research in the area of teaching and learning English as a foreign language), but also of curriculum ideas at the interplay between schooling, culture, and society. There is a focus on what a given society wants from the formal educational curriculum within its jurisdiction. In Bourdieusian terms, foreign language *doxa* and *heterodox* and *orthodox* discourses may be in play in public debate (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984), *doxa* representing norms and common beliefs (Bourdieu, 1977), *heterodoxy* occurring when people question current norms and beliefs to establish differing, individual opinions

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<sup>9</sup> I have not referenced some of these documents because that would identify the study university. I have referenced what I could within the boundaries of anonymity.



(Bourdieu, 1977), and *orthodoxy* resulting from when people try to rebuild *doxa* by reinforcing the prevailing notion as ‘normal’ again (Bourdieu, 1977). With respect to the EGAP course which is the focus of this research, the relevant institutional curriculum activity is that of national requirements which specify that academic programmes must be in English, competency in the language being a requirements and universities being encouraged to use English as the medium of instruction in degree programmes (EGAP Introductory Faculty Memo (2010) & EGAP Teacher-Guide (2014)). In this institutional context, the university which is the context of this study has considered its language practice policy according to national requirements and the expectations of students, and has decided to introduce the EGAP course for the development of students’ English proficiency (EGAP Introductory Faculty memo (2010)).



**Figure 3.3**  
**Three levels of the curriculum domains**

### **3.4.1.2 Programmatic level curriculum planning**

This level is also called policy curriculum, a more abstract or ideological term, which establishes the link between education and society (Deng, 2010; 2018; Doyle, 1992a, 1992b). This is also called the analytic or formal curriculum, that transforms curriculum policy into instruments that may be used in actual classroom settings (Deng, 2010; 2018; Doyle, 1992a, 1992b). At this level, subject matter entails a

translation of the institutional curriculum into subjects to be taught by teachers and learned by students. This frames the process of creating a syllabus for subjects or programmes of study for use in the classroom, and it involves aspects related to the programmatic meanings of subject content. These are in turn informed and enriched by curriculum models and representational systems to develop school/university subjects or programmes (Deng & Luke, 2008). At the university involved in this study (the Premier University of Sri Lanka, or PUSL), the academic department which conducts the EGAP course would have prepared the syllabus in accordance with the institutional requirements of the government. Specifically, the EGAP syllabus had been introduced with a focus on integrated skills as the university is focusing on developing all the macro language skills in English once the students have completed the EGAP course (EGAP Introductory Faculty Memo (2010); EGAP Teacher-Guide (Raheem, 2014); & EGAP Student Handbook (2012)). Curriculum activity at the programmatic level functions as an operational framework designed to mediate between the institutional level of normative discussion about what universities and schools should teach and classroom level curriculum (Deng, 2010; Doyle, 1992a). Curricular activity at the programmatic level of the EGAP course entails designing the syllabus, preparing course materials, and other activities related to the functional level of the course (EGAP Teacher-Guide (Raheem, 2014)).

#### ***3.4.1.3 Classroom level curriculum planning***

The classroom curriculum is also conceptualised as ‘curriculum events’, during which teachers and students work to attain instructional goals and also refers as ‘instructional curriculum’ (Decastell, Luke & Luke, 1989; Deng, 2010; Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a). The curriculum, field, or disciplinary knowledge is mediated by individual teachers and students in any particular classroom (Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a; Westbury, 1999). That is, subject matter meanings from the programmatic and institutional curricula are determined and shaped by a teacher’s interpretation of them in relation to several factors, including their understanding of (i) the peculiarities of the learners in their class; (ii) the socio-cultural environment of those learners; (iii) the dominant media and modes of representation in the subject area (e.g., what resources are usually used for the subject and the way those resources represent the content of the subject); (iv) the patterns of discourse and the participation structures in the classroom (e.g., individual or collaborative activities); and (v) the

local pedagogical possibilities of a given classroom context (e.g., how it is possible to teach given local conditions (e.g., a pandemic) and resources (e.g., the computers made available by the university to students and teachers and the online platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams that are supported by the university) (Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a; Westbury, 1999). The focus of this level of curriculum activity is subject matter in the classroom. It requires paying special attention to the general construction and reconstruction of knowledge that occurs in teachers' and students' everyday interactional and discursive activities, for example, whether or not they talk to each other in class, and how they talk to each other, via individual or collaborative activities (EGAP Teacher-Guide (Raheem, 2014) & EGAP Student Handbook (2012)). To summarise, classroom curriculum planning turns institutional and programmatic content as reflected in curriculum documents and materials into educational experiences for students (Deng, 2010; Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a; Westbury, 1999). In other words, it entails teachers' and students' involvement to convert a curriculum into a practice; it is the creation of an enacted curriculum.

In this research, the classroom is the most important level, as the research questions investigate learner commitment in collaborative activities that the teachers worked with myself as the researcher to introduce into the classroom discourse and participation structures. The issue under investigation occurs at the classroom level. The teachers' understanding of the subject matter, of the nature of their students' learning, teacher and student actions and interactions, and the classroom environment are all key factors associated with the classroom level (Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a; Westbury, 1999). By introducing new participation structures in the form of collaborative activities, the intention of the study is to intervene in the enacted curriculum.

### **3.4.2 Interconnection of the three levels of the curriculum domains**

As demonstrated in Figure 3.3, the three levels of curriculum activity are interconnected. Although they are hierarchical, they are interconnected and interdependent (Deng, 2010; 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a, 1992b). When any significant change is made in a curriculum all three levels may need to be considered, as all levels are equally important as a set of interconnected fields. For example, if any methodological change is taking place in the enacted curriculum at the

classroom level it is important to consider the requirements of the programmatic as well as the institutional levels. At the same time, it is important to recognise the classroom level contribution to curriculum planning (Deng, 2010; 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a, 1992b; Westbury, 1999). Classroom-level agents do not simply implement curriculum developed higher up in the hierarchy of fields. Rather, the teachers, and sometimes the students, play an important role in the practices of curriculum. It is this level of teacher and student activity that is the main focus of this research, although there are inevitably references to relations between this level and that of the programmatic curriculum (what the university has specified to be taught in EGAP) and the institutional curriculum (what the Sri Lankan government and public expect from universities with respect to English language proficiency).

As the participants of the study were selected from the English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) course of the Premier University of Sri Lanka (PUSL) policy documents of the course were also considered in data interpretation and referred to as relevant elements of the course.

### **3.4.3 Policy documents related to the EGAP curriculum**

The EGAP curriculum has been designed for first-year undergraduates to enhance their English knowledge and proficiency. The course content is based on the Benchmark Framework for Academic English developed for the Sri Lankan university system, which is aligned with national requirements of English knowledge needed by undergraduates for academic purposes as well as for future employment opportunities (Raheem, 2014). The EGAP curriculum represents a top-down curriculum model, that is, the curriculum planning proceeds from the institutional level to the programmatic level and then to the classroom level (Cohen & Spillane, 1992; Deng, 2010; Westbury, 1999). There are three main policy documents which represent the three levels: the EGAP Introductory Faculty Memo (2010), the EGAP Teacher-Guide (Raheem, 2014) and the EGAP Student Handbook (2012).

#### ***3.4.3.1 The EGAP Introductory Faculty Memo***

The EGAP Introductory Faculty Memo (2010) is a memo produced in December 2010 by the Faculty Board of the relevant faculty of the PUSL in the form of a proposal to offer a course in English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) to all undergraduates at PUSL. This memo was produced by the Head of the Department

of Language Studies to secure the recommendation of the Faculty members and to forward it for the approval of the Senate and the Council of the university.

The Department of Language Studies (LSD) had been providing English language courses to all undergraduates enrolled in different degree programmes at the PUSL. These courses had been centred on the subject-specific needs of the different degree programmes by adopting an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach. As a result, the department was conducting individual courses for diverse disciplines, such as Law, Management, the Natural Sciences, Nursing, Engineering Technology, and the Social Sciences. The major issue faced by the department was to maintain uniform standards of language teaching across the different courses.

The next issue was the requirement of including all four macro skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) in the English courses, as these are a necessary requirement of academic study as well as future employment. Teaching all four skills was also a requirement as a recipient of a World-Bank funded University Development Grant (UDG), a sub-component of the Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century (HETC) Project (Raheem, 2014; Sri Lanka - Higher Education for the Twenty First Century Project (English), 2010) which aimed to develop the skills and abilities of Sri Lankan university graduates. The LSD had therefore introduced a viable mechanism to teach all four language macro skills to all undergraduates at PUSL; hence the introduction of the EGAP course in place of the various different ESP courses.

The EGAP Introductory Faculty Memo (2010) explains how the proposed approach would help to standardise the teaching of English across faculties and departments of study. In order to maintain the shared standards, the proposed course would incorporate skills set out in the Benchmark Framework for University English. The memo defines the objectives of the course as providing English language training in all four language macro skills to undergraduates to assist them in their main programmes of study and also enhance their future employment opportunities. The memo finally provides details of the departmental plans for dealing with the course and the proposed mechanisms of its management.

### **3.4.3.2 EGAP Student Handbook**

EGAP Student Handbook (2012) is the main document that provides details of the EGAP course to the undergraduates who enrol in it. It was created by the academic department which conducts the course to provide students with important academic as

well as administrative information. The handbook was written in 2011 when the course was first offered to students from the B.A. Social Sciences Programme. Since then, it has been given to students in the other undergraduate programmes registered for the EGAP course.

The handbook presents information under different topics, making it easier for students to comprehend. At the beginning, it talks about learning English in the university, mentioning the distance learning mode to highlight the importance of independent learning. It provides details of the study pack and pre-preparation for the face-to-face sessions (day schools), and an overview of the course materials and of the language macro skills covered in the course. It emphasizes the importance of students' participation in classroom work and of the completion of out of class study. The details provided relating to evaluation criteria indicate that the students need to complete Continuous Assessment (CA) Tests and Final Examinations (Department of Language Studies, PUSL, 2012). The handbook further indicates the importance of completion of the CA Tests in order to be eligible to sit the Final Examination. By being provided with these details at the beginning of the course, students are aware of the importance of following classes and completing the CA Tests.

The next section of the handbook presents details regarding the administration of the course. It explains student grouping and how they are expected to participate in their face-to-face classes. It also provides details of maintaining studentship, re-sits and repeat status and withdrawing from the programme. Important details regarding student communication are also provided. This information helps students to manage academic and administrative issues which may arise as they progress through the course. The handbook also highlights the importance of the student identity card, advising students to carry it always when on university premises.

### **3.4.3.3      *The EGAP Teacher-Guide***

The EGAP Teacher-Guide (Raheem, 2014) is one of the important documents that provides useful information to teachers teaching the EGAP course. It was written by a senior Professor and edited by a senior academic attached to the Department of Language Studies of PUSL under a project, Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century (HETC), a university development grant funded by the World Bank published in 2014 as a publication of the PUSL. There are two main parts to the book. The first presents the background to the course and the second comments on the course material.

The academic department conducting the course uses this book to provide necessary details to the teachers who teach it. The department conducts teacher briefing sessions on a regular basis and uses the details provided in the Guide to enhance teachers' knowledge of the course. Teachers are given the book to help their preparation for teaching.

The first part of the Guide provides background details to the course, including its aims and objectives, details related to the Framework for University English, and characteristics of EGAP learners at PUSL. The aims and objectives reference the demand for the language macro skills and connect with the Benchmark Framework for University English (Raheem, 2014). It subsequently provides details of the Benchmark Framework, including its history and development (Raheem, 2014). This helps teachers to understand the different levels and competencies set out for the different levels for each language macro skill. The Guide then provides details of EGAP as a methodological concept in ELT, identifying the different sub-fields of English language teaching and differences between approaches currently adopted in teaching English to children and adults. This section of the Guide explains the rationale for introducing an EGAP course instead of the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses, indicating how teachers will need to adapt their teaching approaches to suit adult learners. A summary of the EGAP course content including related macro-skills is provided in Appendix A.

The last section of the first part of the Teacher-Guide outlines the characteristics of EGAP learners at PUSL. This is important information for the teachers, as PUSL students are primarily Distance Education (DE) learners, who have some different characteristics from conventional university undergraduates. It further explains how teachers are expected to familiarize themselves with DE as a mode of teaching and learning, including the use of contemporary tools and pedagogical approaches. This information is needed if the EGAP teachers are going to work appropriately with DE students.

Part two of the Teacher-Guide provides information regarding the course materials and how teachers are supposed to use the course content. It also provides details of the prescribed Benchmark levels for the course, and how these can be achieved. It details all the units of the course materials, printed as well as audio-visual (AV). This supports teaching in terms of working with the four macro skills in the English language, providing guidance on how the course begins with simple, less

demanding lessons and moves then to more complex and challenging lessons. This part of the Guide also describes how teachers are expected to manage time, learner evaluation, and learner grouping. As they work through the last section of the Teacher-Guide, teachers will realise that their main role will be to help students achieve mastery through effective scaffolding of the macro and micro skills incorporated in the EGAP course.

The Teacher-Guide also directs the teachers to resort to learner-centered methods and strategies, rather than attempting to dominate the learning situation at all times. One effective approach to fostering learner autonomy is to incorporate a substantial amount of pair work and group work, enabling learners to learn from one another, provide stimuli and corrections to their peers, and take charge of their own learning. Hence, the teachers are asked to follow the following strategies:

- When giving activities in the classroom, make the students work in pairs or groups and then check on responses –rather than asking for individual responses to every activity.
- Ask students to correct each other’s written work or spoken utterances. The teacher can affirm the correct answers or provide the correct input when necessary.
- Pair work is an obvious strategy for enhancing speech. Use techniques such as role play, assigning personalities to each student so that shy or introvert students need not have to provide personal answers.
- Group work can be used for brainstorming ideas, for organizing information cooperatively-before a complex Writing or Speech task is attempted.

(Raheem, 2014, p. 19).

The following section discusses the connection between Bourdieusian concepts and curriculum theory by utilising Luke’s sociological framework for language education reform (2009).



### 3.5 Luke's Bourdieusian Sociological Template for Language Education Reform

When referring to English education as an L2 in a school field, Luke (2009, p. 286) claims that “race, language, and literacy” comprise capital in school. He proposes a sociological template for reforming school and classroom systems with special reference to L2 education. The template is proposed as a means for ensuring that students' knowledge and talents are equally exchanged for valued resources and power. This study has adapted Luke's sociological template as its conceptual framework.

Luke (2009) identifies how Bourdieu's conceptual model has a number of real-world applications for curriculum and pedagogy, assessment, and accountability difficulties in schools. He postulates the role of language in education as a fundamental variable which creates both inequality and equality in the education field, considered as a form of capital that is carried to the cultural and social fields of classrooms and schools. Luke further points out that the individual habitus also consists of language, and can be moved through different social fields, such as school and classroom, university and workplace. The “authoritative agents” who have the ‘symbolic power’ evaluate the form of capital and “set the rules for the realization, valuation, exchange, and transformation of capital” (Luke, 2009, P. 290). For example, as previously noted, in Sri Lankan universities the medium of instruction of the academic programmes is decided by the authority of the higher education system, so that having relevant linguistic cultural capital becomes a prerequisite for undergraduates embarking on the main courses of their degree programme. Luke (2009) claims that the focus of the educational response is on the mechanics of recognition, with demands for a broad change in the discourse in schools to account for various forms of knowledge and cultural interactional patterns.

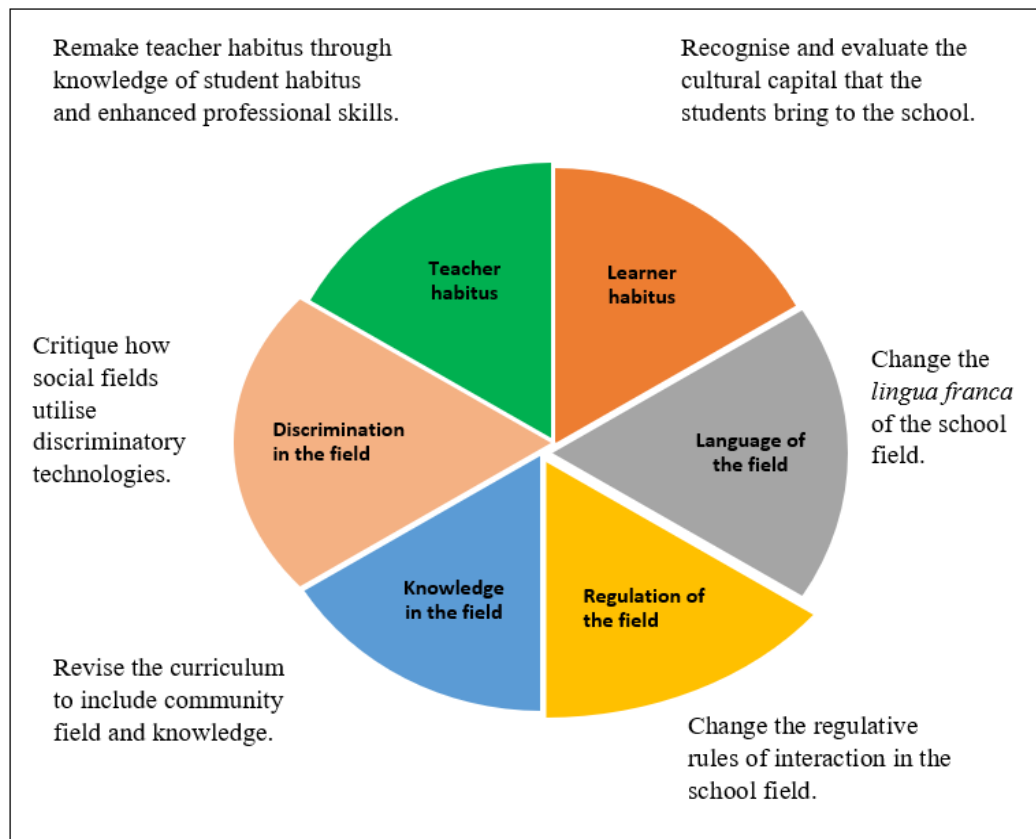
Table 3.1 demonstrates the institutional strategies proposed by Luke (2009). Each of the approaches described in the table emphasises the transformation of the habitus and its potential for agency in the context of the education field. Luke offers concise summaries of each family of methods, describing them as institutional strategies intended to transform or adjust existing exchange and value connections, aligning these approaches with Bourdieu's conceptual tools of *habitus*, *capital*, and *field*.

**Table 3.1**  
**Institutional and instructional approaches for students with different backgrounds**

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Focus</b>
<b><i>Learner habitus</i></b>	Remaking of student habitus prior to and in initial encounters with the field; focus on cultural capital seen as deficit or lacking (e.g., compensatory education, early literacy)
<b><i>Language of the field</i></b>	Alteration or augmentation of the dominant <i>lingua franca</i> of the school field (e.g., bilingual education, transitional language education)
<b><i>Regulation of the field</i></b>	Systematic alteration of interactional codes of the school as a field of exchange to accommodate those of diverse learners (e.g., culturally appropriate pedagogy, incorporating learner/community languages and practices, epistemologies and local stocks of knowledge)
<b><i>Knowledge in the field</i></b>	Systematic inclusion of the alternative and revisionist school knowledge as a change in the “value” and discourse of the field (e.g., revising curriculum to include standpoints and epistemologies, voices, histories, experiences and cultural genres of the marginalised)
<b><i>Discrimination in social fields</i></b>	Explicit analysis of the racist, sexist, class-based and other discriminatory rules of regulation of school fields and other institutions (e.g., critical pedagogy, critical literacy, antiracist education)
<b><i>Teacher habitus</i></b>	Alteration of teacher habitus, introducing new schemata for “discrimination” of student habitus and capacity at any of the pedagogic and curricular approaches above (e.g., pre-service teacher education and professional development programmes for antiracist and antisexist education, diagnostic tools for recognising diversity)

(Luke, 2009, pp. 296-299)

Figure 3.4 demonstrates how Luke (2009) reimagines a whole-school approach to provide more equal education for students from marginalised backgrounds by integrating all these institutional approaches, which were previously looked at in isolation in the school field. This sociological template suggests how institutional strategies can be applied to whole-school language education reform, with special reference to students from marginalised backgrounds.



**Figure 3.4**  
**Luke's Bourdieusian Sociological Template for Language Education Reform (2009)**

The template emphasises strategies regarding 1) learner habitus, to recognise and evaluate the cultural capital that the students bring to the classroom from previous or existing habitus; 2) change to the *lingua franca* of the school field, to assist students to develop their linguistic cultural capital in English, ensuring that it does not impact on usage of their L1; 3) change to the regulative rules of interaction in the school field, to develop pedagogical approaches to match student requirements and levels of competency; 4) revision of the curriculum to suit mainstream and community curriculum fields and knowledge; 5) critique of how social fields utilise discriminatory technologies, that is, “a broad analysis of how social fields discriminate”; 6) a remake of teacher habitus via professional development, drawing on the practical knowledge of the learner community along with teacher experiences (Luke, 2009, pp. 302-303).

### **3.6 Bourdieu's key concepts and learning in a collaborative/group activity environment, curriculum theory and the EGAP curriculum**

Bourdieu's inter-related main concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* provide a theoretical frame to understanding how individuals make their own choices in learning environments. When higher education is considered as a *field*, it becomes clear that it has its own rules and roles which determine the behaviour of participants and distinguishes them from participants in other *fields*. According to Bourdieu (1984) the *structure* of each *field* of an individual's action is based on the *habitus* and on *capital*. Since *habitus* is formed through a person's beliefs, preferences, interests, thoughts, and understanding of the world, a person's family, culture, and educational background are very important.

Capital such as the value accorded to social, cultural, economic, and symbolic resources also becomes an influential factor in determining interaction and the performance of an individual in the field. The fact that individuals have access to varying capital creates different positions for individuals in the same field. In relation to group activity learning environments in tertiary education, the *field* may be the space in which students interact; and *capital* is then the students' social, cultural, economic, linguistic and family background - resources which any one individual will possess to varying degrees. As a result, there will be uneven power in the group which represents the field.

This study is an exploratory case-study which seeks to change the play of power in the specific field through the creation of a collaborative or group learning environment unlike that which is typically operating in Sri Lankan university classrooms. The activities were designed to promote and support students' commitment to their acquisition of the cultural capital that is the English language. The re-designing of the curriculum plays a central role in the study.

The term 'curriculum' describes how formalised education operates on a daily basis. It comprises the planning and creation of curriculum for schools and higher education institutions or academic programmes, as well as the mediation of that curriculum in the activities and interactions of teachers and students (Deng, 2018). Academic materials created particularly for the aim of educating students at an institution are referred to as 'content' (Deng & Luke, 2010).

As previously noted, curriculum involves three levels: the institutional, the programmatic, and the classroom levels. The EGAP programme is an example of the

programmatic level, which designs and develops subject (ESL) matter, generally in document form. The classroom is where the enacted curriculum takes place, where the subject matter is mediated via the processes of teaching, learning, and interaction (Deng & Luke, 2008; Deng, 2010, 2018). The implemented curriculum mandates that students participate in meaning-making interactions with the ‘texts’ of their course materials and with their fellow students, and that they in turn create textual responses to these (Deng & Luke, 2008; Deng, 2010, 2018). The EGAP classes, which include collaborative activities and interactions with and between students, demonstrate how the curriculum is put into practice. They also show how the students react to the EGAP curriculum and changes in teaching.

As outlined above, Luke’s sociological template and conceptual model for language education reform (2009) incorporates Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of habitus, field and capital in a linguistically and culturally varied school field. He demonstrates how Bourdieusian *practice theory* can be operationalised in an investigation of a school field. The current study has adapted Luke’s template in re-designing the EGAP curriculum to include collaborative activities.

The empirical study is introduced in the next chapter, which presents it as exploratory case-study research. The specific research questions that served as the compass for the study are detailed, along with the methodology, data collection techniques, and analytical tools that are selected based on the theoretical framework mentioned above.

## Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

### 4.1 Introduction

The current study of student involvement in a collaborative ESL learning environment investigates the students' commitment to their acquisition of the embodied and objectified linguistic capital of English in relation to multidimensional aspects: emotional, social, cognitive and behavioural. The focus of the study has been to examine how the commitment of ESL learners can be promoted through collaborative group activities in a Sri Lankan university ESL classroom. The study also examines challenges faced by the students and teachers before the introduction of the re-designed collaborative instructional curriculum to the EGAP classes.

This chapter outlines the methodology and methods adopted in the study. It explains the design selected to achieve the aims stated in Chapter 1 of investigating how student commitment can be promoted through collaborative group activities. As noted in Chapter 1, the following main and sub-questions guided the study:

The overall research problem of the study is:

*In what manner is collaborative learning valuable to university-level learners of English in a Sri Lankan ESL classroom?*

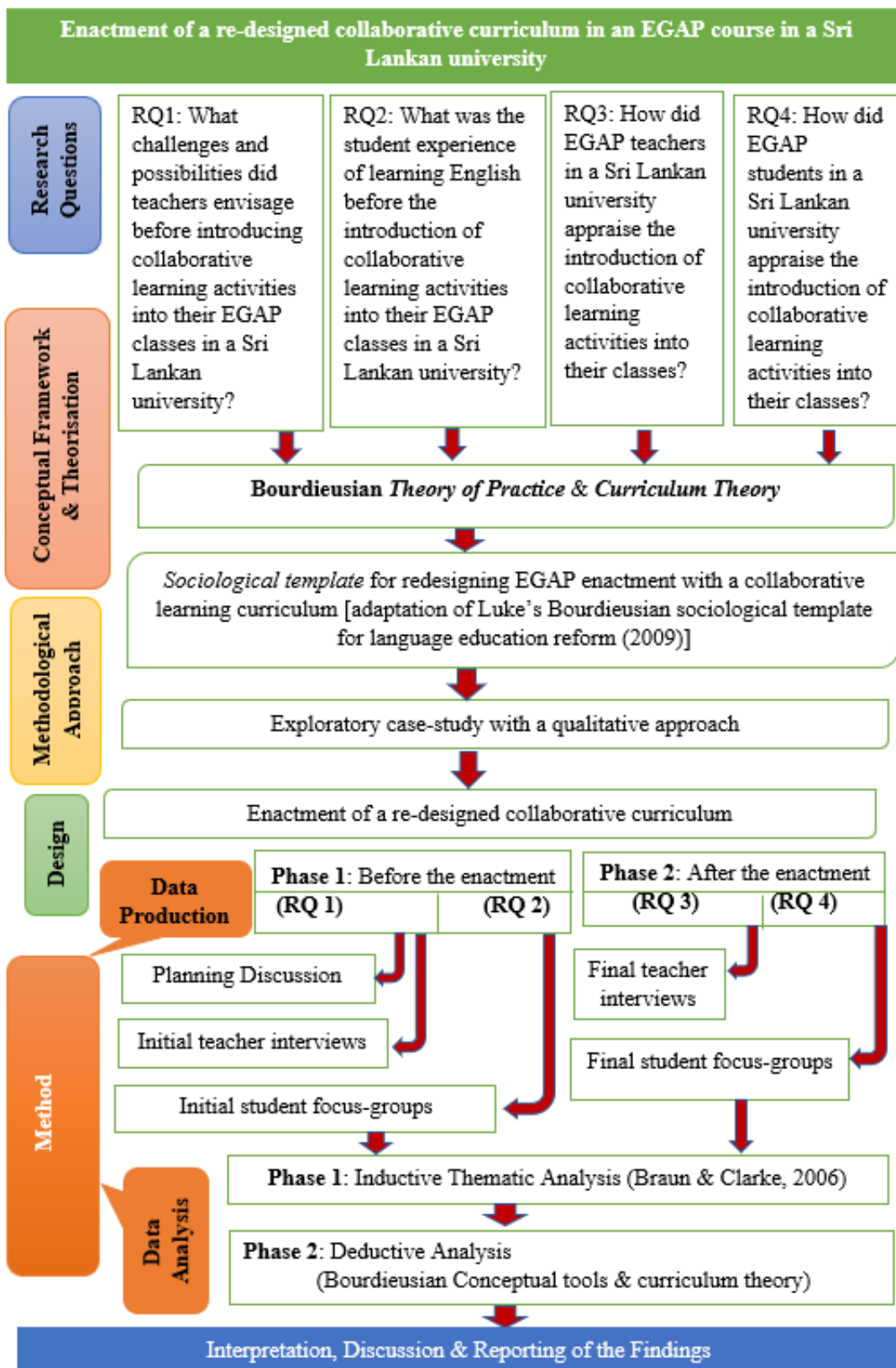
The research problem was further addressed by the following sub questions:

RQ1. *What challenges and possibilities did teachers envisage before introducing collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes in a Sri Lankan university?*

RQ2. *What was the student experience of learning English before the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes in a Sri Lankan university?*

RQ3. *How did EGAP teachers in a Sri Lankan university appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes?*

RQ4. *How did EGAP students in a Sri Lankan university appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes?*



**Figure 4.1**  
Overview of the research design

Figure 4.1 presents an overview of the research design. This chapter begins by discussing this design, providing a detailed explanation of exploratory case-study. The next section discusses the methodology used in the study, indicating the stages by which the methodology was employed. Details of the selection of the site and participants are then provided. All instruments used in the study are listed and data sources justified. Further, an outline of the data collection procedure and the timeline for completion of each stage of the data production methods are provided. This is followed by discussion of data analysis. The final section of the chapter discusses the ethical considerations associated with the research and its potential limitations.

## **4.2 Exploratory case-study research**

The current study adopted an exploratory case-study research method based on Bourdieu's (1986) theoretical framework and curriculum theory. It utilised inductive thematic data analysis. The overall design is informed by exploratory case-study research methodology, which is defined as,

a methodological approach that is primarily concerned with discovery and with generating or building theory. In a pure sense, all research is exploratory.

In the social sciences exploratory research is wedded to the notion of exploration and the researcher as explorer. In this context exploration might be thought of as a perspective, 'a state of mind, a special personal orientation' (Stebbins, 2001: 30) towards approaching and carrying out social inquiry.

(Davies, 2011, p. 111)

In an exploratory study, therefore, the researcher becomes an explorer who seeks new knowledge by discovering unknown territory and then explains the significance of the phenomenon. This exploration could be in the form of a viewpoint or researcher disposition, or of the of the researcher's position in relation to accomplishing objectives in the selected area of study. For example, in the case of the current study the researcher is interested in exploring the possibility of promoting the commitment of ESL Sri Lankan university students learning through collaborative group activities, while anticipating that such a change in the learning environment will provide students with better learning conditions than in a conventional classroom.



The study is exploratory, as it is undertaken in the under-researched area of a Sri Lankan ESL learning context. Stebbins (2001) refers to the process of exploratory research using the metaphor of “setting and realizing an agenda for a meeting” (p. 18), pointing out that we prepare an agenda to include points to be discussed at a meeting, which leads to further discussion and the creation of new ideas which had not been considered important previously.

Similarly, exploratory studies look at previous research carried out in a particular area or field and design the new research work (the agenda) to explore previously neglected or missed points or events - as “business arising” in a meeting (Stebbins, 2001, p.18). For instance, the current study has been built around the researcher’s consideration of literature related to ESL learning, especially relating to the Sri Lankan context. The findings suggested that Sri Lankan university ESL students face significant psychological and sociological issues in learning English in a conventional classroom setting. The current exploratory study therefore aims to investigate as a case-study the possibility of promoting commitment of ESL learners through collaborative group activities.

Case studies are commonly used in social science research. Creswell (2012; 2013) defines this form of research as “a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, or an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry” (p.73). In a case-study, the researcher often uses a qualitative approach to investigate an issue through one or more cases over a period of time, through a process of detailed in-depth data collection. This may entail utilisation of multiple sources of data, such as interviews, observations, documents, audio-visual material and reports. Creswell (2012; 2013) describes a case as a bounded system, explaining that the outcome of the study is presented as “a case description and case-based themes” (p.73). Simons (2009) provides a detailed definition of case-study as follows.

Case-study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a ‘real life’ context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence led. (Simons, 2009, p. 21)

A case-study, then, investigates a specific phenomenon in a real-life situation with the intent of developing a comprehensive understanding through many perspectives of the

study. Luck, Jackson, and Usher (2006) refer to a case as a *system*, which has specific boundaries, such as time, place, event or activities, and these boundaries help in relation to limiting the collection of data. The current study is an exploratory case-study based on a real-life situation in an authentic university ESL classroom. The data collection therefore was limited to an EGAP teaching-learning course in a selected Sri Lankan university within a selected period of time. It occurred during the first 6 weeks of the 2-hour teaching sessions of an ongoing EGAP course. A redesigned curriculum was enacted which involved collaborative group activities; it was employed by the two university assigned teachers in their regular classes: data were therefore collected from the 2 teachers and from their 12 students (6x2), before and after the change to the redesigned EGAP curriculum (Figure 4.1).

An exploratory case-study is one of the six case-study categories classified by Yin (2003), who notes that “an exploratory case-study should be taken at face validity” (p.7); that is, it is necessary to consider at the initial stages of the research the hypotheses, method/s of data collection, access to data and data analysis methods. Once these preliminary considerations are completed, the researcher can commence the empirical study (Yin, 2003). Streb (2010) defines exploratory case-study as,

a study [which] investigates distinct phenomena characterized by a lack of detailed preliminary research, especially formulated hypotheses that can be tested. (Streb, 2010, p. 373)

Exploratory case-study method is typically selected for studies where there is a lack of extant research evidence to provide guidelines for the study with respect to research methodology, data collection and analysis methods. In this way, aligning with Streb’s definition above, this study is located in an under-researched domain, specifically that of ESL study in a Sri Lankan university context. As explained with reference to relevant literature (Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2), studies that have considered the multidimensions of learning engagement (treated in this study as *commitment*) have been few in number, especially in the domain of ESL teaching and learning. The current study therefore had to commence its work without a strong base in relevant existing studies.

Exploratory case-study has its own characteristics that provide advantages to the researcher. A high level of flexibility and independence in relation to the research

design provide more freedom in terms of research design, data collection methods, and the need to satisfy the requirements and criteria of validity and reliability (Streb, 2010). Exploratory case studies by definition involve conducting research in circumstances where boundaries are not clearly defined, which again gives the researcher more freedom and independence when selecting the study design. An intuitive approach is typical also of exploratory case-study, which provides opportunities to investigate a previously unrecognised phenomenon (Streb, 2010). Intuitiveness allows the investigator to accommodate necessary alterations or adaptations to the actual research protocol, depending on the particular case and site requirements (Streb, 2010; Yin, 2003). It is the features such as flexibility and intuitiveness which provide researchers with opportunities to investigate “social phenomena in their original context” (p.373), when other means of investigation may pose difficulties (Streb, 2010).

These features of exploratory case-study facilitated the current study in many ways, enabling the investigation of the emerging topic of ESL student commitment in a context characterised by little extant research evidence to support research design decisions. At the same time, due to the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, personal access to the relevant data collection sites was more challenging than originally anticipated when the study was designed in 2019-2020. The flexible nature of exploratory case-study was useful in designing the study, which required the incorporation of alternatives and adaptations to the original research protocol based on the prevailing situation at the data collection site. Also, given the study’s focus on ESL students’ commitment through the lens of a sociological theoretical framework, and the challenge associated with scarcity of similar research protocols, the nature of exploratory case-study assisted in the design of the research protocol.

#### **4.2.1 Procedures for conducting a case-study**

Creswell (2012, p.74) proposes the following steps as appropriate procedures for conducting a case-study.

- i) *It is necessary to determine whether the case-study approach is appropriate to the research problem:* As explained in the definition of case-study above (Simons, 2009), case studies occur in ‘real life’ situations. This study took place in a real educational context, an ESL classroom of an ongoing EGAP course. Case-study method provides opportunities to maintain the holistic and significant features of real-life events, such as the

behaviour of small groups, the life cycles of individuals, and managerial and organisational processes (Yin, 2009); this study was conducted in a regular EGAP classroom, with a group of students and the university assigned teacher/s.

- ii) *It is necessary to identify the case:* The investigator needs to decide what type of case is useful and matches the case; for example, whether the case is *single, multiple, intrinsic, or instrumental*, and whether the focus is on the case itself or on an issue related to some other condition (Creswell, 2012; Simons, 2009; Yin, 2003). Based on its purpose, a case-study can be categorised as *intrinsic* or *instrumental* (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). If the primary exploration lies in the case itself, then the case is *intrinsic*, whereas if the exploration lies in gaining insight into an issue based on some other grounds, then it is *instrumental* (Luck et al., 2005; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). As the researcher in the current study, being an ESL practitioner, I realised that most EGAP students are somewhat reluctant to participate actively in ESL classroom activities. To reiterate, the purpose of the study design was to examine collaborative classroom group activities and to observe and analyse the students' commitment to learning the English language. This study can therefore be considered as *instrumental* as the case has been selected to investigate a particular phenomenon.
- iii) *The data collection needs to be extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, documents, and audio-visual materials:* The study employed a range of tools for data collection, including lesson plans, class teaching materials and resources, ESL policy documents from the university, initial and final focus-group student discussions, planning discussion and final and semi-structured interviews of the ESL teachers. The study adopted a qualitative method as it would facilitate a comprehensive exploration of the study.
- iv) *The analysis of the data needs to be a holistic analysis of the entire case or an embedded analysis of a specific aspect of the case:* In data analysis entailing a holistic approach the investigator examines and presents details of the whole case, the global nature of the entire case, whereas working with an embedded approach the researcher selects one analytic aspect (sub-unit) within the case and examines a specific phenomenon for presentation

(Creswell, 2012; 2013; Yin, 2009). In the current study an embedded data analysis approach was used due to the use of the Bourdieusian *3-moment field analysis* (the focal field, habitus in that field, and the relation of that field to other fields), plus the use of concepts such as *doxa* and *illusio* and the application of curriculum theory (*instructional curriculum*) in order to examine the selected phenomenon of ESL students' commitment in collaborative English learning activities in a Sri Lankan university classroom.

- v) *In the final interpretive phase, it is necessary to report the meaning of the case, noting whether the meaning comes from an intrinsic case (learning about an unusual situation) or an instrumental case (learning about the issue of the case). As noted at the second step above, the meaning of the current study comes from an instrumental case, as it is learning about the issue/s of the case.*

The following section discusses in more detail the methodology of the study.

### **4.3 Research Design**

The current exploratory case-study took a qualitative approach as it is conducive to the exploratory intent of the project (Creswell, 2012; 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Fredericks, et al., 2004; Simons, 2009).

Qualitative research has been defined as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.3). The world is seen through material practices which are involved in shaping and changing the world. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) elaborate that “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p.3). Qualitative studies take place in a natural environment, for example in a classroom, not in an artificially created situation, so that the researcher can experience or observe occurrences authentically. This study was conducted in a real EGAP classroom to which teachers and students were already assigned. This enabled the collection of data related to the focus of the study.

It is helpful to look at the methods used in similar studies. A qualitative approach emphasises the qualities of processes or entities, whereas a quantitative approach prioritises measurement and concerns about informal relationships between

variables (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The qualitative researcher may emphasise the nature of reality that is created socially (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). When discussing studies relating to student involvement, Fredricks et al. (2004) claim that although several studies have been conducted quantitatively, utilising tools such as student and teacher surveys, they have provided only limited information. They therefore argue the need for more in-depth exploration to better understand student involvement, rather than just listing what factors do or do not influence involvement.

A qualitative method helps the researcher to comprehend the experience of phenomena (Fredericks, et al., 2004). In the case of this study it has the potential to demonstrate how the process of student commitment happens, and the ways in which different dimensions of it develop and interact. It may provide insight as to why some students are not very committed while others are strongly committed to their work. Fredricks et al. (2004) postulate that a qualitative approach can also explicate individual and cultural differences, enabling the researcher to understand “the complex interaction between identity development and engagement” (p. 87). These commentaries help to explain why qualitative methods were selected to investigate the phenomenon which is the focus of this study; and the approach can be accommodated within the Bourdieusian framing of the study. Bourdieu (1986) maintained that it was not the qualitative or quantitative nature of a study *per se* that matters. It was rather the fit between the assumptions of the approach - qualitative or quantitative - and those integral to his concepts that was salient in the first instance. For instance, the qualitative method of this study will enable understanding of the dynamics which are integral to the inter-related concepts of *field* (the objective) and *habitus* (the subjective). Similarly, it should home in on the understanding that fields are relational rather than substantialist spaces. It will, for instance, conceptualise English language proficiency as a resource which allocates actors to relations of dominance or subordination within a given field, rather than as something that has intrinsic (substantial) value or status. It is also an appropriate approach given the paucity of existing research on the topic (Imai, 2010).

The next section discusses selection of the site and participants.

#### **4.4 Study Site and Participants**

The Premier University of Sri Lanka, a pseudonym given to conceal the identity of the university (Neuman, 2014), was selected as the data collection site due to logistical factors such as easy access to the site and the researcher's familiarity with it. The participants were also selected as a convenience sample, a non-probability sampling technique that involves choosing participants from a pool of people who are both easily accessible and agreeable to recruitment (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). Nonetheless, the selected students and ESL teachers have some similarities to undergraduates and ESL teachers at other universities, which means that the findings should be suitable for wider consideration. Undergraduate ESL students in PUSL and other universities in Sri Lanka are engaged in the process of learning English as a second language. They may come from diverse language backgrounds and have varying levels of English proficiency. However, the demographic profile of students may differ between institutions, including factors such as age, prior educational background, and work experience. ESL teachers in PUSL and other universities in Sri Lanka typically pursue a bachelor's degree or diploma in English language teaching, applied linguistics, or a related field. They receive formal education and training in language teaching methodologies, second language acquisition, and other relevant areas. ESL teachers in OUSL and other universities are equipped with pedagogical knowledge and skills necessary for teaching English as a second language. They understand theories and principles of language teaching, instructional design, assessment, and classroom management.

##### **4.4.1 Study Site**

Premier University of Sri Lanka (PUSL), a national university in Sri Lanka, was selected as the site of the study. It consists of a number of academic faculties and several other institutions. At present, there are more than 40,000 students studying at PUSL, who are served by several regional centres and study centres located around the country. Almost all the degree programmes are offered in English as the medium of instruction. A few programmes allow students to take first-year subjects in their first language (Sinhala or Tamil), but it is mandatory to switch into English medium instruction from second year onwards. The PUSL recognizes that English is important both for employment and for learning while at the university, therefore it tries to

provide English-medium programmes for all degree courses. As in most Sri Lankan universities, completion of an English component is compulsory for obtaining a degree.

PUSL is not a conventional university as it offers distance mode as well as face-to-face teaching-learning, which means that those students have particular responsibilities associated with self-study and are not expected to participate in all face-to-face classes (day-schools) (Section 3.4.3.2 - EGAP Teacher-Guide). English classes, however, are the exception; they mainly follow a face-to-face teaching methodology. It is essential for students learning a language to have opportunities to communicate via face-to-face classroom activities. The university therefore makes great efforts to enable this to happen in their English courses (EGAP and English for Academic Purposes), which are coordinated by the Department of English Language Teaching (ELT) from the central campus and conducted in regional and selected study centres. However, there have been difficulties in maintaining the standards of day schools (face-to-face teaching sessions) and outcomes of the EGAP course, as most of the teaching sessions are now delivered by teachers hired from outside the university.

#### **4.4.2 EGAP Course**

The English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) Course has been designed for first year undergraduates undertaking degree programmes in the Health, Engineering, Management, Science and Social Science disciplines. EGAP students learn English as a second language. As explained in Chapter 2, these students come from different socio-economic backgrounds and have different levels of English language proficiency depending on their previous exposure to the language at home and in the primary and secondary school environment.

The EGAP course focuses on English needed for academic as well as for general purposes. It consists of working with the four macro skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The course comprises six units, each containing four modules, one for each language skill. The course content is based on the Benchmark Framework for Academic English developed for the Sri Lankan university system (Raheem, 2014) (Section 3.4.3.1- EGAP Introductory Faculty Memo). Two continuous assessments are conducted during the course work and one final examination is held at the end of the course.



Originally the EGAP course was conducted for a period of six months, including thirty-six 3-hour face-to-face teaching sessions. At the time of the study, the duration of EGAP teaching had been reduced to a period of three months including thirty-six 2-hour face-to-face day school sessions. Due to the prevailing COVID situation, PUSL was compelled to shift the delivery of the EGAP course from face-to-face to emergency online teaching (EOT) mode. Hence the EGAP course in this study limited its teaching sessions to only thirteen 2-hour online classes. Data were collected from the EOT of the EGAP course for a freshly commenced degree programme, the Bachelor of Software Engineering Honours (BSE Hons) programme. Although the EGAP course is conducted by the English Language Teaching Department (ELTD), it was decided that the newly commenced degree would be co-ordinated by the same faculty which offered the degree programme. However, all the course materials, the structure of the evaluation method and the teaching methods were provided by the ELTD (3.4.3.2 - EGAP Teacher-Guide (2014)). As the researcher in the current study, I subsequently obtained access to the EGAP course through the faculty that was offering the programme. They were happy to help me and to allow me to be involved in the course as they too were able to receive reciprocal support from me as an experienced lecturer and the former EGAP Coordinator attached to the academic department that designed the course. They invited me to join the online teacher briefing session conducted for the newly commencing EGAP course.

The COVID pandemic impacted EGAP teaching dramatically, as this is not a cohort of students and teachers for whom it is easy to go suddenly online. This was a very challenging situation. During the planning discussion teachers expressed their concern that teaching in the EGAP course would be a “nightmare” for them. They had no idea about the background of the students who would be joining the new degree programme (Software Engineering), nor did they have the usual induction session that the ELT Department conducts for EGAP students before the commencement of the course. Teachers were also unfamiliar with the online portal (Microsoft Teams), and they were uncertain about the technical and technological facilities and capacities needed for online teaching. ESL’s specific teaching of the different macro skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) requires specific facilities for practising these skills, which posed challenges for the teachers. They were especially uncertain about practising listening and speaking skills due to the lack of available facilities

available - for them as well as for the students. The teachers were also aware that the majority of the students would be learning speaking and listening skills for the first time, as these skills are not included in primary and secondary school curricula. Sri Lanka being a developing country, the availability of technology for educational purposes is limited. Most of the students in the cohort would not even have access to basic facilities such as a computer (desktop or laptop) or data facilities for internet connections. The other key concern expressed by teachers was that of time limitations. The EGAP course had scheduled three-hour face-to-face teaching sessions, and the university had cut the online sessions to two hours, due to limitations of economic and technological resources.

#### **4.4.3 The Bachelor of Software Engineering (Hons) programme**

In this continuously evolving field, the Bachelor of Software Engineering Honours (BSE Hons) programme wants to produce competent graduates. The degree has been particularly developed to fulfill the demand of the industry for qualified software engineers. The government of Sri Lanka had identified the need for additional IT graduates for the IT industry, and it assigned PUSL the task of producing additional Software Engineering undergraduates. The PUSL, together with University Grants Commission (UGC), decided to rise to this national challenge by admitting 10,000 students to its Bachelor of Software Engineering (BSE) programme and other IT degree programmes from the year 2021.

The Bachelor of Software Engineering programme is the first industry-oriented software engineering programme offered by a Sri Lankan local university with the University Grants Commission's (UGC) approval. The BSE (Hons) programme is delivered by the Centre for IT Educational Service (CITES) under the guidance of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. The CITES was established in 2021 to facilitate a large intake of students for several IT degrees and to administer the delivery of courses offered by different Faculties in PUSL. Since these BSE graduates are intending to work in the private sector, especially in foreign based IT companies, special attention is given to ensure they have proficient communication skills. Learning English is very important for these undergraduates.

#### **4.4.4 Participants**

The study selected two teachers and two groups of EGAP students, with around 50 students in each group to create a collaborative teaching-learning environment and to collect data on how this worked. As the sole investigator, I conducted the initial and final student focus-groups and the planning discussion and initial and final semi-structured interviews with the teachers (Fredricks & McColsky, 2012; Early & Marshall, 2008; Gass & Mackey, 2000). I had to limit the number of student focus-groups so that the study was feasible with the given resources (Dunn, 2010), therefore two groups of six students were selected (See Section 4.5).

##### **4.4.4.1 *Teacher Participants***

After receiving ethics approval from both the university where I have completed my research studies and PUSL, six visiting ESL lecturers/instructors teaching English in the EGAP course of the BSE Programme were approached through the Head of the Academic Department and the EGAP Co-ordinator. The new EGAP Co-ordinator is attached to the CITES, although usually the co-ordinator is assigned by the English Language Teaching Department (ELTD). The invitation was sent by email. The first two teachers to provide their consent were selected as participants for the study.

One later volunteer who gave her consent to participate was thanked and told that the teacher participants had already been selected on a first-come basis. The two teacher participants were involved in two phases, before and after the implementation of the collaborative curriculum.

Table 4.1 shows the demographic details of the two selected teacher participants (TP). They have been provided with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and confidentiality (Neuman, 2014).

As indicated in the table, both teachers have ESL teaching experience at secondary as well as tertiary level. TP1 and TP2 have been teaching in the EGAP course for 8 and 6 years respectively. Their experience is invaluable as they know the EGAP syllabus well, and are familiar with the nature of the students, the course and the evaluation structure.

**Table 4.1 Demographic details of the teacher participants**

	Teacher participant (TP)1 (Ms Srini)	Teacher participant (TP) 2 (Ms Gaya)
<b>Teaching experience in ESL</b>		
<b>Secondary level teaching</b>	4 years	25 years
<b>Tertiary level teaching</b>	10 years	6 years
<b>EGAP teaching</b>	8 years	6 years
<b>Educational qualifications</b>	M.A. in TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language)  B.A. in English & ELT	M.A. in Linguistics  B.A. in English & ELT
<b>Professional involvements (current)</b>	Visiting academic at PUSL ESP Course – English for Legal Studies Certificate Programme in ESL/ Listening & Speech Course	Visiting academic at PUSL ESP Course – English for Legal Studies State schoolteacher ESL for Grades -11, 12, 13

I now provide details of the student participants in the study.

#### **4.4.4.2 Student Participants**

All the students in the selected two classes of the EGAP course were able to participate in the collaborative activities irrespective of whether they were study participants or not. All students (around 60 in total) of the two classes were invited to participate in the study. The first 12 (6 from each group) who returned completed consent forms were accepted. Since more than 12 consent forms were returned, I responded to the additional students, thanking them for their offer of participation and informing them that the study quota had been reached. Data were collected only from the 12 students who first provided written informed consent.

**Table 4.2**  
**Demographic details of the student participants**

Name (SP)	Age	Employed Yes/No	Gender	School attended	Highest English qualification	Reason for learning EGAP
<b>Lakshika</b>	21	No	Female	Government/ Semi-urban	O/L English- C A/L General English – S Certificate Course in English	Academic and general purposes
<b>Dilukshi</b>	23	No	Female	Government/ Rural	O/L English- S A/L General English - C	Academic purposes
<b>Harini</b>	21	No	Female	Government/ Urban	O/L English- C A/L General English - A	Academic purposes
<b>Rasika</b>	21	Yes (not at the beginning)	Male	Government/ Semi-urban	O/L English- C A/L General English – S Certificate Course in English	Academic and social purposes
<b>Tharosh</b>	21	No	Male	Government/ Rural	O/L English- -- A/L General English - S	Academic/Social/ Career purposes
<b>Thamara</b>	23	No	Female	Government/ Rural	O/L English- C A/L General English – F Certificate Course in English	Academic/Social/ Career purposes
<b>Bhashini</b>	22	No	Female	Government/ Rural	O/L English- C A/L General English - C	Academic/Social/ Career purposes
<b>Nurasha</b>	20	Yes	Female	International + Government/ Urban	O/L English- A A/L General English - A	Academic and Career purposes
<b>Gihan</b>	22	Yes	Male	Government/ Urban	O/L English- C A/L General English - B	Academic/Social/ Career purposes
<b>Janaka</b>	20	Yes	Male	Government/ Rural	O/L English- -- A/L General English - S	Academic/Social/ Career purposes
<b>Pradeep</b>	21	Yes (not at the beginning)	Male	Government/ Semi-urban	O/L English- C A/L General English – C Certificate Course in English	Academic/Social/ Career purposes
<b>Thushari</b>	21	No	Female	Government/ Urban	O/L English- B A/L General English - C	Academic/Social/ Career purposes

\* All the students had registered in the BSE (Hons) Programme at PUSL

\*\* O/L - General Certificate of Ordinary Level; A/L - General Certificate of Advanced Level

They participated in two phases of data collection, before and after their learning experience in the collaborative learning environment.

Table 4.2 shows the demographic details of the student participants (SP). All were provided with pseudonyms to keep their identity confidential (Neuman, 2014). The details provided in the table show that these students come from different socio-economic backgrounds (according to the schools they attended) and had different levels of English proficiency (according to their qualifications). Gender representation shows there were 7 female and 5 male students. All had attended government schools, but some had attended rural schools while others had gone to urban or semi-urban schools.

Except for two students, all provided their grade for O/L English, which is the first national level English examination in Sri Lanka. A/L General English is the next national level examination, which students sit in their final year of school. Looking at the grades, it is seen that most of the students who had attended urban or semi-urban schools had obtained better grades than those from rural schools. The two who did not provide their grades were from rural schools. Lower or failure grades may have been the reason that they did not want to provide their results. Three students (Nurasha, Gihan and Janaka) were employed at the time that the initial focus-groups were conducted; Rasika and Pradeep secured employment after they had commenced the EGAP course; they were employed by the time that they took part in the final focus-groups.

The next section details the data sources of the study and what instruments were utilised for data collection.

#### **4.5 Data Sources**

The main instrument for data collection was the initial and final focus groups, and semi-structured question protocol with the student participants and the initial and final semi-structured interviews and planning discussion with the teacher participants. The initial student focus-groups, teacher semi-structured interviews and planning discussion were conducted before the enactment of the collaborative group activities curriculum. The final student focus-groups and teacher semi-structured interviews were held after it. The data collection methods are detailed below. Due to COVID

pandemic all the focus groups, semi-structured interviews and planning discussion were held virtually via Zoom, and they were video recorded. Although in the data collection audio- video recordings were on, the video recordings which provided non-verbal cues and emotional aspects have been used for thematic analysis interpretively to have rich data source and deeper understand. However, they were not used in the objective analysis.

#### **4.5.1 Interviews**

Interviews are one way of collecting qualitative data. They are defined as “a means of data collection involving an oral exchange of information between the researcher and one or more other people” (Dunn, 2010, p.79). They are an effective way of collecting required data verbally, as they can provide reliable, prompt, and in-depth information regarding the core issue of the case-study (Simon, 2009). Simon (2009) further claims that interviews have “the potential for uncovering and representing unobservable feelings and events that cannot be observed” (p.43); researchers can obtain more reliable data from the participant themselves directly rather than collecting data only through observation, which can be framed by the observer’s own assumptions. For example, in an ESL classroom the observer may assume that an observed student is seriously engaged in a writing activity, when they are actually catching up on missed notes or doing some other writing (Lane & Harris, 2015). As this study requires detailed, reliable qualitative data to provide an analysis and response to the research questions, interviews were chosen as the most suitable data collection method.

Interviews are often an essential data source in case studies. As Yin (2009) points out, in general “case studies are about human affairs and behavioural events” (p.109) that need in-depth qualitative data, and through interviews an investigator can obtain insights to such affairs or events, obtained directly from well-informed interviewees. Dunn (2010) argues that interviews are an excellent means of data collection as they grant the researcher direct access to people’s experiences and opinions, which vary enormously; they are a means of understanding how different meanings are made between and within people. This study used focused *interviews*, that is, the interviews were conducted over a short period of time (30-45 minutes) and open-ended questions were utilised, as recommended by case-study protocol (Yin, 2009).

Open-ended questions are a key element of a semi-structured protocol, which falls on a continuum between structured and unstructured interviews (Dunn, 2010; Longhurst, 2003). Dunn (2010) defines a semi-structured interview as an

[i]nterview with some predetermined order but which nonetheless has flexibility with regard to the position/timing of questions. Some questions, particularly sensitive or complex ones, may have a standard wording for each *informant*. (p. 387)

Semi-structured interviews follow an interview guide, at the same time giving the researcher flexibility to adjust questions and the order and pace of questions. The questions are content-focused and related to the research questions more directly than in an unstructured protocol. As in any interview, the interviewer needs to be a good listener and to be non-judgmental; and the interview needs to be conducted carefully and systematically (Longhurst, 2003). Challenges in this regard can arise from the fact that there is more in-the-moment response and shaping of the interview by the researcher than is the case in a structured interview. Successfully navigating this flexibility requires vigilance on the researcher's part, particularly in relation to managing any potential intrusion by the researcher's own professional beliefs during the interview (Longhurst, 2003).

ESL classes like those in which the study was conducted in Sri Lanka are usually large. Gathering information in these circumstances requires careful design that takes account of the class size (Lane & Harris, 2015). In this study, as previously noted, it was not possible to collect data from all the class members, which is why focus-groups were used to collect in-depth commentary about challenges the students faced in learning ESL, their commitment and their experience in and response to learning English in a collaborative learning environment.

#### **4.5.2 Focus-groups**

As a data collecting technique, the focus-group has some advantages and some particular characteristics. It is defined as,

a research method involving a small group of between 6 and 10 people discussing a topic or issue defined by a researcher, with the researcher facilitating the discussion. (Dunn, 2010, p. 377)



Focus-groups are conducted as small group discussions in which interviewees have the freedom to express their views in detail, with some direction provided by the facilitator or interviewer. They share some characteristics with semi-structured interviews, given their conversational nature and relatively informal tone (Longhurst, 2003). They are less threatening for student participants than formal individual interviews. For example, Sri Lankan students may be reluctant to speak out individually, especially regarding their ESL learning; but they become more courageous when they see other students speaking out (Simon, 2009). Another characteristic of a focus group is interaction between group members (Dunn, 2010). This characteristic is referred to by Dunn as the '*synergistic effect*': that is, one participant's comment can trigger a chain of responses from others. Improved interaction and contribution allows the researcher to obtain more information (Dunne, 2010), and interaction also helps participants expand their individual knowledge on a topic or question, and to reconsider their understandings or perspectives. In general focus-group interviews allow the researcher to collect data more effectively and economically, at the same time allowing participants also to feel more relaxed and confident and to enjoy themselves by expanding their knowledge on the topic under discussion.

As the current study adopted an exploratory case-study method, the data collection needed to be extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information. In addition to collecting data through initial and final focus-groups and semi-structured interviews, relevant documents were also considered. These included lesson plans and teaching schedules, class teaching materials and resources, ESL policy documents, such as the EGAP Handbook (2012), the EGAP Teacher-Guide (Raheem, 2014) and the Introductory Faculty Memo (2010). These documents provided data about course content, course objectives, completion of the course, methods of teaching, and facilities provided by the university to support ESL teaching and learning. Although these documents were not utilised for the purpose of analysis, they were very helpful in informing the planning discussion and also the interpretation of the data. For example, lesson plans and teaching schedules, class teaching materials and resources were used as the basis for re-designing the instructional curriculum with the teacher participants. This ensured, for example, that the incorporation of group activities into the re-designed curriculum was carefully managed without interrupting existing

schedules and plans. The planning of the collaborative activities was also based on the themes and lesson content of the course materials and details provided in the EGAP policy documents, such as course objectives, completion of the course, methods of teaching, and the availability of facilities. All these sources of information were useful in interpreting the data.

Details of the data production method of the study will next be discussed, together with the type of data and how they were gathered.

#### **4.6 Data Production Method**

I held a pre-discussion with the two ESL teachers via Zoom before the commencement of teaching to discuss ways of facilitating collaborative group activities. I also had discussions with each teacher participant every week before each teaching session, which facilitated coordination between us during the study (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). I was not, however, involved in the teaching sessions, though I got involved in observing the teaching sessions that took place on Microsoft Teams (MST) online platform. This provided me an opportunity to observe how the students were interacting among the breakout room members and with the teacher. The teachers are both experienced, with many years of ESL teaching with EGAP students (Table: 4.1). They are therefore familiar with the attendance rates of the students, the facilities available in the classroom, and details of the EGAP Course. The PUSL conducts regular teacher briefings, which provide all the EGAP teachers - including permanent and hired outside teachers - with lesson objectives and teaching techniques for each language macro skill based on the course units. These teacher briefings allow the university to transfer the programmatic curriculum into the instructional curriculum while indicating the aims and objectives of the institutional curriculum. As a result of these processes the teachers' experiences and their awareness of the EGAP course were helpful for me as the researcher in organising the collaborative group activities and conducting the research.

Normally around 30 to 40 students are assigned to an EGAP group. All are learning English as an L2, and they come from different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds (Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim). Their English language proficiency levels vary depending on previous exposure and experience at school and in their home

environment (Table: 4.2). Their enthusiasm for participating in the ESL classes will also vary. Although EGAP students are enrolled in different degree programmes, students from the same discipline are selected when assigning groups for the English classes. The present study was therefore able to select students from the same undergraduate programme, as described in Section 4.4.

#### **4.6.1 Phase one data collection**

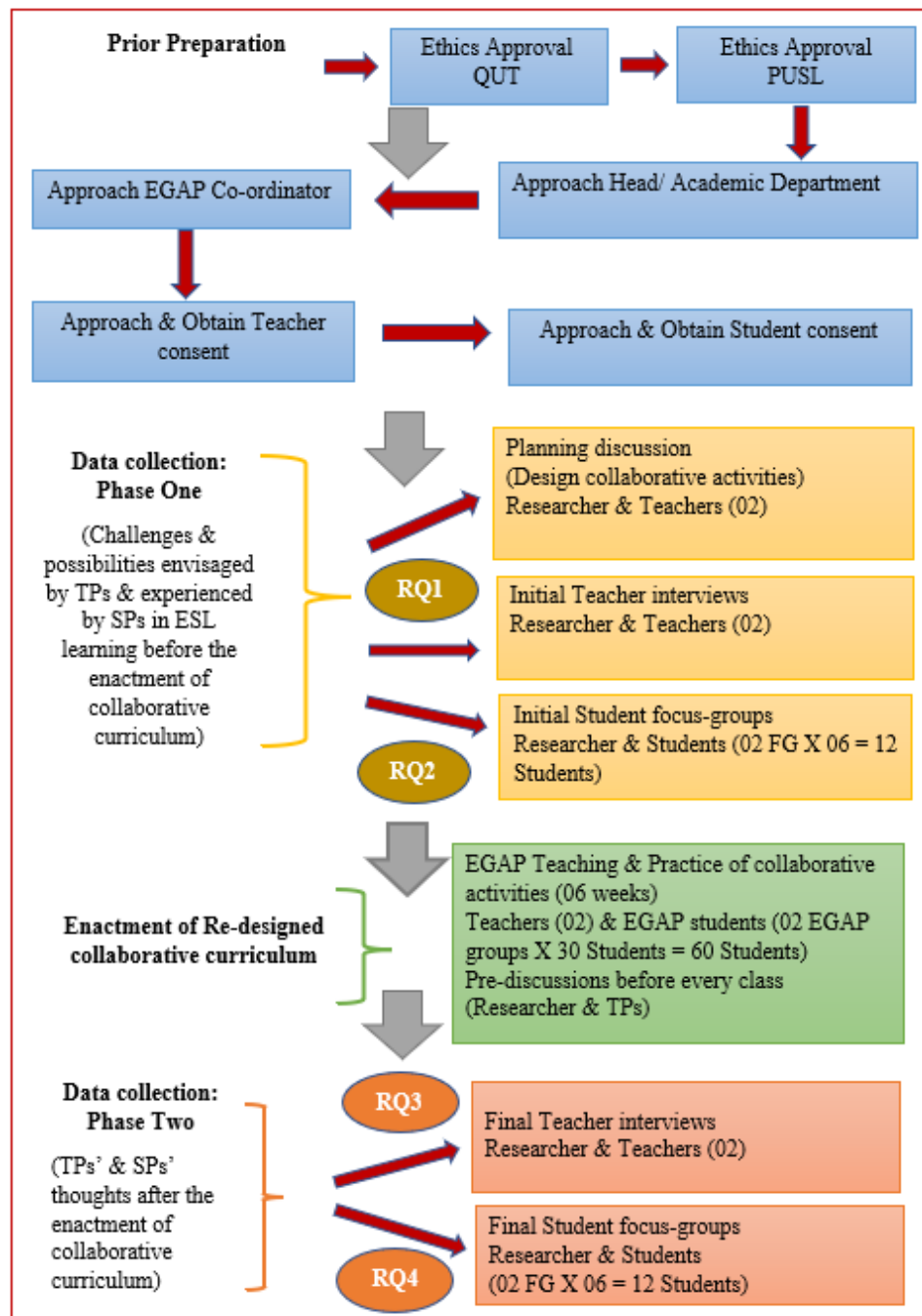
Data collection was undertaken virtually over a six-week period, involving six collaborative teaching-learning sessions (through MST online platform) of two hours each. Figure 4.2 presents a flowchart of the data collection procedures, including the phases of initial and final student focus-groups and semi-structured teacher interviews and planning discussion held before and after the collaborative learning activities via Zoom meetings. The classes were held online (through MST online platform) due to the prevailing COVID-19 situation. Data were collected in two phases via planning discussion, focus-groups and semi-structured interviews conducted online via Zoom meeting and they were video recorded (Figure 4.2). The planning discussion with the teacher participants was held as the initial step of data gathering to re-design the classroom activities of the EGAP course.

The initial (pre) semi-structured interviews with the teacher participants were also conducted prior to the teaching-learning sessions, based on the availability and convenience of the teachers. The initial (pre) focus-groups were held separately before the commencement of the teaching activities in order to collect data relevant to Research Question (1)<sup>10</sup> and Research Question (2)<sup>11</sup>. The interviews were conducted with the teachers and students to collect their perceptions of the challenges they face in their ESL teaching and learning. These data helped to provide a context for understanding the issue of student commitment at the study site. The planning discussion and the teacher interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the student focus-groups were also recorded, transcribed and later translated.

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<sup>10</sup> RQ1. What challenges and possibilities did teachers envisage before introducing collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes in a Sri Lankan university?

<sup>11</sup> RQ 2. What was the student experience of learning English before the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes in a Sri Lankan university?



**Figure 4.2**  
Flowchart of the data collection procedures for the introduction of collaborative activities into an EGAP course in a Sri Lankan university

#### 4.6.1.1 *Elements of the re-designed curriculum with the collaborative group activities*

Before the newly commencing BSE degree programme began the two teachers and I planned the collaborative group activities according to the teaching schedule given to teachers by the university. We then discussed how to deliver the re-designed

curriculum in the upcoming EGAP teaching period. The teachers were acutely aware of the changes that this was going to involve. Firstly, this was a new programme, and they had no background information about it. Secondly, the COVID-19 pandemic meant that students could not come on campus, or meet the teachers and other students face to face. On the other hand, the course was usually coordinated by the ELTD, and so the teachers were at least familiar with the staff and the systems of this academic department. As noted previously, the new course was coordinated by the faculty that offers the BSE Programme through a newly established center, therefore the teachers were totally unfamiliar with the online teaching portal (Microsoft Teams), the Coordinator of the EGAP course, and the BSE students.

It was made clear to the teachers that the collaborative group activities needed to be designed based on the existing EGAP curriculum and the teaching schedule; and the study was not going to conduct separate teaching sessions only for the selected student participants, as the intention was to implement the collaborative group activities in a real classroom within an existing curriculum, so that benefits from the new activities would be accrued by the entire class. Conducting the study in a real classroom allows the researcher to see outcomes in relation to a real picture. As Brown (1992) points out, it is not appropriate to only change one aspect of teaching in a classroom due to the “synergistic” nature of “classroom life” (p.141).

#### **4.6.1.2 *Planning discussion with the teacher participants***

Planning of the collaborative group activities was one of the most important elements in the current study. I did not want to interrupt the teaching schedule of the EGAP course, therefore careful planning was required to allow the teachers and myself to share experiences and ideas in relation to the research focus. The planning process helped to build the collaborative partnership between the practitioners (the teachers) and myself as the researcher (Anderson and Shattuck, 2012).

As the first step of data production, I explained the purpose of the study to the teachers. They knew about conventional group activities but were not very clear about the characteristics of collaborative group activities. I therefore explained the concept of collaborative learning as defined in the study, - what it consists of, how teamwork operates, and how it supports more effective learning. I then discussed how to plan collaborative group activities to align with the teaching schedule provided by the academic department. During the discussion I worked with them to design activities

based on the lessons contained in the teaching schedule, providing sufficient scaffolding to support them. The EGAP course focuses on the four macro language skills and comprises six units, each containing 4 modules, one for each language skill (EGAP Student Handbook (2012)). Therefore depending on the teaching schedule of the day-schools, collaborative group activities were designed focusing on the relevant language skill/s. For example, the first unit of the course was based on a reading module on ‘World Personalities’, so we discussed how to design an appropriate collaborative activity as a pre-reading activity (see Appendix B, Sample Activity 1). Since this was the first group activity, we thought it best to provide an opportunity for students to talk to each other while engaging in the activity, so we suggested having smaller groups (around 6 students) in which each student could think of a key figure that they like, as required by the activity given in the textbook. They had to come up with 2 or 3 points that they knew about that person or reasons why they like them. Finally, they had to present their chosen personality to the group and decide if they could all agree on one figure, and together list some details that they would expect to find in a text about that person.

The discussions and preparation took place prior to the first teaching-learning session, based on the convenience of the teachers. All the discussions were held through Zoom meetings due to COVID-19 travel restrictions which meant that I could not visit Sri Lanka as planned originally. However, due to time differences between Sri Lanka and Australia, finding a suitable time for the three of us to work together became a challenge. I sought maximum input from the teachers when designing the activities, as they have better experience in the real world of teaching and learning at the study site (Brown, 1992; Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). Care was taken to avoid inconvenience, and also to ensure that the teachers were clear about the purpose of the study (the details of the study was also provided in the information sheet along with the consent form). Since they were highly experienced in teaching EGAP students at the university they were able to share their experiences with me which was helpful in terms of bridging the gap between research and practice (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012).

The teachers were provided with the pre-determined curriculum and teaching instructions for the EGAP course before they began teaching; and I ensured that they followed these whiles implementing the collaborative group activities in the revised programme. Brown (1992) stresses the importance of maintaining the usual

functioning of the classroom as smoothly as possible while conducting classroom research, otherwise the researcher may not see the real picture of how the classroom works. She also makes the point that it is inappropriate to investigate aspects of teaching and learning such as testing, teacher education, or curriculum separately; that they are interconnected parts of a whole system. She argues that due to the “synergistic” nature of “classroom life” we cannot make changes to a single aspect of a teaching and learning situations (1992, p.141). The classroom is one “whole operating system” (p.143), where we cannot isolate one aspect to study (Brown, 1992). Brown further claims that when conducting a classroom study it is necessary to adjust all components, such as teachers, students, curriculum, and technology, if a proper outcome is to be achieved. She considers these different classroom components as inputs which work together within one system.

To recap, this study took place in a first-year classroom at a university where English is being taught as a second language. When designing the new collaborative learning environment, the existing teaching curriculum was followed, in line with the understanding that it is the responsibility of the researcher not to interrupt the smooth functioning of the EGAP course syllabus. However, it was necessary to make some modifications without deviating totally from the existing course syllabus. In the context of the changed approach, unlike in that of a conventional teaching classroom in Sri Lanka, the teacher’s role was more that of *facilitating* rather than *transmitting* information; and the students’ role entailed more independent learning as collaborative group activities are student-oriented and student-managed (Bruffee, 1999; Oxford, 1997a). Attempts were therefore made to transform the traditional passive student role of conventional Sri Lankan classrooms. The following section provides details of the initial and final focus-groups and the semi-structured interviews held with the students and teachers.

#### **4.6.1.3 Initial focus-groups and semi-structured interviews**

Initial focus-groups with a semi-structured question protocol were carried out with the student participants prior to the collaborative teaching-learning sessions virtually through Zoom. I used both English and Sinhala languages when talking to the students as most of them were not competent enough to respond only in English. Only one student out of the twelve was able to respond totally in English. I therefore ensured that I explained and talked in Sinhala when necessary and that the students

were also able to talk in their L1 or L2 as they liked. The initial focus-groups (IFG) were held to collect data related to Research Question 2 (See footnote under Section 4.6.1): that is, to collect students' perceptions of the challenges they face in their ESL learning in their university classes before introducing the re-designed curriculum with the collaborative group activities.

The initial semi-structured interviews (ISI) with the teachers were also carried out prior to the collaborative teaching-learning sessions virtually through Zoom. They helped to collect data related to Research Question 1 (See footnote under Section 4.6.1) which probed teachers' perceptions and experience of challenges faced in their ESL teaching before introducing the re-designed curriculum with the collaborative group activities.

Sample questions for the initial focus-groups and semi-structured interviews conducted prior to the teaching activities are given in Appendix C. The questions were developed based on the literature related to ESL teaching and learning and on my many years of ESL teaching experience. The following section discusses details regarding the final focus-groups and semi-structured interviews.

#### **4.6.2 Phase two data collection**

Final (post) focus-groups (FFG) with student participants Groups 1 and 2 were conducted after the six-weeks of teaching sessions. The final semi-structured interviews (FSI) with the teachers were held at the same time based on the availability and convenience of the participants. As the second phase of data collection, the final focus-groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted after practising the teaching activities, focusing the relevant data on Research Questions (3)<sup>12</sup> and (4)<sup>13</sup>.

##### **4.6.2.1 Final focus-groups and semi-structured interviews**

Final focus-groups and semi-structured interviews were carried out after 6 teaching-learning sessions of 2 hours over 6 weeks. The final focus-groups were

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<sup>12</sup> RQ 3. How did EGAP teachers in a Sri Lankan university appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes?

<sup>13</sup> RQ 4. How did EGAP students in a Sri Lankan university appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes?



conducted to collect data relating to RQ4, which was about eliciting the students' perceptions of learning English in a collaborative learning environment. The final semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers to collect data related to RQ3, which was about eliciting the teachers' opinions and perceptions of teaching English in a collaborative learning environment.

As demonstrated in Table 4.3, features of the student engagement dimensions were used as guidelines for the first part of the final focus-group and semi-structured interviews, as this study looks at similar empirical phenomena. The focus-group students were asked to talk about their involvement in this course of academic activities in a collaborative learning environment in comparison to their previous conventional learning environment.

**Table 4.3**  
**Features of student engagement dimensions**

<b>Engagement dimension</b>	<b>Features</b>
<b>Emotional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indicates the extent of the learner's inspiration for the activity</li> <li>- Students' feelings of connections and disconnections in relation to their peers in the classroom or their activity interlocutor</li> <li>- Emotional indicators: interest, enthusiasm, and enjoyment, frustration, anxiety and boredom</li> <li>- purposefulness and autonomy</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Come to the class on time and interact with the teachers, peers and others as requested by the teacher</li> <li>- Behaviours are not those requested by the teacher (e.g., non-participation in academic activities, disrupting the teaching and learning of others)</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustained attention, mental effort (learner is attentive and constructs his or her own knowledge through focused attention)</li> <li>- Self-regulation strategies (monitors attention, thoughts and emotions)</li> <li>- Oral interactions (completing peer utterances, questioning, exchanging ideas, explanations, giving directions, making evaluative comments, justifying an argument)</li> <li>- Facial expressions and gestures</li> <li>- Thoughtfulness and willingness to make an effort to comprehend complex ideas and obtain necessary skills</li> <li>- Has a positive, purposeful, willing, and autonomous disposition towards the object</li> </ul>
<b>Behavioural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time on task</li> <li>- Active participation in classroom activities (extent to which students are actively participating in relevant learning tasks)</li> </ul>

For example, the students were asked to describe their feelings of connection or disconnection in relation to their peers in the classroom or to their activity interlocutor, and also their positive and negative feelings. They were asked to comment on the extent to which they interact with their teachers and peers and on their willingness to participate in their ESL learning (see Appendix C: final focus-group questions). They were also asked whether they actively participated in the activities in all four macro skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Questions for the final student focus-groups and teacher semi-structured interviews were developed based on the literature related to engagement studies as this study investigated similar empirical phenomena from a different theoretical perspective. Appendix C provides the sample questions.

As shown in Table 4.4, mediating effects of dimensions of engagement were used as the guidelines for the second stage of the final focus-groups and semi-structured interviews, which produced data relevant to what activates (strengthens) and deactivates (inhibits) students' commitment behaviours. For example, the students were asked how interesting a topic was, what was their focus on different language skill/s related to the collaborative activities, and how they felt about engaging in the activities (see Appendix C: final focus-group questions).

Final semi-structured interviews were held with the teachers to gather data on their opinions of methods students in ESL classes find engaging, and their general perceptions of teaching English in a collaborative learning environment. They were also asked about differences they noticed between their traditional classroom teaching and the new collaborative classroom. They were further asked to say whether they noticed any differences in students' emotions and general behaviour in the collaborative teaching context.

Sample questions utilised at the post-semi-structured interviews with the teachers are given in Appendix C. These interviews were conducted to elicit deeper insights into the use of collaborative group activities and to explore learners' behaviours, perceptions, and feelings, and teachers' understanding and perceptions related to collaborative group activities.

**Table 4.4**  
**Mediating effects of dimensions of engagement**

<b>Dimension of Engagement</b>	<b>Mediating Effect on other Dimensions</b>	<b>Activating or Strengthening Engagement</b>	<b>Deactivating or Inhibiting Engagement</b>
<b>Emotional</b>	Cognitive	High interest in topic or task prompts concentrated thinking.	Student is so excited that she or he can't focus or so anxious that she or he can't think.
	Behavioural	Interest and excitement prompt student to keep working on the task in spite of difficulties.	Boredom or frustration leads to no work on task.
	Social	One peer's excitement about or interest in a task draws others in.	Mismatch of emotional engagement leads to lack of social connection between peers on a task.
<b>Social</b>	Cognitive	Peers working together support each other's thinking (mutuality, reciprocity).	Student switches off from task because his or her partner isn't working with the student; or peers distract each other from thinking about the task.
	Emotional	Student enjoys the task because of the social element.	Student doesn't enjoy task because social relations aren't working.
	Behavioural	Student spends time on task because of social aspect.	Social goals are more important than doing the task.
<b>Cognitive</b>	Behavioural	Students are intent on "solving the puzzle" and keep working until it is done.	Students are so focused on one aspect of a task that they neglect others.
	Emotional	Student's interest is caught by a particular idea or cognitive challenge.	Cognitive challenge results in frustration.
	Social	Students are prompted to work with or seek help from others by the ideas or challenges of the task.	Student works on the task individually and doesn't want input from others.
<b>Behavioural</b>	Cognitive	Task itself focuses attention, prompts deep thinking.	Focused on task completion at a superficial level: surface approach to learning limits cognitive engagement.
	Emotional	Successful task completion prompts student to want to do more.	Task is boring or frustrating to complete, so student approaches this kind of activity negatively in future.
	Social	Cooperative tasks strengthen social links.	Competitive tasks may disrupt social relations.

(Philp & Duchesne, 2016)

#### **4.6.3 Validity and reliability of the planning discussion, semi-structured interviews and focus group data**

To enhance the validity and reliability of the planning discussion and initial and final semi-structured interviews and focus groups, I sought feedback from my two experienced research supervisors for the drafts of the questions. After getting their feedback necessary amendments were made to the questions. This process enabled a more robust question development procedure for the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Consent of teacher and student participants was obtained prior to the interviews, planning discussion and focus groups (Creswell, 2012; 2013). After recruiting the two teachers and gaining their consent, the students were emailed softcopies of the consent form through the EGAP co-ordinator.

The first students to give consent were selected as the focus group; there was no screening of student participants. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in English with the teacher participants as they were competent to do this. The focus groups were conducted bilingually as I am a Sinhala-English bilingual and able to use both languages proficiently. The questions were first presented in English and further explanations were then provided in Sinhala as all the participants used Sinhala as their L1, except for one competent enough to communicate in English only. Since no Tamil students volunteered, there was no need to provide Tamil translation as anticipated at the planning stage. In general, the EGAP students were able to understand a question asked in English, then they were allowed to use English and Sinhala to express themselves as they wanted. Examples of the questions can be found in Appendix C.

Given the tragic history of linguistic relations of power in Sri Lanka described in Chapter 1, my interactions with the participants required careful exercise of reflexivity, more specifically, what Bourdieu called ‘participant objectivation’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 113). Two aspects of the interviews and focus groups required this kind of careful reflexive consideration. The first was the choice of language used for the interactions between myself as researcher and the participants. I am a Sinhala speaker who has some proficiency in Tamil and is fluent in English. In my interactions with the participants I used very simple English so that student participants could understand; and if they needed to use their mother tongue (Sinhala) they were encouraged to do so. The content of the interviews and focus groups was the

second aspect that required careful reflexive consideration. More specifically, being a university academic and a former co-ordinator of the EGAP course, I did not want to make any impact through my own habitus or dispositions when moderating focus-groups with the students or conducting semi-structured interviews with the teachers. I reiterated each time that all participants would remain anonymous, and that all data provided by them would be kept confidentially (Neuman, 2014).

## **4.7 Transcription and translation methods**

The information recorded through initial and final semi-structured interviews was transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. This section discusses the procedures of transcription and translation of the transcripts.

### **4.7.1 Transcription**

The data derived from the transcripts were vital as they represented the students' as well as the teachers' perceptions of collaborative learning in ESL. Transcription is defined as "the process of converting audiotape recordings or fieldnotes into text data" (Creswell, 2014, p. 263). The information collected in an interview or as fieldnotes is not in a format that can be used in analysis. Dortins (2002) identifies transcription as a "*transformative process*" (p. 207), suggesting that it bridges the gap between interview and analysis. In other words, transcribing involves re-contextualising the vocal data (Dortins, 2002), a process by which the text of the conversation is emphasized and converted into a form of data that can be analysed, particularly qualitatively.

I transcribed the interview data of this study. Transcribing consumes a considerable amount of time, but there are many reasons why it is better for the researcher to do it themselves rather than getting it done by external transcribers (Creswell, 2014; Dortins, 2002). Interpretation of verbal as well as non-verbal interview data may be misinterpreted by external transcribers if they are not familiar with the context of the interviews. On the other hand, transcribing the oral data myself gave me the opportunity to become very familiar with the data, which further helped me at the analysis stage.

The interview data were transcribed in two steps (Power, 2005). First, verbatim transcripts were produced as word-for-word transcripts. Poland (1995) warns that

verbatim transcripts can be limited to “faithful reproduction” (p.291), that they may not capture emotional context or non-verbal communication. In transcribing the interview data by myself I was also able to consider nonverbal cues and emotional aspects (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006; Harrigan, Rosenthal & Schere, 2008). To maintain transcript trustworthiness, I kept fieldnotes when required while conducting the interviews, and this information was also incorporated into the interview transcripts when necessary (Poland, 1995). As it is important to maintain the confidentiality of participants, re-coding was conducted under pseudonymous codes for each participant (McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003).

As the second step, the transcriptions were reviewed and any necessary corrections were made. Once the word-for-word transcripts were completed and stored on the computer, I listened to the audio recordings several times to check the accuracy of the transcripts, refining transcript readability in relation to text organisation and grammatical accuracy (Edwards, 1994). Member verification was done when the teacher transcriptions were finished to ensure that they had accurately captured the teachers’ opinions (Creswell, 2014). Participant verification of transcripts before data analysis improves the validity of the data. Due to practical reasons the focus-group transcripts were not given to the student participants for member verification, but verifications were sought when needed.

#### **4.7.2 Translation**

The interview data needed to be translated as some information was in Sri Lankan vernacular language. Focus-group interviews with the student participants were conducted bilingually as some participants were unable to understand or express themselves completely in English. Students were therefore encouraged to talk in their vernacular language, Sinhala or Tamil, if they preferred. It is important to maintain accuracy of meaning when translating verbal data as some meaning goes beyond the use of a word and may be lost when converted from one language to another (Appleton, 1995; Poland, 1995). Mistranslation of information may result in unreliable research findings, leading to possible misinterpretation of the entire study (Maneesriwongul & Dixon, 2004).

Initially, I was the translator of the student focus-group data. Except for one student’s data, all were in the Sinhala language, the vernacular language of the majority of Sri Lankans. Although it had been anticipated that there would be some

data in the Tamil language, the minority vernacular language of the country, as noted above there were in fact no students who spoke Tamil as their vernacular language. Birbili (2000) points out the importance of the concept of validity when gathering data interpreting findings in a different language. He highlights the importance of the translator's awareness of the cultural context, their own language competency in both languages, and their specific role in relation to the research. Since I am a Sinhala-English bilingual by formal education, I was able to translate the focus-group data in Sinhala to English. To maintain the trustworthiness of the translation, 10% of the data was translated by another bilingual competent in both Sinhala and English (Birbili, 2000). When that translator found a few slight differences in translations, our discussion led to some replacement of terms. These differences were connected to particular vocabulary rather than to meaning, as it is sometimes difficult to find exact vocabulary from one language to another (e.g., *feeling bad* or *feeling upset*). There was no requirement to enlist a Tamil/English translator, as there were no focus-group data in Tamil. I was involved in transcribing and some translating of the verbal data (Sinhala into English), which took up a considerable amount of time. I chose to transcribe the whole data set before undertaking the analysis because it helped me to gain an overall picture of the data gathered before and after enactment of the re-designed EGAP curriculum.

The following section discusses the conceptual framework of this exploratory case-study, which has been constructed in line with the theoretical perspective introduced in Chapter 3.

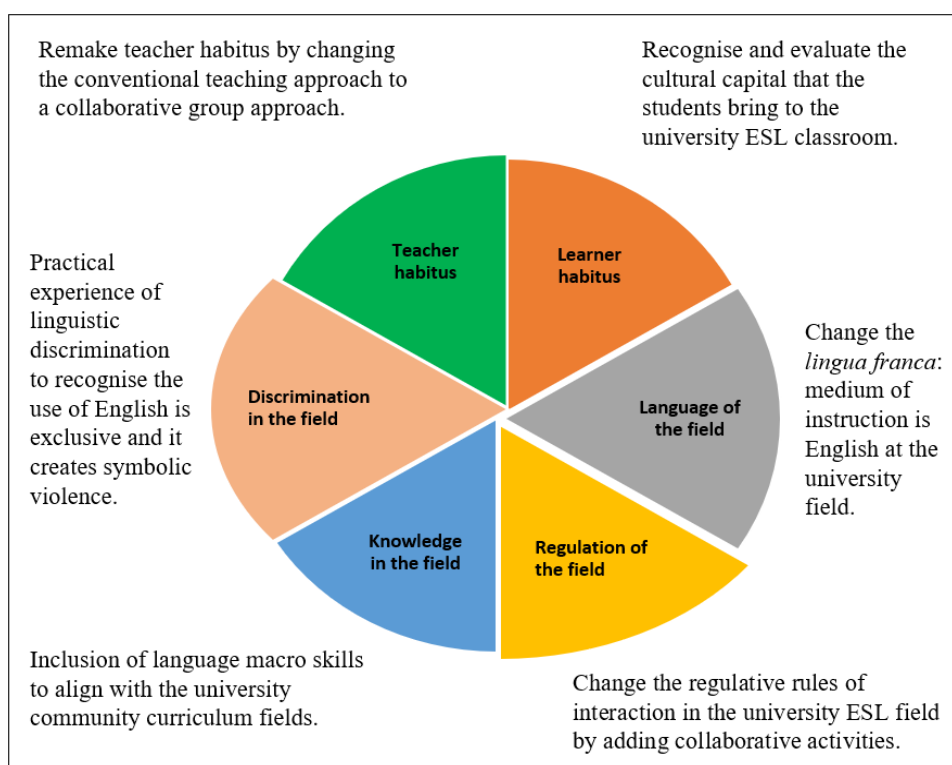
#### **4.8 Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical framework of the study takes concepts from the models of inculcation and imposition developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and articulates them with curriculum theory. Beginning initially with Bourdieu's models of inculcation and imposition (1986), a sociological framing for change was developed. It involved: (1) the habitus (socialized dispositions) of learners; and (2) the field of relations of power, for example, through collaborative pedagogic action (e.g., Luke, 2008). Such changes to incorporate what are known as strategies of L2 learning entail changes of practice in a re-designed instructional curriculum.

As flagged above, when using a Bourdieusian perspective it is most important to select methods that fit with the theoretical concepts. In probing ‘field’ for instance, methods are needed that enable a focus on relations between agents located at different positions in social space according to their capital. Those considerations informed the selection of analytic methods for the study. It will be recalled from Chapter 3, that the theoretical framework brings together Bourdieu’s *theory of practice* and curriculum theory by means of Luke’s Bourdieusian sociological template for language education reform (2009). The following section discusses how this sociological template was adapted in re-designing the instructional curriculum in EGAP.

#### 4.8.1 Adapting Luke’s Bourdieusian sociological template to re-designed instructional curriculum in EGAP

Luke’s sociological template for language education reform (2009) was adapted to support the current study to investigate whether the enactment of a re-designed curriculum with collaborative activities can re-regulate the field and re-make teacher habitus.



**Figure 4.3**  
**Sociological template for re-designing EGAP enactment with a collaborative learning curriculum**  
 [Adaptation of Luke’s Bourdieusian sociological template for language education reform (2009)]



Figure 4.3 presents the adapted sociological template for re-designing EGAP enactment with a collaborative learning curriculum.

The criteria included in the template describe the application of the strategies in the current study as follows:

- 1) *Learner habitus*: remaking of student habitus prior to and in initial encounters with the field; to recognise and evaluate the cultural capital that students bring to the classroom from their prior school and social habitus as the university field requires proficiency in all macro skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) whereas the school ESL field requires only reading and writing skills.
- 2) *Language of the field*: alteration or augmentation of the dominant *lingua franca* of the field; to adapt the *lingua franca* of the university field to align with national requirements and to assist students to develop their linguistic cultural capital in English as the medium of instruction in the university field.
- 3) *Regulation of the field*: systematic alteration of interactional codes of the university classroom as a field of exchange to accommodate learners from different proficiency levels and backgrounds; to change the regulative rules of interaction in the university ESL field to develop pedagogical approaches by including collaborative learning activities in the re-designed enactment.
- 4) *Knowledge in the field*: systematic inclusion of alternative and revised curriculum as a change in the ‘value’ and discourse of the field; to revise the curriculum to align the content of the EGAP lessons with the mainstream university community curriculum fields and knowledge.
- 5) *Discrimination in social fields*: explicitly make students aware of the requirement of English in the university and employment fields; eventually it had made the students experience discrimination in the feel and helped students to overcome discrimination and potential symbolic violence they may face because of the ESL field’s discriminatory rules of regulation.
- 6) *Teacher habitus*: alteration of teacher habitus, by introducing new schemata for ‘discrimination’ in relation to student habitus and capacity by any of the pedagogic and curricular approaches noted above; to re-make teacher habitus through professional development which includes practical knowledge of the learner community along with teacher experience and changing the conventional teaching approach to a collaborative group activity approach.

The above theoretical framework demonstrates how the methodology and methods of the study fit with the Bourdieusian theoretical framework and curriculum theory. In terms of the conceptual *object* or model *constructed for the purposes of empirical verification* in the study (Bourdieu, Chamboredon & Passeron, 1991), *field* is the institutional space where the ESL students engage in interactions with their peers and the teacher/s.

In the context of this study, re-designing the learning environment through incorporating collaborative group activities entails work in the field. The teachers were encouraged to utilize the new approach in their teaching. In this respect, the study can be seen as an initiative to change the field of ESL by introducing a new pedagogical approach; by substituting a collaborative learning environment for a conventional one. As explained in Section 3.3.2 of Chapter 3, the ESL students in this cohort possess different levels of cultural (Section 3.3.2.3) and linguistic capital (Section 3.3.2.4) in relation to the content of the English class. Such capital has the potential to be exchanged through students' interactions in a collaborative learning environment; interaction requires active engagement, and by engagement students potentially exchange or increase capital. As noted, the students come to the field with unequal capital.

Another of Bourdieu's conceptual tools is that of *habitus*. In this study this references a matrix of student perceptions, evaluations, and actions in the context of working with other students. The term *illusio*, as noted earlier, refers to the students' commitment or interest that is in play in their *investment* in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). It connects the *habitus* of the students as agents with the *field*. *Illusio* and *investment* are key terms when considering the ESL students' commitment to English learning; a commitment which may depend on their commonsense or everyday beliefs, that is, the *doxa* to which they ascribe. More specifically, if students have recognized the importance of learning English, they tend to understand that they will accrue benefits by improving their proficiency in the language, and will consequently engage in their learning as positively as they can in order to accrue the capital on offer as profits of the field. Students' emotions as well as their understanding also become important in relation to their commitment to learning. Positive emotions will encourage learning, whereas negative ones potentially lead to withdrawal from the learning field. In the conceptual framing of this study emotions are understood to be generated by agents' experience of the relations of power of given fields.

The following section discusses the data analysis method adopted in this study. Like the data production methods, it has been designed to fit with the assumptions about social reality that are integral to the Bourdieusian framework to ESL teaching and learning by articulating them with curriculum theory.

## **4.9 Analysis Method**

There were two phases of data analysis employed in this study. Inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was utilised in the first phase, while the second phase involved articulating Bourdieu's conceptual tools with curriculum theory, applying them deductively to the themes derived from the inductive thematic analysis. This approach ensured that the study describes the reality of the Sri Lankan context rather than imposing concepts derived by Bourdieu from French and Algerian empirical realities onto the Sri Lankan context.

### **4.9.1 Phase One: Thematic Analysis**

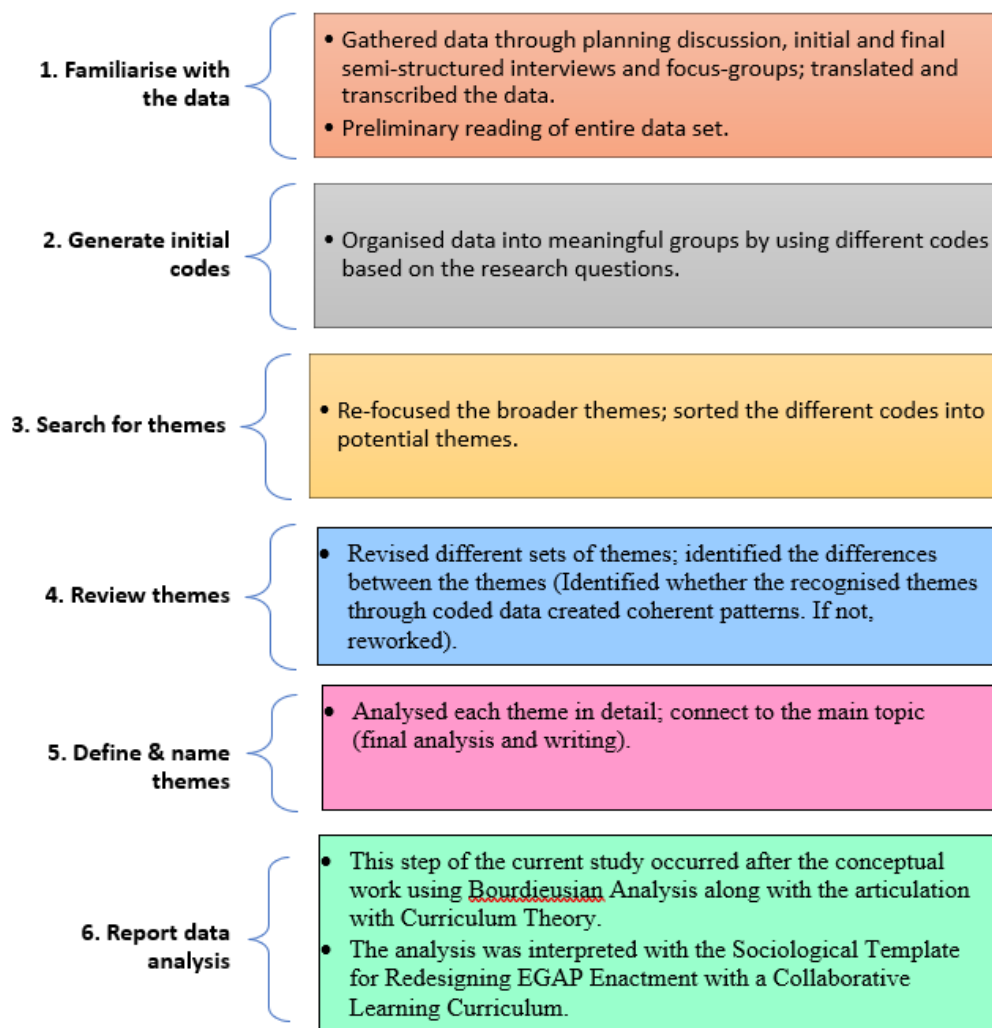
Thematic analysis is considered as a key qualitative analytical method (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). It has been defined as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). The method makes it possible to organise and describe a dataset and is therefore very useful for exploratory research like the current study (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998). One of the important features of thematic analysis is its flexibility. The method can be applied in a study irrespective of "a[ny one] particular theoretical or epistemological position" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78).

In relation to thematic analysis, it is important to describe the term *theme*. There are two main features of a theme: it depicts some significant features of the data in connection to the research questions and it characterizes some degree of meaning or pattern within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The size and the selection of key themes or patterns depend on the scope of the study. Due to the degree of flexibility in thematic analysis, the researcher has the freedom to decide the size and the key themes of the analysis.

There are two primary approaches to thematic analysis: an *inductive* or *bottom-up* approach and a *deductive* or *top-down* approach (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data-driven analysis is considered as an *inductive* approach, by which different

themes and concepts generated from the data itself, rather than being predetermined or directly connected to the theoretical concerns of the study. Accordingly, in inductive analysis the processing of the coding is conducted along with the themes that generated from the data. There is no predetermined coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is an appropriate approach for this study which does not use Bourdieusian concepts deductively, rather re-working the concepts as required by the data.

Six steps for inductive thematic analysis are suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Different phases are shown in Figure 4.4. In the first phase, the researcher familiarises themselves with the data. In this study this involved conducting the planning discussion, interviews and focus groups, transcription and translation, and preliminary reading of the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Riessman, 1993).



**Figure 4.4 Phases of Inductive Thematic Analysis in data**  
(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The second phase generates initial codes, which allows for organisation of the data into meaningful groups. The coding of this study was based on the sub-research questions. For example, in relation to the third sub-research question, two different codings were applied for the learners' perceptions and the teachers' perceptions of collaborative learning. The same procedure was applied to the other sub-questions.

The third and fourth phases involved searching for and reviewing themes respectively. During the third phase, the broader level of these was re-focused in order to sort different codes into potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the fourth phase, the different sets of derived themes were revised to identify differences between them. There were two levels of review and revision. The first was carried out to identify whether the identified themes through coded data created coherent patterns. At some point some themes did not fit with the data extracts and they were reworked.

The fifth phase involved defining and naming the themes, and the last phase reporting on the data analysis. The fifth phase requires a thematic mapping of the data. At this stage, the 'essence' of each theme in the study was checked to identify what each theme was about. At this stage, detailed analysis of each theme was undertaken and connection to the main topic of the data established. Samples of inductive thematic analysis - the themes derived in the analysis related to the data collected in Phase One and Two are provided in the Appendices as follows.

Appendix F - planning discussion with the teachers (Phase One data collection)

Appendix G - initial semi-structured interviews with the teachers (Phase One data collection)

Appendix H - initial focus-groups with the students (Phase One data collection)

Appendix I - final semi-structured interviews with the teachers (Phase Two data collection)

Appendix J - final focus-groups with the students (Phase Two data collection).

The sixth step occurred after the analytical work involving Bourdieusian field analysis and curriculum theories was completed. The following section discusses Phase Two data analysis of the study, Bourdieusian field analysis and articulation with curriculum theory.

#### **4.9.2 Phase Two: Bourdieusian Analysis and Interpretation of Curriculum Theory**

During the second phase of data analysis, Bourdieu's conceptual tools were applied to interpret the themes that generated from the inductive thematic analysis. These themes were now further interpreted through Bourdieu's process of field analysis (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), which consists of three moments or levels (described in Section 3.3.4.2), the themes providing the basis for the three moments of field analysis. As they had been created inductively, they enabled the concepts used in the field analysis, or even the three-moment method of field analysis, to be re-worked as necessary to describe the empirical data in conceptual terms. During this second phase of data analysis the specification of the field analysis also articulated with curriculum theory. In other words, the themes derived from the first phase of the inductive thematic analysis were interpreted based on the impact of the teachers' re-designed instructional curriculum and the students' commitment in the field of collaborative ESL learning. The following curriculum indicators were considered at Phase 2 data analysis and interpretation.

The curriculum indicators (Deng, 2010):

- i) the peculiarities of the learners in the EGAP class
- ii) the socio-cultural environment of the learners
- iii) the dominant media and modes of representation in ESL (e.g., what resources are usually used for the subject and the way those resources represent the content of the subject)
- iv) the patterns of discourse and the participation structures in the EGAP classroom (e.g., individual or collaborative activities)
- v) the local pedagogical possibilities of a given classroom context (e.g., how it is possible to teach given local conditions (e.g., a pandemic) and resources (e.g., the computers made available by the university to students and teachers, and online platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams supported by the university).

In this way the themes derived from the inductive thematic analysis were further deductively analysed and interpreted by combining Bourdieusian conceptual tools with articulation of the above curriculum indicators, along with the Sociological

Template for Re-designing EGAP Enactment with a Collaborative Learning Curriculum (Luke, 2009).

The following section discusses the ethical considerations of the current study.

#### **4.10 Ethical considerations**

This section outlines the ethical considerations involved in this research project and any threats to the validity of the results that required management.

The process of conducting an in-depth study with university students and teachers as participants requires attention to ethical considerations. The study was considered low risk, due to the nature of the focus-groups and semi-structured interviews, but certain ethical issues still had to be addressed. Since I, the researcher, worked with classes in an ongoing course for the study, it was necessary to ensure that the designed classroom activities would be covered according to the teaching schedule for each session. I therefore obtained a human research ethics approval certificate from the University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC) from the Australian university (QUT) (Appendix D). As a second step, I obtained ethical clearance from the Research Unit of the Sri Lankan university (PUSL) (Appendix E), a process which became a challenge. I had to coordinate between PUSL and the supervisory team of QUT, and there was unfamiliarity and cultural differences between the two systems; I had to take care in interpreting terms between the supervisory team and the PUSL.

When collecting data it is also important to obtain permission from the relevant authority and consent from all participants, students as well as teachers. Before commencing data gathering I obtained permission from the PUSL authorities, including the relevant academic department, to collect data from the ongoing EGAP course via ethical clearance from the Research Unit of the university. Once permission was granted, the co-ordinator of the EGAP course was also informed of the relevant sessions of the course that were to be utilised for the purpose of data collection. Consent from the teacher and student participants was obtained before starting the planning discussion, initial and final semi-structured interviews, and focus-groups. Special consent was obtained from the teacher participants and relevant student

participants for the video and audio recording of the planning discussion, semi-structured interviews, and focus-groups.

Researchers must maintain respect for the relevant authority, teachers, and students throughout the process of data collection (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). At the same time, they need to make sure that they do not make judgments in relation to the teacher's teaching or to the data gathered during the study – whether these agree with their views or not. Researchers should always remember that the main purpose is to collect data, not to make judgment (Patton, 2002). In this study the viewpoints and teaching approaches of the teachers were reported as they were observed, irrespective of whether I agreed with them or not, even though this was at times a challenge to manage.

It is important to maintain and protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants in the study. I therefore used pseudonyms for the selected university, the students, and the teachers (Neuman, 2014).

#### **4.11 Summary of the methodology and research design**

The methodology and research designed explained in this chapter were developed to explore how the commitment of ESL learners can be promoted through collaborative group activities in learning English in a Sri Lankan university. The qualitative exploratory case-study research methodology was adopted as a suitable approach for this study carried out in an authentic ESL classroom. It is a practitioner-oriented study undertaken in an under-researched domain, which made the exploratory case-study methodology suitable.

Bourdieuian *theory of practice*, which involves thinking tools such as *field*, *capital*, and *habitus*, informed the theoretical framework for the study along with curriculum theory (Bourdieu, 1977). Since these theoretical tools are relational concepts, the study followed a qualitative method that homes in on the relational dimensions of the empirical world investigated. Given the national border and institutional closures both in Australia where I was located and Sri Lanka where the study was conducted, the main data sources became the interviews including the planning discussion and focus groups (conducted online) and documents (which were collected electronically). These data were analysed in two phases. Inductive thematic



analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was firstly utilised, and then the conceptual tools of Bourdieu's *theory of practice* were applied to the themes that generated from the inductive thematic analysis along with curriculum theory.

Interpretation of the data analysis was conducted based on the *sociological template for re-designing EGAP enactment with a collaborative learning curriculum*, adapted from Luke's Bourdieusian sociological template for language reform (2009). Chapter 5 interprets the analyses of data produced in Phase One, and Chapter 6 reports on the analysis of data produced in Phase Two.

## Chapter 5: Imagining and appraising pedagogy for EGAP classes

### 5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters it has been established that this study investigated the introduction of collaborative activities into an EGAP course in a Sri Lankan university. This involved an exploratory re-design element in the study whereby I worked with the EGAP teachers to plan the collaborative activities. The study was framed by the sociological template for re-designing EGAP instructional curriculum (Figure: 5.1), and unfolded in two phases: planning the collaborative activities (Phase 1), and classroom enactment of the activities (Phase 2). This chapter reports on the analyses of data produced in Phase 1 which provide responses to the two research questions:

RQ1: What challenges and possibilities did teachers envisage before introducing collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes in a Sri Lankan university?

RQ2: What was the student experience of learning English before the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes in a Sri Lankan university?

Two sources of data provided evidence about teacher understandings of the challenges and possibilities of collaborative pedagogy for EGAP classes:

- the transcript of an audio-recorded planning meeting involving the teachers and myself as the researcher (hereafter, ‘planning data’); and
- the transcripts of audio-recorded initial semi-structured interviews with the teachers about their EGAP teaching experience (hereafter, ‘pre-activity teacher interview data’).

Analysis of these data provides evidence of the teachers’ deliberations while planning how to turn the programmatic curriculum of EGAP into an enacted curriculum that involves collaborative learning activity. During the planning stage the teachers considered challenges that they would be facing and how to navigate these. The programmatic curriculum had originally been enacted in-person in physical classrooms, but the study was conducted during the period when emergency online teaching had been put in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the teachers were grappling with two issues: the introduction of collaborative activities for the purposes of the study, and the sudden switch to online teaching. In these conditions they had to seriously consider what resources and facilities were available to them. They explained in detail how they would try to mitigate difficulties associated with the new environment in such a way as to minimise negative emotions that might arise when students are

introduced to the new activities. The concept of symbolic violence informs understanding of the teachers' deliberations. As noted in Chapter 3, this form of violence is a result of the misrecognition associated with symbolic capital and the process of creating domination, which happens arbitrarily (Bourdieu, 1990; 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The symbolic violence evident in the data in this study related to the formation of habitus and the exchange of capital in the classrooms of a nation where English, the language of the former coloniser, is inequitably distributed in the population (Bourdieu, 1990; 1977).

While informative in terms of understanding teacher thought and action, the teacher data cannot give access to students' experience of the enacted EGAP curriculum. Data relating to this experience were collected during Phase 1. These data consisted of the transcripts of audio-recorded initial focus groups with the students (hereafter 'pre-activity student focus group data').

In general, the students talked about significant differences in their experiences of learning ESL at school and at university. Learning academic English was a priority at university as students realised the importance of the language for academic success and their imagined professional lives. They reflected somewhat ruefully on what they considered to be the lost opportunities of their high school English studies. With respect to their current learning situation, they valued the opportunities for group work and oral interaction in English already in the EGAP curriculum prior to the introduction of collaborative activities. They also expressed a strong preference for learning in the physical classroom rather than online. They believed that they would be able to participate better in a physical classroom; they missed face to face interactions with each other. The concept of *habitus* helps in understanding the students' thinking about preferences for classroom experience (Bourdieu, 1977). The concept of *illusio* can be applied to the strong new commitment to English that became part of their habitus in the new field of ESL at the university, while the concept of *investment* can be applied to their willingness to throw themselves into the new classroom activities introduced by the teachers (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

The remainder of this chapter is structured in two main sections. The first is concerned with teacher planning and imagining of the introduction of collaborative activities into their EGAP classes. It reports on analyses of the planning data and of the pre-activity teacher interviews. When planning the collaborative re-designed instructional curriculum, the teachers tried to imagine how they would be able to re-regulate the field in order to re-make student and teacher habitus (Luke, 2009). Due to the teachers' durable disposition, they were aware of the

symbolic violence faced by Sri Lankan ESL students due to linguistic discrimination in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). They had taken extra measures to mitigate and minimise this and also to promote *illusio* and *investment* by students in accruing the embodied and objectified linguistic capital of the English language (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004).

The second section of the chapter examines student appraisal of the EGAP classes before the introduction of collaborative activities. It presents analyses of the pre-activity student focus group interviews. The students realised that they had brought limited relevant linguistic capital to the university ESL field. Even though they had been reluctant to accrue this embodied and objectified linguistic cultural capital in the school field, they had fallen in love with English in the university field. They had realised the differences between the school and university teacher habitus, and they too *invested* in the field, realising their new English learning *illusio* in practice (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004).

Each section concludes with a discussion of evidence in relation to the relevant research question. I now turn to details about how the teachers planned and imagined the introduction of collaborative activities into their EGAP classes.

## **5.2 Teacher planning for and imagination of the introduction of collaborative activities into EGAP classes**

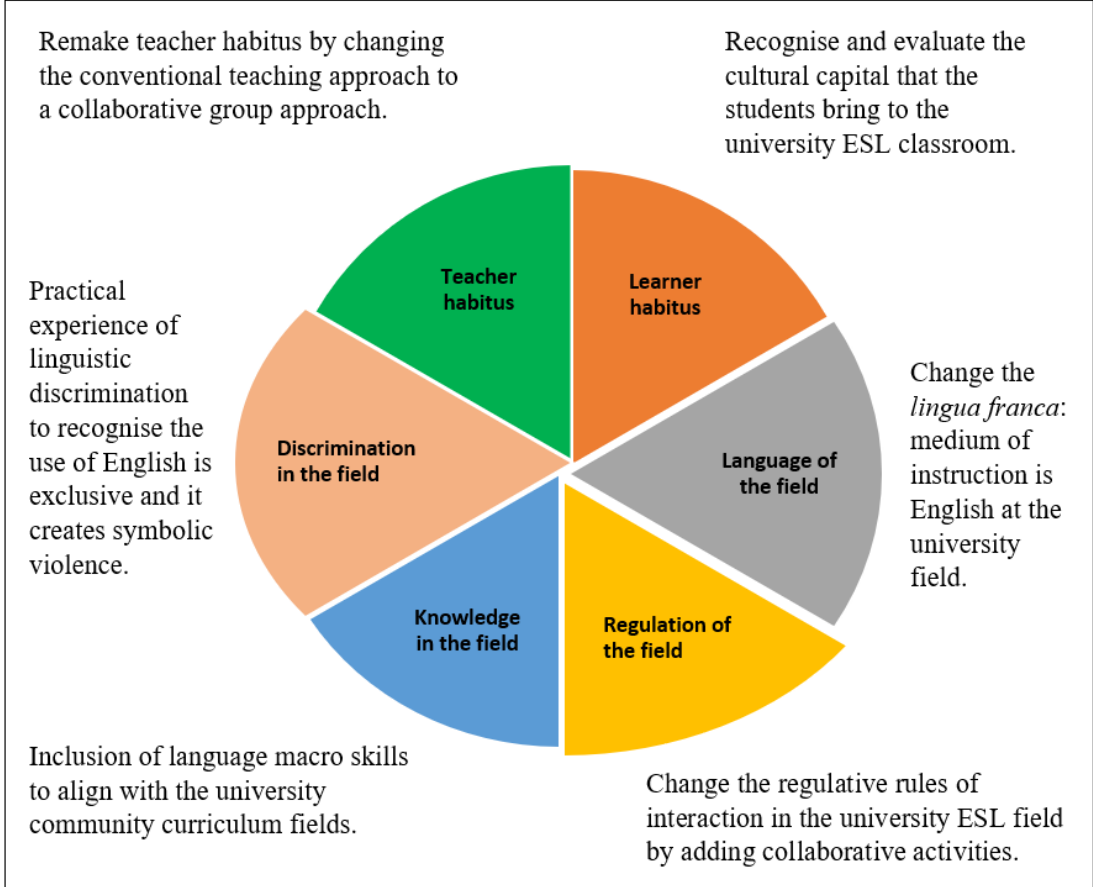
This section responds to the research question about the challenges and possibilities envisaged by the teachers before they introduced collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes. The planning and pre-activity interview data used to address this question were produced with two teacher participants: TP1 or Miss Srini and TP2 or Miss Gaya. Both teachers have been given a pseudonym. Pre-activity or initial semi-structured interviews are indicated as (ISI), and planning discussion was indicated as (PD).

### **5.2.1 Mitigating and minimising symbolic violence during curriculum enactment of EGAP**

The two teacher participants and I had a discussion about the commencement of the new EGAP course and how they would plan to introduce collaborative activities into their teaching. They reflected upon their previous teaching experiences and on the challenges they imagined they would be facing introducing new activities while using an unfamiliar online teaching platform with an unfamiliar set of newly registered EGAP students in a newly introduced degree

programme. In short, they talked about a complex set of challenges to the development of the instructional curriculum.

In enacted curriculum it is important to pay attention to pedagogical choices, as these impact on students’ capacity to make meaning from the content of the subject (Deng, 2010 & Doyle, 1992b). For example, the teacher may use conventional teacher-centred or student-oriented teaching - with implications for their students’ experience and learning. The current study was designed to create an enacted curriculum that incorporated student-oriented teaching in the form of collaborative learning activities. The teachers imagined how the features of the collaborative learning activities they were planning would play out in the experience of the students in their EGAP classrooms.



**Figure 5.1**  
**Sociological template for re-designing EGAP enactment with a collaborative learning curriculum**  
 [Adaptation of Luke’s Bourdieusian Sociological Template for Language Education Reform (2009)]

It will be recalled from the exposition of the sociological template for re-designing EGAP curriculum in Chapter 4 (Figure: 5.1) that the teachers were trying to re-regulate rules of interaction in the university ESL field by adding collaborative activities, and to re-make (their

own) teacher habitus by shifting their teaching approach from the conventional transmission model to a more collaborative approach.

Drawing from what they knew from their durable dispositions built up over time as EGAP instructors, the teachers attempted to protect their students from what can be understood in Bourdieusian terms as symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This concern was integral to their planning and to the practice of the re-designed enacted curriculum. During the planning of the re-design of the curriculum, the teachers assumed that they would be able to re-make learner habitus by re-regulating the field (Luke, 2009). They therefore imagined how they were going to achieve this in spite of the uncertain situation that had arisen due to the emergency online teaching situation. Bourdieu (2000) observes that

[h]abitus as a system of dispositions to be and to do is a potentiality, a desire to be which in certain ways seeks to create the conditions of its fulfilment, and therefore to create the conditions most favourable to what it is. (p. 150)

Subjective aspirations may need to be adjusted to the objective structure, due to changes in the field's structures and logics. Consequently, the teachers had to think according to their durable dispositions how they needed to adjust their conventional teaching approach to encourage student active involvement in ESL learning. In other words, as demonstrated in Figure 5.1, the teachers were trying to re-make their habitus by shifting from their familiar conventional teaching approach to a collaborative group activity approach as they re-regulated the field (Musofer & Lingard, 2020, Luke, 2008).

The teachers spoke of a common indisposition to English (an aversive disposition) on the part of the students that was born out of their experience of a social space and educational field in which languages existed in a hierarchy whereby English and other languages were endowed with different amounts of capital or value (Bourdieu, 1990). As discussed in Chapter 1, Sri Lanka was once a British colony and so there are different attitudes towards English due to the symbolic value with which it is endowed in Sri Lankan society. Importantly for this study, such attitudes may influence students' use of English, particularly when they are acquiring the objectified capital of spoken English via classroom practice. Srini explained that “with that [societal] background, when they come to the class and then we asked them to speak, they wouldn't, they wouldn't open up” (ISI\_TP1). In other words, the teachers attributed the silence of their students to negative attitudes which had their roots in societal attitudes to English.

Teaching and learning English in Sri Lanka has become problematic due to the attitude that people have towards the English language.

### ***Protecting the students from symbolic violence***

Sri Lankan society considers English as a ‘different’ language, used only by a certain class of people. It cannot be assumed that everyone is able to accrue objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in the form of oral proficiency. Therefore when students enter the university field with limited exposure to English as relevant embodied and objectified capital from their secondary school education, they may not feel comfortable enough to produce objectified oral texts in English as they feel ‘shy’ to use the language in front of others. This lack of confidence and reluctance is compounded by the linguistic habitus produced in the primary pedagogic work of families too, where the language of home and community does not include English.

The silence of students is evidence of symbolic violence: the students think that they need to have better proficiency in English to speak in front of others as it is an elite language (Bourdieu & Wacquant 2002). According to Bourdieu, this is a situation of violence being committed against a social agent with their consent or complicity (Bourdieu & Wacquant 2002). The teachers believed that the students were attempting to reduce the humiliating experience of being unable to speak well in English - of encountering symbolic violence - by not speaking in English with one another in the EGAP classroom; by being 'shy'.

Yet the teachers believed that most of their students are predisposed to have “positive attitudes” towards acquiring embodied linguistic capital in English at the transition from the school ESL field to that of the university. They seemed to believe that as their teachers they had a strong influence on the students’ persistence in relation to their language learning: “... if the teacher makes it interesting, the students.... will stay in the class” (ISI\_TP1). In other words, the teacher can strengthen students’ belief in the value of what they are learning through the enacted curriculum, that is, the *illusio*, (Bourdieu, 1996). The teachers did in fact speak of positive dispositions to English learning and believed that they could be harnessed to support and respond positively to the introduction of collaborative activities in the EGAP classroom. They noted that EGAP is “compulsory” if the students are “to get the degree”; English learning is therefore institutionalised cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). However one student commented that “[A]ttendance to EGAP sessions is not compulsory” (ISI\_TP2), because PUSL follows a distance learning mode in its operation; so while it may be compulsory, turning up in class is not. According to the teachers, however, most of the students enrolled in the current EGAP course do participate in the classes, “so obviously they want[ed] to learn” (ISI\_TP1);

and they consequently see it as their “duty” to provide the students with the opportunity to learn “as much as they can”; that is, to acquire embodied and objectified cultural capital. This commitment is in response to the *illusio* evidenced in the students (Bourdieu, 1996). The teachers are responding to what they see as the students’ commitment to learning English as evidenced by their class attendance.

The teachers identified some “students who have not realized” (ISI\_TP2) the importance of English; who seem unaware of the cultural and economic capital associated with English language proficiency; unaware that “English is a must” in the higher education field and in the employment field for future professional work; unaware of how the embodied and objectified cultural capital of English is turned into institutionalized cultural capital for students and graduates and converted into capital of one or another kind in the workplace (Bourdieu, 1986).

There was also evidence in the data of cognitive schema in the habituses of teachers and students in the EGAP field. They related to being ‘good’ at English versus ‘poor’ at English. This schema is the source of the symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) evident in the data, whereby teachers and students come to think about each other in these terms, which causes harm. The following comment by one of the teachers shows how this works: “only say about two or three [who] would be actively working, and it would be the smarter ones, and they would be appointed to read out if that was then an exercise” (ISI\_TP1). This comment suggests the belief that the majority of the students lack the embodied linguistic capital of English; they are not “the smarter ones”. This understanding is internalised by the students, who minimise the risk of experiencing symbolic violence by not exposing themselves to the teacher and the entire class (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). As the teachers became aware of the reasons for students’ behaviours, they tried to avoid symbolic violence when re-designing the instructional curriculum by limiting expectations of spoken language from individual students – which constitute the demands for the objectification of English (Luke, 2008).

It is clear from the data that the teachers were concerned about the students’ socio-emotional state when they were re-designing the enactment of the EGAP course.

### ***Taking account of student socio-emotional status in planning EGAP activities for enactment in the classroom***

As noted above, the cognitive schema involved in teachers’ and students’ habitus in the EGAP field are associated with being ‘good’ at English vs ‘poor’ at English. Both students and teachers have internalised this schema, and it informs how they judge or appraise each other



(Bourdieu, 1990). Internalisation of the schema and of the judgements it generates is the source of symbolic violence, and of subsequent negative emotions and defensive behaviours manifested by students (e.g., ‘shyness’). By choosing certain activities and acting in particular ways towards the students, the teachers try to mitigate this symbolic violence and the associated emotions and behaviours.

As the teachers were concerned about the peculiarities of the students, they explored local pedagogical possibilities in re-designing the EGAP instructional curriculum (Deng & Luke, 2008; Dooley, forthcoming & Luke, 2009). They thought about how to mitigate students’ negative emotions to make them feel comfortable in classroom activities by avoiding the experience of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). They knew that students “are more comfortable in writing” (PD\_TP1) than in speaking as they initially feel “shy and reluctant to talk” (PD\_TP2). They hesitate to use English to talk with another person, regarding it as a ‘different’ language due to social and cultural attitudes towards it. These commentaries reflect students’ inability to produce objectified spoken text in English in the classroom (Bourdieu, 2006).

In re-designing the curriculum the teachers were proactively trying to avoid creating negative bodily emotions and sentiments for the students with a given weak position in the field of EGAP, those with relatively little embodied linguistic capital compared to the teachers. They wanted to play down their own much greater capital, hoping to lessen the students’ feeling of having to be defensive due to their own lack of English proficiency (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). For example, while they talk in English in class, the teachers take care to use “very simple English”. Srimi explained that students “know that though I speak the language I’m not a *hi-fi* uppish person”, adding “when you talk in English they think ‘*Aapo eakattiya hari* posh’ [Oh! They are very posh]”. In this way the teachers believed they created a safer and more welcoming environment from the very first class, “and after about the second class”, the students “know that they can come and talk” (ISI\_TP1) to the teacher. Srimi added: “I have told them, ‘Tell me [you don’t understand] any number of times [you wish], then I will explain [again] whatever I’m explaining’”. The teachers did everything they could to ensure that the students got all the help they needed, trying to minimise feelings of embarrassment in front of others, ensuring their accessibility to the students so that they “don’t have to get up from class [in front of the others] and say I didn’t understand” (ISI\_TP1).

The teachers noticed that due to phonetic differences, students experience pronunciation difficulties in developing spoken proficiency in English. Certain sounds, such as ‘*sion*’ (“fusion”: /'fju:ʒən/ (fyoo-zhuhn), ‘*tion*’ (“action”: /'ækʃən/ (ak-shuhn)) and ‘*o*’ and ‘*au*’ are

not available in the students' L1 (in this case Sinhala). Sinhala does not have a clear distinction between the short 'o' (/ɒ/) and the long 'o' (/ɔ:/) sounds found in English. As a result, Sinhala speakers may struggle to differentiate between words like “pot”: /pɒt/ and “port”: /pɔ:rt/ due to the absence of this phonemic distinction in their native language. Words containing these particular sounds are difficult for the students to pronounce. Not having had the opportunity to acquire relevant linguistic capital (L2) in their childhood, it is more difficult to master certain sounds, and the experience creates “the unease of someone who is out of place”, as opposed to “the ease that comes from being in one’s place” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151). The teachers recognised that it would have been better to teach these sounds “when they were young to get their vocal cords done properly”. These students are grappling with capital disadvantage: starting out in the field with less of the capital which is valued, being positioned potentially less successfully, less able to draw on and to accumulate even more capital (Bourdieu, 1985). By correcting student mispronunciations in general – as opposed to identifying and exposing individual mistakes - the teachers take measures to minimise symbolic violence. They “do not say who had made the mistake”; instead they “repeat the word and stress the pronunciation of that particular word” (ISI\_TP2) or “go back to the beginning of the sentence and read it again” (ISI\_TP1). The teachers also used “collaborative aloud reading” instead of “individual aloud reading”, the activity usually used in conventional ESL teaching, supporting students to correct their pronunciation mistakes without exposing them to the symbolic violence that results from the appraisal or judgement of others (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Gaya identified another important consideration: that it is important to “make them [the students] realise that English is not that hard [a] language” (ISI\_TP2). She recognised the need to reduce the negative disposition in relation to learning English that the students typically have on arrival at university. The re-design of the instructional curriculum took account of the need to avoid the kind of symbolic violence that created feelings of inferiority due to lack of embodied linguistic capital, which limited their capacity to confidently produce oral texts and so accrue objectified linguistic capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2002). In re-designing the instructional curriculum, the teachers considered the level of relevant cultural capital students brought to the field, considering it to be their responsibility ultimately to transfer the embedded knowledge (the subject content) of the programmatic curriculum to the students (Deng & Luke, 2008; Luke, 2009; Westbury, 1999). They know that if they, the teachers, do not make the necessary adjustment in the field to connect with the students' habitus, then any initiative by the programmatic and institutional level curricula to develop language proficiency in their students will be ineffective (Deng & Luke, 2008; Westbury, 1999; 2003; 2008). They

understand that it is their responsibility to re-regulate the field by incorporating collaborative activities into the re-designed instructional curriculum, hoping to re-make the students' habitus of disposition to English (Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

The planning data and pre-activity teacher data show evidence of the teachers working to generate students' *illusio* to invest in the new ESL field. The following section discusses this evidence in more detail.

### **5.2.2 Re-designing instructional curriculum to generate *illusio* and *investment* in a collaborative field of ESL learning**

As reiterated previously, when the students come to the university ESL classroom changes are required to their existing ESL learning due to differences between the fields of school and university. The teachers in this study were planning how to raise the students' awareness of the value of investing in the university ESL field and also to realise that learning English is not as difficult as they think it will be. The re-designed curriculum aims to re-regulate the field by incorporating collaborative activities, thereby re-making the students' habitus by providing opportunities for them to collaboratively produce objectified linguistic capital. The teachers' attempts to create *illusio* and *investment* (Bourdieu, 1996) are now discussed in detail.

#### ***Developing the macro skills in teaching EGAP***

When the teachers talked about acquiring the embodied and objectified oral linguistic capital of English they claimed that the students would “be behind”, one reason for this being the fact that although the programmatic curriculum had included oral competence as a macro skill, that resource is not converted into institutional cultural capital by means of either formative or summative evaluation. “Speaking” is not currently included in evaluation, although it was previously. The concept of *doxa*<sup>14</sup> is relevant here; the students feel that “they don't have to worry about speaking to pass the exam” (ISI\_TP1), which creates a mismatch between habitus and field, with students not feeling that they need to invest in acquiring the oral form of the objectified capital (English) (Bourdieu, 1996). As Bourdieu previously explained (1984), this happens “because different existence produces different habitus” (p. 166). In this case when there is no requirement for the students to produce spoken language to obtain relevant institutional cultural capital they make no effort to do so; even though, as the teachers know, this element of the field cultural capital will be essential when the students step

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<sup>14</sup> *Doxa* is recognized and unquestioned views, ideas, and beliefs that are commonly accepted in the field (Bourdieu, 1984)

into the outside world of employment; it is ascribed important cultural as well as economic value in the field of job markets (Bourdieu, 1990).

The teachers also discussed the issue of durable dispositions in relation to students' previous experience of using the language orally, face-to-face in their previous classrooms. Srimi commented that "there is a lot of foible" (presumably, student 'weakness') in the production of objectified oral texts; it is "not that they [the students] don't want to contribute, [it's] because they don't know [how to do so]" (ISI\_TP1). They "are scared to talk in the language" because "they don't want to talk in front of another person and be ridiculed for their knowledge level and their language level" (ISI\_TP1). These students try to pre-empt the experience of symbolic violence in the classroom by avoiding speaking (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This can be understood as self-protective behaviour by students lacking the relevant capital, who therefore "push someone else to do the necessary job [of speaking in front of others]" (ISI\_TP1) even during 'normal' group activities, that is, the form of group work which pre-existed the introduction of collaborative learning activities designed for this study.

The teachers talked about behaviour which can be understood in terms of Bourdieu's concept of *illusio*, "interested participation in the game" (Bourdieu, 1996, p.228), as a result of re-designing the instructional curriculum by incorporating all the macro skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) into activities. It was the teachers' *doxa* (unquestioned and common-sense belief) that the students' "contributions" (ISI\_TP1) need to be enabled and incorporated into activities, and their "contribution" (ISI\_TP1) of objectified capital recognised and acknowledged. For example, when the students practise essay writing "...the contribution of facts for that particular topic would come from the entire class" (ISI\_TP1) and the teacher writes these facts on the board (ISI\_TP1). In an online classroom, the points are put on the screen, and they "share them" with the entire group. The teachers see this as giving "some kind of worth" (ISI\_TP1), contributing to students' objectified capital, and helping them feel able to invest in the learning activities of the field, that it is worth making the effort to collaborate in completing the work. They feel "that the game is worth playing", that it is "worth the candle" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 98).

The teachers also described how there are certain occasions where "some students do not contribute for various other factors" (ISI\_TP2), such as 'fear' of talking, being 'shy' to present their ideas, and not having sufficient vocabulary to express their ideas. In other words, due to symbolic violence, these students avoid the risk of exposing their lack of objectified capital, thinking that if they make a mistake in their answers they will lose the symbolic capital of respect from others in doing so (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Teachers

believe that as a risk management measure to minimise symbolic violence in the context of practising reading skills it is better for the students to engage in “collaborative aloud reading” (ISI\_TP1 & TP2), where individual mistakes are not highlighted (ISI\_TP1 & TP2) (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This practice allows students safe access to correction; and subsequently the opportunity to accrue the relevant embodied linguistic capital.

The teachers reported having to pay special attention to scheduling the macro skills when re-designing the instructional curriculum for two reasons: the limited time frame of their teaching and the technology they had to use. They had to analyse the existing situation according to their experience and then re-make their teacher habitus according to the ‘rules of the game’ in the emerging new sub-field characterised by collaborative activities (Musofer & Lingard, 2020). However, trying to re-make their own teacher habitus in the new field, they experienced a feeling of being displaced, moving between “the unease of someone who is out of place, or the ease that comes from being in one’s place” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151). This was a challenging time. They realised that there was “no way” (ISI\_TP1) of spending lots of time on checking student work. When planning for improving oral skills one calculated “so each group has five students, if they put 3 sentences together, that is 15 sentences or 15 ideas, when they are going to share these sentences will take lot of time” (PD\_TP1). They knew that they would not be able to spend time in supporting the development in these skills that they had been able to in the relatively leisurely fashion of their usual face-to-face classes. The on-line lessons had been reduced from three to two hours; this posed challenges to planning. When they were planning the listening activities, Gaya asked “In this activity the song should be played or? I mean we may not have time to play the song” (Gaya), to which Srini replied, “no, not in this class”. The listening texts played during face-to-face teaching were not possible in the online classes due to time constraints. Further, Srini stated that, “In my face-to-face class, I get them to sing also” (Srini), to which Gaya responded “Yes, because we have an extra hour for everything”. Within these time constraints the teachers wanted to create a comfortable and enjoyable environment: “If we play, we can break the ice to a great extent because we can say that these classes are not boring” (PD\_TP1). They hoped that eventually this would help to change the students’ negative attitudes towards learning, to increase their commitment or *illusio* to English and their investment in the teaching and learning activities of the field (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004). They wanted to show the students that the demands of the new ESL field at the university are different, that studying English is not only for the purpose of obtaining institutional cultural capital by passing the examinations, as was the practice at school, but is also something that they can use for socialisation, entertainment. They believed, however, that

“in a physical class” they “can do a better job” (ISI\_TP2) than in an online emergency class, with the advantages offered by more time allocation for learning for activities and for “personal connections” (ISI\_TP2).

### ***Student interest in the extant course and course materials and the need for improvement of the curriculum***

As the teachers were aware that the students were coming to the EGAP field with limited embodied linguistic capital they were very careful in re-designing enactment of the curriculum (see Figure 5.1, learner habitus). They thought it was their responsibility to encourage students to learn English and help them to reduce negative emotions and attitudes towards learning English by re-making their student habitus (Musofer & Lingard, 2020). As demonstrated in Figure 5.1, the sociological template for re-designing EGAP curriculum, the teachers had tried to make the students aware that the required linguistic capital of the field had changed from their previous school field; and also to highlight the “discourse of the field”, that is, knowledge in the field (Luke, 2009, p. 296).

The teachers tried to make the students understand that it is worth investing in the field of ESL learning, “we need to give them to understand that learning English is a must and explain the versatile nature of the English language”, and that “it is interesting, and it is not a such difficult task because it is not a rocket science or something” (ISI\_TP2). By using the reference to “rocket science” (ISI\_TP2), the teacher was conveying how they try to make English seem ‘easy’ to minimise the effect of students’ negative emotions and attitudes, understood as the effects of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This point resonates with Bourdieu’s explanation of how “social order is progressively inscribed in people’s minds’ through ‘cultural products’ including systems of education, language, judgements, values, methods of classification and activities of everyday life” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471).

The teachers, then, have been trying to change their own conventional teaching habitus which pre-disposed them to using teacher-directed and individualising activities into an approach which would generate collaborative teaching-learning activities in order to create a safe and more productive learning field for the students. For example, when planning a pre-reading activity based on the first lesson on ‘World Personalities’ (Appendix B, sample activity 1), Gaya noted that “we have to explain things to the students” and “have to give some points, otherwise, students won’t come out with their ideas” (ISI\_TP2). They wanted to scaffold the students so that they did not experience the negative bodily emotions (e.g., shame) and sentiments that result from knowing that they have insufficient capital in the field to

comprehend the instructions given in the textbook (Bourdieu, 2001). This evidence underscores the importance of teachers' experiences and views to the planning of the instructional curriculum (Deng, 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008; Dooley, forthcoming; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b; Westbury, 1999; 2008; 2003). While programmatic curriculum planning may pre-suppose an ideal classroom situation and an ideal student, the teachers are the people who face and shape the actualities of the classroom situation and particular students (Doyle, 1992a; 1992b; Westbury, 1999; 2008; 2003). The teachers in the study evidently tried hard to understand the learner habitus and the structure of the field during the enactment of the curriculum; these are important factors when interpreting subject matter and translating it into classroom practice (Deng, 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b).

The teachers also tried to make adjustments to the programmatic curriculum to make it more practically-oriented (Doyle, 1992a; 1992b; Westbury, 1999; 2008; 2003) and to align it with the students' habitus. For example, they pointed out that "the first lesson according to the schedule that you gave is on page 48" and "see, you're going deep into the book" (ISI\_TP1). Srimi went on to observe that the students are going to "think immediately, *Aei, issarahatika karanne naththe nedda?* [Why aren't we going to do the front section?] Aren't we going to do the front section?" (ISI\_TP1). Their concern about this issue, as newcomers to the field of EGAP, is likely to trigger negative emotions and sentiments; so the teachers made the decision not to follow the prescribed order but to "delve into the lesson without asking them to open the book, so that immediately they got to talk to the person who's seated next to them" (ISI\_TP1). This is an example of the teachers recognising the need to re-organise the order of the content and teaching schedule of the programmatic curriculum in the instructional curricula (Dooley, forthcoming; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b; Westbury, 1999; 2008; 2003).

The teachers wanted the students to "go forward" with "liberty to study on their own by pushing them a little further in every class" (ISI\_TP1). They did not want to limit the acquisition of embodied knowledge to that required for acquiring objectified linguistic capital and rewarded with institutional cultural capital in the form of results (Bourdieu, 1986). They talked about the "collaborative homework assignment" (ISI\_TP1 & TP2) on which students have to work independently on "something that the teacher had not taught in the class" (ISI\_TP1). In setting this assignment, they expect the students to share their knowledge, with no teacher involvement, providing the opportunity to master knowledge beyond that which is formally objectified for the purpose of attaining institutional cultural capital. After their independent work, the students were required to present their answers in class (online), sharing them with the entire class, thus

minimising the gap between their different degrees of linguistic capital and avoiding individual experience of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Planning instructional activities always involves teachers' interpretations and modifications of cultural objects, based on their knowledge of and attitudes to the goals associated with education, students, pedagogy, and the classroom environment (Deng, 2010; Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b; Westbury, 1999; 2008; 2003). They therefore make any necessary modifications to the programmatic curriculum based on their own perspectives on their teaching and on the durable dispositions that they have established through long immersion in teaching and learning their subject matter. They also talked about their use of extra materials and activities, mentioning that the syllabus is already very content-heavy, making it impossible to add in extra material or activities.

The teachers realised that the current 'cultural objects' (course materials) needed updating to align with the students' habitus to enable the development of *illusio* and *investment* in the field (Doyle, 1992a; 1992b; Westbury, 1999; 2008; 2003). They pointed out that although the "themes of the lessons" were still relevant, "it is high time to change the topics according to the current situation" (ISI\_TP2). They judged the topics as needing to be "newer" and more "timely" to suit the "current generation....because we need to move forward in the world" (ISI\_TP1). They emphasised the importance of incorporating their contribution to the curriculum development, as it is they who "are the people who [are] faced [with] the practical issues in the classroom" (ISI\_TP1). Their perspectives rightly have significant impact on educational curriculum; they are the local 'factors' in curriculum modification (Deng, 2010; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b; Westbury, 1999; 2008; 2003). The teachers in this study provided evidence of how they work as active agents in the classroom in the field of curriculum modification/translation/enactment. Gaya explained: "I change my lesson plans, add something related to the current situation into my lesson plans" (ISI\_TP2). For example, she commented that "next time I can add something related to COVID-19, which is a most current topic" (ISI\_TP2). To summarise, during the reconstruction of the EGAP curriculum enactment to incorporate collaborative activities while working under pandemic-induced emergency conditions of online teaching the teachers made what they saw to be necessary adjustments to the programmatic curriculum, within their capacity to do so, in order to increase student interest and to improve their investment in the field.



### 5.2.3 Adapting students to a new field of ESL

Bourdieu (1990) explains the concept of habitus with reference to disposition, which functions within the system of field structures (Reed-Danahay, 2005). While disposition can change when students re-locate from the field of the school ESL classroom to that of the university, it is impossible to have an instant change in disposition; students require a certain period of time to establish new behaviours and perceptions. Habitus is durable, and rarely changes quickly (Bourdieu, 1977). The EGAP teachers therefore have a major role to play in this evolution, as they are teaching the students as they first transition to the university field.

#### *Transition from the school field to university field*

This transition can be difficult. It involves change. The teachers want the students to feel that they are now “tertiary level students” and they have to get used to the expectations and requirements of the new field that they have entered. They know that they have a major role to play in the process, that their commitment and perspectives matter in the implementation of the programmatic and institutional curricula (Deng, 2010; Doyle, 1992b) and in the process of re-designing the instructional curriculum, re-regulating the field, and re-making the student habitus (see Figure 5.1, *re-regulation of the field & learner habitus*). This involves careful attention to the students’ socio-emotional state in the context of their divergent levels of relevant capital to the field. This awareness was reflected in the teachers’ thinking about designing collaborative activities and in their reported attempts to mitigate symbolic violence and reduce negative attitudes and behaviours. Changing the student habitus involved changing their own, and changing their conventional teaching approach to match the current field of ESL pedagogy (see Figure 5.1, *teacher habitus*). This move on their part was driven by their responsiveness to student *illusio* with respect to English and their *investment* in the classroom events and activities of the changing instructional curriculum (Bourdieu 1996; Noble, 2004).

While planning to incorporate new collaborative activities the teachers were dubious about the feasibility or potential of such activities early on in the course. One main concern was that the agents in the new field - the beginning students - were unfamiliar with both their peers and their teachers. In other words, the teachers were going to be asking strangers to collaborate with each other, to take risks, while taking instruction from a teacher they did not know. These concerns were exacerbated by the unexpectedly imposed pandemic conditions in which the teachers were now working. With their “practical” knowledge of students (PD\_TP1) they decided that the first day of the EGAP program would not be an optimal time to begin the activities; because the students would still be strangers to each other. By way of background, it

should be noted that due to the COVID interruptions, the usual course induction or orientation which happens as an in-person session had not occurred; so on the first day of class the students were going to be seeing each other - and the teacher - for the first time; and this first meeting would not be face-to-face. Their meeting place was to be the Microsoft Teams (MST) platform rather than a physical classroom. The students, mostly school-leavers, were likely to be learning in an online classroom for the first time. In summary, by designing and incorporating new activities into the EGAP program the teachers risked asking strangers to collaborate on a platform that required dispositions or learning habitus that were unfamiliar to them (Bourdieu, 1990).

It was not only the pandemic conditions that posed challenges for the teachers. They also talked about the pedagogies with which the students were familiar in pre-pandemic times, and the ways they had learned English previously. They expected that at least some of the students might be able to talk with them, the teachers, rather than with their peers. They attributed this to the dominant pedagogic forms enacted in Sri Lankan schools. One teacher described that “for them to talk to the teacher, they are more comfortable than talking to their peers on the first day, because they don't know each other” (PD\_TP1). In pedagogical terms, the teachers were saying that the students were used to learning with a teacher-dependent and face-to-face classroom habitus from their prior schooling; and now they had changed fields from school to university, and to a university using a distance mode of teaching, where they would have to take initiatives in their learning rather than relying on the teacher as was the case during their school studies. In constructing the enacted curriculum to include collaborative English learning activities, therefore, the teachers had to enable change of student habitus which was no longer synchronised with the system of the field in which it was now operating. The teachers were trying to re-make student habitus through re-regulating the field and to “adapt to the new logic of practice” (Musofer & Lingard, 2020, p. 388). Moreover, this was all occurring on an unfamiliar online platform in pandemic emergency teaching mode. It was not only the particular online platform, but also the very fact of learning online that was unfamiliar. It might be observed here that since most of the students are fresh-school-leavers they come to the EGAP classroom with a teacher-centred learning habitus and may try to depend on the teacher rather than being independent or interacting with their peers.

### ***Providing opportunities to the students to explore objectified knowledge on their own***

The teachers talked about student autonomy and of the importance of providing opportunities to explore independently the objectified knowledge of their course content. They

talked about supporting and encouraging students through such activities, providing possibilities for developing embodied capital on their own with the teacher's guidance.

And think out-of-the box and we need to give them that opportunity for them to think and then discuss and then come to different solutions different opinions, and then they should be able to express their opinion with facts. [ISI\_TP1]

These are “adult students”; they need to be independent and to develop the ability to learn independently and to express their own thinking (Nuthall & Alton-Lee, 1993). Srinini's comment above reflects her understanding that they have not experienced the “culture of questioning the teacher, as they are not trained to do so” (ISI\_TP1) at secondary school. They are “scared to talk in the classroom” (ISI\_TP1 & TP2), due to the imbalance in the power relation between teachers and students in conventional Sri Lankan classrooms (Bourdieu, 1977) which are teacher-centred places where the teacher has the principal role and the students listen and do not challenge.

The teachers had carefully considered the contextual background of the teaching field and of the agents in that field when re-designing the EGAP instructional curriculum.

### ***Considering the contextual background of the university teaching field and the agents in that field***

The contextual background and the agents in the field are crucial factors for consideration when developing an enacted curriculum for any teaching context (Deng, 2010; 2018; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b; Westbury, 1999; 2008; 2003). Although the PUSL is a national university, it has its own peculiar and distinctive field settings because – in the context of this study - it operates in distance mode. It normally has the face-to-face teaching that characterises universities and was more or less taken for granted prior to the pandemic, but it also involves distance learning. This change in mode requires careful classroom level curriculum planning as it needs to align with the local field, irrespective of what may previously have been outlined in the institutional and programmatic curricula (Deng, 2010; 2018; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b; Westbury, 1999; 2008; 2003). They consider too, as previously detailed, the lack of field-relevant cultural capital the students bring, and their reluctance to produce objectified capital in the form of spoken English (their so-called ‘shyness’). These different considerations collectively represent considerable challenges for these teachers planning to introduce collaborative English-learning activities which require above all that students talk with each other.

Homing in on the embodied capital required for EGAP, the teachers spoke of the peculiarities of English learning as key to their design of the new curriculum (Deng & Luke, 2008). This is reflected in a comment by Srini after speaking about unfamiliarity in her student group,

... they wouldn't be talking to each other because we, I mean we are talking about *English!* [PD\_TP1, emphasis added]

This is a brief comment, but an important indicator of what the teachers were anticipating: “I mean we are talking about *English*”. In other words, the classes into which the teachers are introducing collaborative activities were not *any* class; they were classes in *English* – the site where the possibility of experiencing “the unease of someone who is out of place” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151) is high due to the symbolic violence created by the misrecognition of English in Sri Lankan society (Bourdieu, 1977).

Much of the teachers’ talk in both the planning discussion and pre-activity interview related to the particularities of teaching English to EGAP students in a Sri Lankan university (Deng & Luke, 2008). The crux of their concern was that the students would feel ‘shy’ to talk with each other in English as “English is considered a different language”. ‘Shy’ here seems to refer not to the psychological condition of social anxiety disorder, but simply to reluctance to speak in a risky social situation. This is a lay meaning of the term, which the teachers repeatedly used throughout the data set. Srini went on to say, “I mean like you know all the problems that we have in the language”. The word ‘we’ is important here; it seems to be a broadly inclusive term, including many Sri Lankan students and teachers. Teachers’ perceptions of these problems are now discussed.

#### **5.2.4 The challenges of introducing collaborative learning dispositions into English classes**

In curriculum planning, student background (*habitus*) is a local factor that may help to shape the classroom curriculum as the teachers’ interpretation of the programmatic curriculum is received ultimately by the students (Deng, 2010). In this study it is the students’ experience of learning English as a foreign and second language within the particularities of the Sri Lankan education system and within the cultural political settings of Sri Lankan society that is of interest. In planning the enacted curriculum, the teachers took account of all these factors. In this section, I look first at school-related factors, then at the impact of learning English as a second and a foreign language, and finally at ramifications of the societal status of English.

### ***Students entering the university field with limited relevant linguistic capital***

The teachers were suggesting that the students brought small reserves of relevant linguistic capital to the field of EGAP education. They pointed out that the students would not have attained adequate institutional cultural capital from their General Certificate in Education in Ordinary Level (GCE O/L). By way of clarification, GCE O/L refers to a national level examination conducted by the Department of Examinations of the Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka for Grade-10 students. The GCE (O/L) can be contrasted to the (A/L), which is the final secondary level national examination conducted for Grade-12 students. It is telling, then, that Srini stated that “I would say about 85 to 90% of the students barely pass the English language Exam at the GCE (O/L)”. In other words, nearly all the students in the class have very low institutional cultural capital in English, and, presumably, similarly low levels of the underpinning embodied and objectified cultural capital. Even if the students have followed “the A/ Level English which is supposed to be general English” (ISI\_TP1) program, it was not relevant to EGAP performance as the students need “academic English” (ISI\_TP1) in the university ESL field. The problem of what the teachers interpreted as inadequate preparation for university studies in English was compounded by the fact that the students had not been engaged with the relevant cultural capital for quite a period of time before enrolling in EGAP. To clarify, although after the release of the results of the GCE (A/L) examination students can request university entrance from the UGC, they have to wait some time as there is inadequate capacity to accommodate the new intake until the final year students graduate.

### ***Lack of exposure to the relevant linguistic capital in the field and ramifications of the societal status of English***

Students’ lack of exposure to relevant cultural capital was considered by the teachers to be the main source of challenges which might bear on the introduction of collaborative activities into the EGAP field (see Figure 5.1, *learner habitus*). The teachers believe that the students have had insufficient exposure to the language as a result of home or school fields or the community that they belong to. Though the students have accrued the objectified form of capital at the basic level (capability in reading and writing English), they find it difficult to speak in English and to comprehend listening texts, especially when these are not in “Sri Lankan accent” (ISI\_TP1). The teachers identified the source of the problem as being not in the students’ habitus but rather in the field, which seemed to pre-suppose capital which the students did not

bring to their university studies (Deng & Luke, 2008). Nonetheless, students' relationship with objectified oral texts (speaking and listening) was a major concern for the teachers and is especially relevant to the intent to design collaborative activities for the EGAP classes. As Srinivasan stated, "speaking is something that is very, very difficult for us, you know, get them to use to". Here the teacher's point is that the students are reluctant to produce oral text in the classroom and it becomes a hindrance to earn objectified oral texts in the relevant capital. It is notable that the teacher used "us"—the collective pronoun seemed to be referring to Sri Lankan ESL teachers in general rather than herself only as a university ESL teacher. This reflects the students' relatively weak dispositions to use English plus limited objectified linguistic cultural capital for the field in which they now found themselves (Bourdieu, 2006). It indicates that the logic of the field impacts on disposition, as Wacquant (2014) explains, "it takes the conjunction of disposition and field, subjective capacity and objective possibility, habitus and social space (or field) to produce a given conduct or expression". (p. 5). There is limited ability to make sense of the English verbal text of the classroom when native speakers' accents are used.

In similar vein, students' inexperience with English in local fields was highlighted by the teachers. One teacher explained that "we don't have cinema that they can go to because Sri Lanka doesn't care to do that. TV is mostly in the local languages and that doesn't take them anywhere" (ISI\_TP1). As TV is the most common form of entertainment for the students, and if the students do not get an opportunity for exposure to languages other than their L1, their exposure to English as the L2 is highly constrained.

It should be noted, though, that in anticipating an enacted curriculum of collaborative activities, the teachers were careful to not homogenise the students (Deng, 2018; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b; Westbury, 1999; 2008; 2003). They described considerable diversity in social backgrounds. They said they were aware that the EGAP students are heterogeneous as there can be recent school-leavers in the student body along with others who are working full-time or part-time. The majority, though, are school leavers. Nonetheless, the educational, social, and economic habitus of the students may vary substantially.

In addition to the students' lack of exposure to the relevant linguistic cultural capital, the unanticipated shift from the physical teaching-learning classroom to an online classroom became a major challenge in re-designing the EGAP instructional curriculum.

### **5.2.5 Introducing the re-designed instructional curriculum in an online platform for emergency remote teaching during the pandemic**

“Dominant media and modes of representation” and “local pedagogical possibilities” (p.88) matter in transferring objectified subject content at the classroom level as they impact on the shaping of learner habitus - and challenge the habitus of teacher dispositions to teaching activity (Deng & Luke, 2008). Especially when teaching a language, teachers look to classroom facilities and the classroom environment as these factors impact on their delivery of the objectified content of the subject. The teachers in this study were rightly concerned about the sudden change of physical classroom to online classroom, and how they would manage this unanticipated situation.

#### ***Sudden change of the teaching learning situation***

The teachers had concerns about the sudden change. Both teachers and students would be working with an unfamiliar platform, “Microsoft Teams” (MST). When talking about face-to-face teaching, historically the dominant teaching mode, they pointed out that sometimes the basic infrastructure and technology provided by the university already did not match ESL teaching requirements. For example, “the classrooms that the university hired from government schools are not suitable for university students” (ISI\_ TP2) because they do not have the relevant cultural objects for the students to practise the macro skills, especially in aural and oral linguistic forms (e.g., these classrooms do not have multi-media facilities required to use audio-video material). These material barriers can impact negatively on students’ *investment* in English learning in EGAP; they may be discouraged from becoming as involved in their learning activities as they might want (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004; Threadgold, 2019). The teachers were trying to evaluate the existing conditions through their durable dispositions and adjust the re-designing of the instructional curriculum accordingly. “Cognitive schemes of the habitus ...are roughly adjusted to the changing structure” (Bourdieu, 2000, p.139).

#### ***Teaching in an online classroom becoming a real challenge***

Teaching in an online classroom became a real challenge for the teachers as it was a totally new practice compared to that with which they were familiar. It therefore required a difference in habitus from that which they brought to this activity. This was complicated by the fact that they were aware of neither the “real situation” of the new teaching platform nor the background of the new students. They tried to evaluate the changes by saying that “we are getting a new set of students; we don't know from where they are coming; how technology

savvy they are; whether they have data; whether they have signals, whether we have all these things” (PD\_TP1 & TP2). The teachers were concerned not only about the linguistic capital that the students brought to the field, but also their other cultural capital and social and economic capital that shape learner habitus - and challenge the habitus of teacher dispositions to teaching activity (Deng & Luke, 2008). Srini went on to say that “you're new to Microsoft Teams; like a *Achcharu* [Pickle] situation and I know it's a nightmare. I'm already having sleepless nights” (PD\_TP1). The simile ‘*Achcharu*’ and the metaphors such as ‘nightmare’ and ‘sleepless nights’ indicate how complicated the situation was; the teachers habitus was disturbed by imagining of the new conditions into which they were being unexpectedly plunged. These were agents who were displaced, feeling “[imaginatively they felt] the unease of someone who is out of place” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151). Despite all the challenges, however, the teachers were determined to proceed with the new instructional curriculum “because mainly all these new set of students are in our hands” (PD\_TP2); the students’ acquisition of the embodied and objectified linguistic capital in English depended on the teachers’ commitment (Deng, 2010; 2018; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b). In terms of position-making, the teachers commented that they were going to be “guinea pigs” and follow a “trial and error” approach in introducing the re-designed instructional curriculum in an unfamiliar field for unfamiliar (but somewhat predictable) students (Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

### ***Looking at the possibility of minimising the interruptions by analysing previous experiences***

The teachers wanted to explore the possibility of minimising the interruptions that they would face in their current EGAP teaching by analysing previous experiences (Deng, 2010; Doyle, 1992a). They brought the latest experiences that they had faced during the last online EGAP teacher briefing. Srini said that “when they [the university English leaders] were trying to explain the book to us, when they played that [it] got stuck” (PD\_TP1). In other words, the relevant listening text had not worked; “so that is with all the data that we have, I mean we have personally purchased data and we have” (PD\_TP1). That is, despite personally buying data for their teaching, the teachers were apprehensive about the reliability of the infrastructure of their upcoming teaching. They also pointed out that students do not have much financial capital, “the students won't have that much money to do all these things” (PD\_TP1), to afford to buy the necessary cultural objects needed for online studies. Overall, “technology is a huge issue” and the university needs to address this seriously. The teachers tried to ensure that all the cultural resources needed for the students would be kept ready and took the necessary steps to “upload them” to the online platform as soon as possible to minimise material barriers for the students.



Here the teachers are seen to be imagining their upcoming teaching in an unfamiliar situation and looking at “a potentiality, a desire to be which, in certain ways seeks to create the conditions of its fulfilment, and therefore to create the conditions most favourable to what it is” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 150).

### ***Looking at the material barriers the teachers would face during the practice of the instructional curriculum***

It was interesting to notice how the teachers faced material barriers during the practice of the instructional curriculum as they analysed and evaluated at the planning stage. Though they were uncertain about introducing collaborative activities at the commencement of the classes, they were able to practise the activities with the students; but they reported that the students could not “collaborate at the same level because of the technological problems” (ISI\_TP1). For example, not all the students were able to use their microphones due to technical issues. Again, Srinu explained that “when students study from home [that] means we have all kinds of noises coming into their audios, and it's sometimes disturbing in the class” (ISI\_TP1). Depending on socio-economic status, some students may not enjoy an environment conducive to sitting down and working in an online class. When the teachers “have to tell them to tone down the microphones” these students feel embarrassed (symbolic violence). Then they may try “not to talk and switch off their microphones”. This demonstrates that online classrooms have practical issues which can hinder the students’ contributions in the classroom activities, impacting the teaching and learning process. These are material obstacles, and the students experienced them as a form of symbolic violence; and the commitment of *illusio* may “be drained by very real material barriers” (Noble & Watkins, 2003; Threadgold, 2019, p. 42).

### ***Material barriers faced by the students when learning in an online classroom***

These material barriers have real impact. The students “are there as a ‘present’ [when the roll is marked], but they are not talking because they can't put the audio [on] because they don't have the data facilities” (ISI\_TP1). In a developing country like Sri Lanka technology costs a lot and some students may not be able to afford it due to their limited economic capital. When they need to use more features of an online platform they may need to use more data; and some may limit their use of data to just connecting with the online class. These material barriers hinder students’ commitment or *illusio* and their practical *investment* in the teaching-learning activities (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004; Noble & Watkins, 2003; Threadgold, 2019). “Some have the video facility, but they wouldn't want to put it up because their conditions in

their backgrounds where they are coming from maybe not possible to be visible to others” (ISI\_TP1). Students may not want others to see the physical environment from which they were attending the online class. More positively, teachers also observed students’ *investment* in class activities, with students trying to “collaborate in their own” (ISI\_TP1 & TP2); and they commented positively on students’ attendance in the online classes. “I think if I have 30 students, out of the 30 students, and generally I have about 26 coming to class. So, I would say about 20 are active” (ISI\_TP1). This indicates that the attendance of the students was high and that the majority were active. In theoretical terms, the teacher is talking about the apparent *investment* of the students in the online learning activities (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004); she also makes the point that “the others – it’s not that they are inactive” (ISI\_TP1) but that they face practical issues or material barriers, such as use of data and technological issues. Given the material circumstances, the teacher did not read student *lack of investment* from limited participation in online teaching activities (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004).

Institutional and programmatic curriculum planning may not pay much attention to the technology and infrastructure facilities needed for enactment of the curriculum; classroom level planning definitely needs to consider these requirements (Deng, 2010; Doyle, 1992a). Even if the teachers know how to deliver their course content, they need the necessary assistance to make their delivery a success (Deng, 2010; Doyle, 1992a; Westbury, 1999).

The following section discusses strategies that the teachers used to help the students in acquiring embodied and objectified linguistic cultural capital of English.

### **5.2.6 Strategies to scaffold embodied and objectified linguistic capital in a newly emerged field**

When different agents enter a field, they bring different levels of capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Similarly, when students enter the field of ESL learning at the university, they bring unequal portfolios of linguistic cultural capital (Luke, 2009). This is represented in the ‘student habitus’ category of the sociological template used for the study (Figure 5.1). The EGAP teachers were also aware of this situation due to their durable dispositions built up through immersion in the ESL field at the university over many years (Bourdieu, 2000). They tried to use these dispositions to analyse and evaluate existing conditions, which helped them to adjust their teacher habitus to changes in the new field (Luke, 2009; Musofer & Lingard, 2020). The teachers therefore tried to ensure that all the students be provided with an equal opportunity to produce embodied cultural capital during the re-designed enactment of the EGAP curriculum.

The following section discusses what strategies the teachers planned to use in scaffolding the students to achieve these objectives.

### *Consideration of contingencies in planning instructional activities*

The teachers' awareness of the practical situation of their classroom environment as the field of their teaching and their students' learning is important since planning instructional activities involves teacher's interpretations and modifications of the teaching learning material based on their knowledge and attitudes about the goals of education, students, pedagogy, and the classroom environment (Deng, 2010; Wilson, Shulman & Richert, 1987; Westbury, 1999; 2008; 2003). The teachers' habitus had been built up through long experience in conventional teaching approaches in a physical classroom - be they English or EGAP classes or classes in other subjects. When they attempted to reregulate the field with their re-designed instructional curriculum the 'rules of the game' of teaching also changed (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). These changes posed many challenges, and their dispositions were displaced, as they experienced "the unease of someone who is out of place" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151). One of the challenges was that of "handling a large number of students" (PD\_TP1 & TP2), and they wanted to "look at the worst-case scenario" (PD\_TP1) to ensure that all the students would become involved in acquiring objectified linguistic capital during the classroom activities. They expressed their concerns: "how are we to know that they're talking, because if they don't talk then what happens?" (PD\_TP1).

The other challenge was the time constraint. As Gaya pointed out, they had to calculate that they had "50 students [who could only be] talking for so many minutes" within the two-hour class now available to them under pandemic emergency learning conditions (PD\_TP1). However, once the teachers realised that breakout rooms in an online classroom can be monitored by teachers, they agreed that group activities would be a better option for the students than working individually, due to the time constraint. One teacher explained that "once they come out with the idea or whatever they have written" (PD\_TP2) in chat boxes in breakout rooms, "then we can realize whether they are very engaged, or they just copy from their fellow partner or something" (PD\_TP2). Much of the teachers' apprehension arose from the unfamiliarity of the online teaching platform; and as they became more familiar with this, they became more confident about the instructional curriculum they were designing. "It takes the conjunction of disposition and field, subjective capacity and objective possibility, habitus and social space (or field) to produce a given conduct or expression" (Wacquant, 2014, p. 5).

### ***Creation of opportunities for everyone to produce objectified linguistic capital and providing feedback***

The teachers needed to ensure that all students feel able to acquire new objectified capital; this commitment informed their planning in terms of both cognitive elements of learning and activities on the part of the students. One teacher explained that they had to “make sure everybody participates in or everyone’s participation is there” (PD\_TP2), while the other explained that “actually you are looking at the activities in the book and to see how the students collaborate with each other to do the activity” (PD\_TP1). These comments indicate how the two teachers are thinking through the inclusion of collaborative learning features along with the requirements of the existing university schedule as they re-design the instructional curriculum to align with the programmatic curriculum (Deng & Luke, 2008; Deng, 2018; Doyle, 1992a).

Another identified important element is that of “feedback from the students to understand that they have done the activity” (PD\_TP1). Students’ responses to what they learn as they interact with the teachers and the lesson content is an important component of an enacted curriculum (Deng & Luke, 2008). Here the teachers were not only thinking about delivering the embedded knowledge (the content) of the cultural objects (the course material) produced in the domain of the programmatic curriculum; they were also concerned about ensuring that the students would come to the “realization of” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243) the embodied cultural capital on offer, given the cultural objects with which they were working. Another related consideration was the fact that teachers have better control over physical classroom teaching, where they can easily check their students’ work; there is no such flexibility in online teaching. To remedy this at least to some extent, they proposed a practical way of checking what the students have learned by suggesting that “we can ask them to write on the chat box or something because then, everyone is involved” (PD\_TP2), “so, we can check their participation there with the names” (PD\_TP1). According to Bourdieu,

[t]he strategies of agents depend on their position in the field that is ... the perception that they have of the field depending on the point of view they take on the field as a view taken from a point in the field. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101)

From a position of positivity about their re-positioning in the emerging field (*investment* in teaching in that field), the teachers worked hard to adjust their strategies to align with the contingencies that bore on re-regulating the field by incorporating collaborative learning activities into their re-designed instructional curriculum.

### *Adapting instructions in response to local contingencies*

Although the teachers adhere to the programmatic curriculum of the university by following the “teacher guide” and the “teaching schedule”, there are occasions when they adapt instructions in response to local contingencies (Deng & Luke, 2008; Westbury, 1999). According to Bourdieu (1990, p.142), the “practical logics” of the field include both the irregularities or incoherence implicit in the field's actual conditions and the regularities defined by the official documents. Both are crucial to the field's ability to function (Bourdieu, 1990). The teachers identified gaps between the actual situation of the field and what is implied in the institutional and programmatic documentation. The EGAP Introductory Memo and EGAP Teacher Guide mention conducting a grading test for the purpose of assessing students’ previous and existing L2 proficiency, but this was not happening in the EGAP program, where students had varying levels of relevant cultural capital. One of the teachers commented that “sometimes the instructions given at the teacher briefing do not go with the students’ needs” adding that “I follow the same instructions as far as I can, but at certain points I integrate my own ways as well” (ISI\_TP2). The teachers want all students to be given better opportunities to accumulate the embodied and objectified capital of L2 proficiency, therefore they typically “use different resources ... different materials and grammar activities,” including “model papers and past papers”. In other words, they understand that enacted curriculum planning involves modifications to the programmatic curriculum in order to connect it to the experiences, interests, and abilities of the students in any given classroom (Deng, 2010; Westbury, 1999). This is why, as explained by Gaya, “each and every teacher has his or her own plan” (ISI\_TP2). The EGAP teachers adjust their teaching habitus according to the “practical logics” of the field, as they translate the programmatic curriculum into an enactment one (Bourdieu, 1990, p.142).

The teacher responses relating to RQ 1 obtained from the planning data and pre-activity teacher interview data are now examined.

#### **5.2.7 A response to Research Question 1**

The analyses presented in sections 5.2.1 - 5.2.6 have provided evidence relevant to RQ1 which was concerned with the challenges and possibilities the teachers envisaged before introducing collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes. In answer to this question, the findings suggest that the students brought limited relevant linguistic cultural capital in English from their prior school education to the university classroom and that the EGAP

teachers took extra measures to promote *illusio* and *investment* by the students in accruing embodied and objectified linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1996; Luke, 2009).

The students come from a society that has a particular attitude towards the use of English, which impacts on their use of spoken English in the classroom. They feel ‘shy’ to talk in English due to these attitudes, thinking that they will be ridiculed by the others. Their exposure to English in their childhood had been limited, which in turn limited their capacity to earn certain features of the required objectified linguistic capital during classroom practice. As oral proficiency was essential for academic life and future employment, the teachers made extra efforts to promote oral skills. They tried to mitigate and minimise the symbolic violence experienced by the students by limiting their expectations of being able to display oral proficiency. Similarly, the students had insufficient cultural objects required for their online learning; these material obstacles also impeded their commitment or *illusio*, (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004; Noble & Watkins, 2003; Threadgold, 2019). The teachers carefully considered these material barriers in their re-designing of the instructional curriculum, again wanting to minimise any symbolic violence that would be faced by the students due to these limitations.

Teachers tried to help students to re-make their student habitus as required by the shift in the learning field (Musofer & Lingard, 2020). They focused on developing autonomy in these students learning in distance learning mode, who needed to be independent learners, unlike when they depended on their teachers in the school classroom. This was needed to make room for the *illusio* that increases students’ *investment* in their learning (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004). In re-designing the instructional curriculum, the teachers also took measures to acknowledge and appreciate student contributions in terms of objectified linguistic capital produced during classroom activities, knowing the importance of such acknowledgement in developing *illusio* and promoting *investment* in the field (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004).

When introducing something new, in this case collaboration on a new platform, they were careful to try to protect the students from symbolic violence due to their lack of the capital required in the university ESL classroom. They wanted to avoid negative emotions that would manifest in the form of ‘shy behaviour’. They focused on mitigating and minimising symbolic violence by promoting collaborative group activities during which the students would be able to practise macro skills in English with their peers instead of working individually to ‘perform’ for the teacher (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In re-designing the curriculum, account was taken not only of students’ cognitive involvement but also of their emotional, social and behavioural involvement. The aim was to align student practice with the “practical logics” (p.142) of the field (Bourdieu, 1990).

Having reflected and reported on Research Question 1, in relation to the teacher planning and pre-activity interview data, I now turn to Research Question 2, and evidence collected and analysed pertaining to the students' perceptions of the experience and of the teaching of English as they have experienced it.

### **5.3 Student appraisal of EGAP classes before the introduction of collaborative activities into the EGAP learning**

This section addresses the second of this study's research questions, which investigates students' experiences of learning English before the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes. The pre-activity focus group data used to address this question were collected from 12 students: Lakshika, Dilukshi, Harini, Rasika, Tharosh, Tamara, Bhashini, Nurasha, Gihan, Janaka, Pradeep, and Thushari. As described in Chapter 4, the majority of these students were fresh school leavers (though they have to wait for some years to getting into university entrance due to administrative issues in the higher education system of the country), some were employed, some were not. They had various experiences in ESL learning before they encountered collaborative activities in their EGAP classes. Pre-activity or initial focus-groups are indicated as (IFG).

#### **5.3.1 The students have fallen in love with English**

The students are now expressing *orthodox*<sup>15</sup> beliefs about the importance of English. The prevailing *doxa*<sup>16</sup> regarding English in Sri Lankan society is that it is a superior language and cultural asset – although constitutionally considered as a 'link language' according to policy documents (Canagarajah, 1999; Gunasekera, 2005; Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). This *doxa* has now been reinforced as students become accustomed to the field of higher education and accept its norms and values - its *orthodoxy* (Bourdieu, 1977). The students have become *invested* in English language learning at university. They speak of working really hard to improve themselves, acknowledging that this is easier now as the university field differs from that of the school, "because different conditions of existence produce different habitus"

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<sup>15</sup> Orthodoxy happens when people try to rebuild doxa by reinforcing the prevailing notion as normal again (Bourdieu, 1977).

<sup>16</sup> Doxa is taken-for-granted norms and common beliefs (Bourdieu, 1977).

(Bourdieu, 1984, p. 166). The students talk of the excellence of their teachers and how they can approach them easily.

### ***Having 'a sense of one's place' in the new ESL field in the university***

As the students realise that they did not come prepared with the linguistic capital required in the university field, they have come to think of their school education as having been counterproductive, a missed opportunity for acquiring embodied linguistic capital in the school field and they feel “regret” (Janaka): “once [we] came to the university we feel what a useless thing we did at the school by neglecting English” (Janaka). This reflection suggests unconscious acceptance of social distinctions and hierarchies, “a sense of one's place,” and awareness of self-exclusion-related behaviours (Bourdieu, 1984, P. 471).

Although some students felt that they “learn[ed] English under pressure”, they know its importance; after schooling they have to learn English in order to do their “studies in the English medium in future” (Tharosh); “we have to work in English in future, specially, Software Engineering” (Thushari). These students are enrolled in the Bachelor of Software Engineering Programme, they have “to learn the university subjects in English” (Rasika). It is the medium of instruction for them now and the language they will need in their future world of work: “Once we go to the industry, especially when we have to work in the software companies, we have to work in English; almost everything is in English” (Rasika); “It is good to learn English as everything will take place in English in future ... we need to make our maximum effort” (Lakshika). These comments resonate with Bourdieu’s description of these moves and transitions: “a withdrawal from outmoded, or simply devalued, objects, places or practices and a move into ever newer objects in an endless drive for novelty” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 249). Dilukshi made a comment that indicates awareness of what is at stake and how the process works: “now we have to change our minds and learn English and have to create a desire to learn”, indicating the shift to “interested participation in the game” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 228), the development of *illusio* through the shift from the school ESL field to that of the university (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004). It indicates, too, that there is now a willingness to re-make their own student habitus, that they have “adapt[ed] to the new logic of practice” (Musofer & Lingard, 2020, p. 388). The students’ comments demonstrate awareness of the reality that they will not be able to flourish in the future without having accrued the embodied and objectified linguistic capital of English (Bourdieu, 2006). This is evidence of the current *orthodoxy* of their



beliefs about English and of their *illusio* or commitment to the language. Bourdieu would identify this as evidence that the students had reached “...tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game”; that they were “taken in and by the game...and [thought it] worth pursuing” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 116-117).

### ***Accepting the ‘rules of the game’***

The students accepted the ‘rules of the game’ in the new ESL field; they believed “that the game is worth playing” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.98); that English proficiency represents linguistic capital that would help to build up in their future, in addition to helping them to achieve the institutionalised cultural capital of good university grades in EGAP and in the subjects taught in the medium of English. “Definitely, we need English for our future to go forward and in future we need to use English similarly to our mother tongue” (Thamara). This comment reflects understanding of the symbolic value attached to the English language as linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1990); Thamara’s *illusio* is evidence that “definitely we have to make our effort to learn English... with a liking to it” (Thamara). All the students, with the exception of Nurasha, had undertaken primary and secondary education in their L1, but they now recognised that being proficient only in their L1 was limiting their opportunities; that due to lack of linguistic capital in English “we lose lots of opportunities which we can gain our knowledge, working with the new technology” (Tharosh). Now that they are studying at tertiary level, Tharosh and her classmates need English to develop the knowledge required from cultural objects such as textbooks and other forms of text to acquire the objectified knowledge associated with the new technology they are studying in their major. “Therefore, strongly I believe that we need to learn English definitely” (Tharosh). Gihan also showed understanding of the symbolic value of English as a global language: “It is great to learn English and I want to learn it more, because it is a universal language today”. Since he started working in a semi-government project, he had realised the importance of English as linguistic capital, and he emphasised its symbolic value - which is not limited only to the local context (Bourdieu, 1990). The various comments from students presented above provide evidence of *doxa* in relation to the symbolic value of the English language as an international or global means of communication (Bourdieu, 1984). The changes in the students’ attitudes towards learning English indicates their changed ‘feel for the game’ and a (re)positioning of their student habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) in the new ESL field, which is why they “like[ed] to learn English with an effort at the university” (Janaka).

The change is evidenced in relation to their *illusio*: "...even when we talk in English, we get a self-pride as we feel that we spoke in English" (Janaka). This awareness reflects the symbolic power and capital associated with English in Sri Lankan society, knowing English is misrecognised as a source of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990), especially the oracy dimension of the capability. This awareness also references the issue of social class and social relations, with students feeling that they too will belong to an upper class when they manage to accrue objectified linguistic cultural capital in English. This is an example of the way that "social order is progressively inscribed in people's minds" by "culture products," (p. 471) such as educational systems, linguistic conventions, moral standards, classification schemes, and daily activities (Bourdieu, 1984). Janaka describes how "the lecturer who teaches us also talks to us and provides us opportunities to participate in the classroom work". There is an appreciation of the fact there are greater opportunities to use as well as learn English, "it motivates us and creates a desire to learn English" (Janaka). It can be seen how institutional, programmatic, and instructional curricula are interconnected (Deng, 2010; Deng & Luke, 2008; Dooley, forthcoming; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b & Westbury, 1999), as the institutional curriculum of the EGAP programme highlights the importance of students learning English for academic purposes, for general purposes, and for benefits for life post-university. They realise that the cultural capital of English proficiency made available through the programmatic and instructional curricula of the university is convertible, via its institutionalisation as an educational qualification into economic capital through employment (Bourdieu, 1990).

### 5.3.2 Strong *investment* in EGAP learning

When someone experiences *illusio* in a given field, they may consider *investing* their own time, energy, and emotion in the activity of that field to be a worthwhile endeavour (Threadgold, 2019). They see something worth working for, to enjoy the benefits of the field. Once one acquires *illusio*, a trajectory where one becomes "taken in and by the game" (p.116) may develop (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). When the EGAP students entered the different field of the university classroom, they felt that "they were getting a different experience" (Nurasha) which could lead to acquiring embodied linguistic capital in English; and they liked this awareness and subsequently *invested* in the field. They believed that learning collaboratively would enable them to earn objectified linguistic capital that would benefit them. They saw the university to be the environment in which this could happen. The following

section considers in detail how the students invested in the new field of ESL at the university level.

### ***Coming from a background with less exposure to the relevant linguistic capital***

All the students came from homes where they have no opportunities to acquire linguistic capital other than in their L1 (Sinhala); they all commented along the lines of “we don’t use English at home at all”. Even Nurasha, who had studied at an international school, did not have the opportunity to acquire English at home although she did have some out-of-school access to it: “I get opportunities to speak in English with my friends, I watch movies and listen to English songs” (Nurasha); but generally her “use of English is very limited” (Nurasha). Dilukshi made a similar comment: “unless we learn English purposefully there is no opportunity for us to learn English by hearing or through the society”. The connection between the symbolic value of English and opportunities to use English depends very much on socio-economic backgrounds in Sri Lanka; as Tharosh noted, “there are different societies” in Sri Lanka (Bourdieu, 1977); for example, in Colombo, people use English in their day-to-day life; not all young people, however, have such advantages: “in certain societies the use of mother tongue is more and there is less connection with the use of English” (Tharosh). Against this backdrop, several of the students identified the university classroom as their “only chance” to accrue the embodied and objectified linguistic capital of English proficiency (Rasika; Thamara; Lakshika; Harini; Thushari). Gihan and Janaka both reported that although they had opportunities to use English in their workplaces, their opportunities for accessing objectified oral texts of English were very limited.

### ***Learning English as a language in the university ESL field***

As discussed previously, the students show that they are more invested in the ESL field at university, noting differences in relation to their school ESL experience. Even before they had experienced their teachers’ new designed collaborative approach they had noticed differences in teaching methods, content and the classroom activities: “At school English was taught only as a subject, but in the EGAP it is taught as a language” (Tharosh; Dilukshi); “The way of teaching is very desirable, and we like it ... in the university it is totally different” (Janaka); “I think I pay much more attention to learn English in the EGAP class because it is really different from the way I learned English at the school” (Nurasha); “since English is a language, it is for the lifetime and not just we learn it as a subject and stop it at some point” (Tharosh). In their own words, the students identified the fact that the teaching of English needs

to be different from the way other subjects are taught as English is not just cultural capital, it is linguistic cultural capital (a language, not just a school or university subject); and that capital is convertible into their daily life, their academic life and their future professional life due to the symbolic value it holds (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990).

Bourdieu's concept of *Illusio* (1990) was designed to demonstrate how people are moved by stimuli in some fields but not others. When the students spoke about the content and the activities of the EGAP course they identified differences between it and their school learning, for example the fact that unlike in the school curriculum EGAP includes “all four skills” (macro skills) and “these skills are also presented in a logical order” (Tharosh). For example, a reading module provides the background to the writing and speaking modules on the same theme. Although the students said that they “did not want to be in the English period at the school”, unlike school, EGAP “is not boring, and we like to learn in the EGAP class” (Pradeep). This shift to developing *illusio* about English has led to greater *investment* in the activities of the EGAP field. Janaka contributed an example of the shift:

... even one day while I was travelling, I was going through some class content on my laptop, that much we like to learn in the EGAP class as we are kind of addicted to it [IFG\_Janaka].

Janaka did not have a positive experience of learning English at school; but he appears to have ‘fallen in love’ with English (*illusio*) and with learning English in the university ESL field (*investment*) (Bourdieu, 1996). The students talked about opportunities to interact with the teacher, as they “are asked questions in the class ... are encouraged to find more and learn” (Dilukshi). Dilukshi explained further, “if we need to answer in front of all the others, we need to provide the correct answer, therefore, we try to give the correct answer rather than just giving the answer as something” (Dilukshi). These are adult students working to mitigate symbolic violence by making extra effort to find and contribute the correct answer even though they may not have the relevant capital to deal with the situation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). They can be seen as agents repositioning themselves, trying to get a feel for the new game and to deal with changing logics (Bourdieu, 2000). They are repositioning themselves in the ESL field (Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

### ***Getting more opportunities to accrue the objectified linguistic capital of English in the university field than in the school field***

As noted and evidenced, the students are seeing the university ESL field as providing opportunities to earn objectified linguistic capital, especially in its aural and oral forms. When

they had to operate via an online platform, they were “being put into breakout rooms” (Harini, Lakshika and Thushari) and allowed to engage in group activities from the first day. This was immediately different: “more than what we did at the school now we use the language practically” (Rasika). They find themselves sharing and pooling their linguistic capital; and they see that “this method is much better than the way the schools had, because the EGAP course provides the opportunity to learn all four skills not only writing skills” (Thushari).

The students had only been in the university field for a few sessions before the interview sessions (and before the introduction of collaborative in-class activities), but they could already see how they were reaping the rewards of their *investment*:

We have done only a few sessions in the EGAP course so far and we have covered more work than what we did during all the time that what we had learnt at school.

[IFG2\_Bhashini]

This suggests that the students had really fallen in love with English; they are happy about their new *investment* in the field and their new *illusio* about English (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004; Threadgold, 2019). They judge that they have already learned more than they did across all their school learning (Bourdieu, 2006). They have stepped away from their previous habitus which had led them to feeling displaced in the ESL field, shifting from “the unease of someone who is out of place” to “the ease that comes from being in one’s place” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151).

### ***Enjoying the benefits of investment in the field***

The main purpose for the students acquiring academic linguistic capital in EGAP is to obtain embodied, objectified and institutionalised cultural capital in the English medium learning field of their major at the university; but they also get the opportunity to acquire more general linguistic capital. They came to consider their *investment* in the linguistic capital associated with learning in English as convertible into broader cultural capital for “communication with the outside world” (Dilukshi; Thushari; Gihan). These students may become “software engineers or work in the IT related field”, especially “in an international company” (Nurasha & Gihan); they will need linguistic capital of the kind that is recognised internationally: “even if we get an internship, these things also use English mostly” (Pradeep & Rasika). They understand that the acquisition of embodied linguistic capital in English is vital to engaging in the field of employment not only locally but also internationally.

Expecting to graduate as ‘Software Engineering’ graduates, these students expect to be able to improve their social status in Sri Lanka. Lakshika commented that “we should be able

to write with good vocabulary; should be able to talk professionally”; and Tharosh agreed that “it is very useful to know English” as it helps “to get self-confidence at your workplace ... “if you know your English” you “will be very confident to handle the work at your workplace” (Tharosh). Students understand the symbolic power of the English language as linguistic capital; they how vital it is for their future endeavours (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990). Most of them used terms such as “learn properly”, “good vocabulary” and “proper English”, reflecting misrecognition of the meaning of being ‘good’ vs ‘bad’ at English (Bourdieu, 1990). They believe in the value of their *investment* in the field, knowing that they will be able to enjoy the benefits of it in the future (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004). Pradeep commented that “we need to learn English continuously, there is a great morale”, indicating the extent to which the students seem to have changed their attitudes to English learning – to have ‘fallen in love’ with it; their *illusio* is motivating them to *invest* in the field (Bourdieu, 1996; Noble, 2004; Noble & Watkins, 2003).

Some of the students also drew attention to the value of the English language as a link language (Canagarajah, 1999; Gunasekera, 2005; Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). As noted previously, Sri Lanka is a multiethnic country, everyone is proficient in one of the two official languages of Sinhala and Tamil, especially in their written forms. Sinhala is the dominant language, and the Tamil-speaking minority who speak Tamil as their L1 face difficulties when they have to use Sinhala for official purposes (Canagarajah, 1999). In such situations English can be the link language (Canagarajah, 1999; Gunasekera, 2005; Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016), as Janaka explained in relation to when he had previously worked for a pharmaceutical manufacturing company: “There were some Tamil and Muslim people also, so we had to talk to them in English”. Since Tamil and Muslim people use Tamil as their L1, and Janaka uses Sinhala as his, they could not use their respective L1s in their communication, and English became the link. Janaka also told how he had also worked with Chinese and Indian people in the same company: “since they didn’t understand Sinhala, we had to communicate with them in English”. In this situation Janaka is appreciating the use of English as a link language between locals as well as an international language (Canagarajah, 1999; Gunasekera, 2005; Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). In Bourdieu’s terms, this is an example of the symbolic power of English as a link language as both a means of communication and a tool of power.

### **5.3.3 Difficulties that the students faced in relation to exchange of capital in the university classroom**

In general terms, the students identified many challenges encountered once they stepped into the university ESL classroom. These can be understood in terms of capital exchange. While they had learned English in school for many years, they brought only limited embodied and objectified linguistic capital to the university classroom (Luke, 2009). They quickly realised that the English resources they brought to the university field had little value. In this context English is no longer treated as a subject; it is not only about achieving academic grades. Entering university with high marks in English from school does not necessarily equate to being advantaged – unless they have also accrued a strong base of embodied and objectified linguistic capital, not always the case for examination-savvy students (Bourdieu, 2006). Also, the capital they do have in terms of English proficiency is unlikely to be equally balanced across the macro skills. It will be skewed in favour of reading and writing skills, but at university students also need to be able to speak and listen in English, and work in the language as the medium of instruction in their other subjects, and to communicate in the future in the job market. The following section discusses this scenario in more detail as evidenced in commentaries offered by students during the initial focus groups.

#### ***What capital did the students bring to the university ESL field from their school field?***

This question concerning what the students bring from their school to their university field is important. Do they bring enough to survive and prosper? The students spoke about how, why and what type of English they learned at school and how it differs from that required in the university classroom, and about their understanding of the purpose for which they were learning English at university (Bourdieu, 2006). In the Sri Lankan school system, as previously detailed, the main examination that students had faced in English was the GCE O/L exam, where English was considered as just another subject alongside such subjects as mathematics or science (Raheem & Devendra, 2006). Afterwards, the students learned General English as a subject at the GCE A/L; yet the results of those studies are not taken into consideration for university entrance - despite the fact that the medium of instruction for the majority of university courses in Sri Lanka is English (Raheem & Devendra, 2006).

At GCE O/L English level teachers focus on “writing” and “reading” and ignore “speaking and listening”. Students are pushed to get the best possible marks in these two skills in order to obtain institutionalised cultural capital by passing the O/L examination. This is where the “sense of limit” or “sense of reality” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164) comes in. In the school

field, the main purpose of teaching English is to pass examinations and obtain good grades; the purpose in the university field is different. When it comes to the A/L General English subject, teachers as well as students pay attention primarily to the main subjects – as symbolic capital; and schools’ reputations are also dependent on this (Bourdieu, 1990). Most teaching focus is on the main subjects, with little attention being paid to focusing students’ attention onto General English. Lakshika commented that “the focus was only to teach the main subjects, even the teachers taught these subjects during the General English periods”. In other words, teachers used the scheduled General English classes for teaching the main subjects – and General English was not one of these.

The students reflected on the fact that although “English is a language” (Tharosh), it “was also taught as the same way the other subjects were taught” (Dilukshi). Dilukshi further claimed that teachers “came to the class and taught what was on the book and nothing was done beyond that”. All subjects at school are taught in an examination-oriented fashion, and English is “just another subject”. It was therefore a significant change when students moved to the university field and realised that English was not going to be treated as “just another subject” for examination marks, but as a language in which they were expected to communicate. Basically, the students did what was required for the field in which they found themselves; and at school in general most students “considered learning English as a trouble” and they “didn’t feel [they had] even to listen [to] what [the teacher] was teaching” in the class (Dilukshi). Providing another example, Janaka articulated his experience in the school ESL classroom as follows:

There was no communication between the teacher and us at all. The teacher was also sick of us, and we too were sick of the teacher at school. We didn’t understand what the teacher was teaching us, and I don’t know whether the teacher knew what kind of students that we were even. [IFG\_Janaka]

Remembering that English has particular symbolic value in Sri Lankan society, the majority of the students had not enjoyed the opportunity for exposure to the language in their family field (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990). They had very limited access to the capital. Meanwhile, the teachers only had experience of the examination-oriented teaching habitus of the school field, and they taught English in the same way that all the other subjects were taught. The alignment of these two circumstances created a big gap between the teacher and the students.

At school the teachers didn’t pay their attention to us, a few students who sat in front and spoke were paid the attention and only they were given the opportunity to talk and learn actively, not to all of us. [IFG\_Janaka]



The students with a stronger background in English in their family field and during their primary schooling were better able to take an active part in classroom activities due to their capital advantage (Bourdieu, 1985). Starting with more capital, they were then going to be more successful than others, as accrued resources help to produce and accumulate more capital. Different players, playing different games, determine the shape of the field and their position in it (Bourdieu, 1985).

The teachers also mentioned another factor in students' experience: they typically had to wait a few years after leaving school to gain university entrance without having any academic activities. This hiatus hindered their use of English, as school would have been the only access they had to the language. As Thushari explained, "since it [my life situation] has reduced the use of English after A/L from school, I have forgotten some vocabulary and it is bit difficult to understand when hear something in English again". This interruption in learning English meant that as agents in their new field the students felt "out of place" and "unease" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151) when they started their English classes at university.

### ***The University ESL classroom being a different field with its own habitus***

Once the students came to the university classroom, a different field with its own habitus, they realised that their the linguistic capital in English was lower than they had thought, and that to succeed in this field they needed to acquire embodied linguistic capital in order to acquire embedded knowledge in the cultural objects of the university field and not only to obtain institutionalised cultural capital by passing the examinations, as in the school field. The medium of instruction had changed from Sinhala (L1) to English (L2), which demands actions different from those which would be generated by their durable habitus. The one exception to this was Nurasha, who had undertaken her primary education in English at an international school. The major challenge that the students faced was learning the "academic English" required in the field of the university classroom - Nurasha included. Rasika commented: "the biggest difficulty that we faced is that we are being taught totally in English and sometimes it is difficult to understand things only in English" (IFG\_Rasika); a comment which suggests "the unease of someone who is out of place" (Bourdieu, 200, p. 151) with the changing structures of the field.

The embodied and objectified linguistic cultural capital required in the field of university ESL studies was found to be "more advanced" than that which the students had acquired in the school field (Bourdieu, 2006). "The English we learn at university is much more advanced than what we learnt at school" (Janaka). Even Nurasha reported, "I feel that there is

a formality in academic English. So, I too have a difficulty in that formality as I'm also not used to that formality". Although Nurasha came to the university field with greater cultural capital by having been in an international school, she too found herself to be lacking in terms of the now required capital. She too felt "the unease of someone who is out of place" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151) with the changing structure of the field; for the first time, perhaps, she was confronting what counted as the challenges associated with symbolic capital in terms of learning English. Thus all the students, although to different degrees, found it difficult to adapt to the new field where different dispositions and extra effort was required to accrue the relevant capital in the field by re-making their habitus (Bourdieu, 1990; Musofer & Lingard, 2020). Janaka stated that "sometimes I write to the lecturer privately or try to translate and understand on my own", indicating that he was trying to get extra support from the teacher as well as working out his own study strategies. Nurasha provided her understanding of the challenge: "we need to move on with academic English, not this informal English that we have been using. So, we have to get used to this type" (Nurasha). In Bourdieu's terms, agents have noticed the changing rules of the field and they have accepted the 'rules of the game' in the new ESL field; they are trying to re-make their habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

Unlike in the school field, the university field included working explicitly on all four macro skills due to the fact that the focus was on more than just the capital needed for passing examinations. Once students complete their degree programme, they need to find employment, which also requires the objectified linguistic capital of English, especially in its aural and oral forms. At this point the English language has symbolic value as it can be converted into other forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990). The students need to accrue the kinds of capital that will make them attractive to an employer.

Students' commentaries regarding the requirement of acquiring oral linguistic capital in the university field are presented in the following section.

#### **5.3.4 Oral language interactions in the EGAP classroom**

English representing *linguistic capital* in the Sri Lankan context, there is inevitably inequality in the university learning environment. Students with "relevant capital" are in a better position and acquire embodied capital relatively more easily, while others are at a disadvantage (Bourdieu, 1986). Symbolic power is evidenced by the distinction between Sri Lankan ESL learners from families and schools with strong embodied linguistic capital of English in contrast

to those who do not (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986). Once they come to university students need to accrue higher levels of oral objectified linguistic capital in the ESL field (Bourdieu, 2006).

Most are bringing limited relevant cultural capital, especially in relation to oral language proficiency (see Figure 5.1, *learner habitus*). They have had limited opportunity to develop speaking skills. Nurasha, who studied from Grade 1 to Grade 9 in the medium of instruction in English before moving to a Sinhala-medium state school, described her experience:

When I moved on to a government school, I didn't get an opportunity to communicate with everyone in English, because they don't usually speak in English, they only speak in Sinhala. [IFG\_Nurasha]

Students who come from state schools have little opportunity to develop spoken competence in English; then they arrive at university and have to produce not only written but also spoken language, which constitutes “a big challenge” (Rasika). When offered opportunities to practise speaking - to earn oral linguistic capital - “it is doubtful whether the majority is taking the advantage of this” (IFG\_Pradeep). It was not that they don't want to, they can't. They have insufficient relevant cultural capital to perform the task. This was evident when Bhashini explained, “we too have some weaknesses such as I don't get volunteered to do the activities”. Students safeguard themselves by not volunteering, by being ‘shy’ (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992): “most of the students are not coming out with the activities” (Nurasha). Nurasha herself had no hesitation in speaking out in class. Bourdieu's metaphor applies to her: “... it is like a fish in water: it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 127); but her peers, who did not have the same capital, experienced negative emotions when required to speak in English in front of the teacher and the other students. They experienced symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

The following section presents responses to RQ2.

### **5.3.5 A response to Research Question 2**

The analyses presented in sections 5.3.1 - 5.3.4 have provided evidence relevant to RQ2 which was concerned with student experiences of learning English before the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes. The findings suggest that the students fell in love with English and English language learning in the university field, despite their previous reluctance and disengagement in the school field. They had realised that this was a very different learning experience. In the university field, they are offered the possibility of

acquiring academic linguistic capital as well as linguistic capital in the form of English language capability. As they realised that they were expected and encouraged to learn autonomously, and that the teachers' approach was friendlier, they became more positive about learning English. They *invested* in the field, realising their *illusio* in practice. They came to see that the commitment was of value, was worth their while. It represented the opportunity to acquire valuable embodied and objectified linguistic cultural capital which they recognised as essential in terms of accruing institutionalised cultural capital and entering the employment field. This was not an easy shift, from the school ESL field to that of the university. They realised their shortfall in linguistic capital, especially academic linguistic capital. They had difficulties due to the symbolic power associated with English in Sri Lankan society, to their fear of shame, and to their limited prior exposure to the language. They typically tried to avoid volunteering or speaking out by being 'shy', safeguarding themselves from *symbolic violence* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

#### **5.4 Looking ahead to Chapter 6**

This chapter has reported on the analyses of the planning data and the pre-activity teacher interviews to discuss the planning and imagining of the introduction of collaborative activities into the EGAP classes. It has also reported on analyses of the pre-activity student focus group interviews to discuss students' appraisal of EGAP classes before the introduction of collaborative activities.

The teachers' planning and pre-activity interview data revealed that they faced many challenges. Some related to students' previous learning and to their socio-cultural backgrounds; others to limited available resources and mismatches between the programmatic and the enacted curriculum, especially in terms of teaching in an emergency online teaching environment. However, during the planning of collaborative group activities and the EGAP online classes, the teachers had kept in mind the issue of students' negative emotions and attitudes towards ESL learning.

In terms of their challenges, the students had understood that they needed to rework their habitus to accommodate the new cultural capital that they desire to accumulate, both linguistic and symbolic capital. Although the students were not yet competent to engage with their current ESL classroom contexts, they are trying to make adjustments to align with their teachers' expectations. They are recognising the importance of learning English, coming to believe (*orthodoxy*) in the value of engaging in learning the language, that they will benefit by doing

so, and will accrue relevant capital. The students, therefore, as the players of the game, are connecting their habitus with the field through *illusio* as an *investment* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The teachers have become the agents of educational transformation as they support students disadvantaged by their previous ESL education.

In the next chapter I present analyses of the post-activity interview data, presenting evidence of teachers' accounts of their experience of translating an unfamiliar programmatic curriculum into the enacted curriculum, doing so under pandemic conditions of emergency online learning. The post-focus group student data provides evidence of students' experiences and observations of the collaborative version of the instructional curriculum, and of their perceptions of their learning in the new environment.

## Chapter 6: Collaborative classroom events and capital exchanges in a re-designed EGAP instructional curriculum

### 6.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapters, this study investigates the integration of collaborative group activities into an EGAP course at a university in Sri Lanka. Phase 1 data on planning the collaborative activities were reported in the previous chapter; the findings from Phase 2 of the study, conducted after the classroom events had occurred, are presented in this chapter.

The analyses provide responses to two research questions:

RQ 3. *How did EGAP teachers in a Sri Lankan university appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes?*

RQ 4. *How did EGAP students in a Sri Lankan university appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes?*

Two sources of data provide evidence relevant to the questions. Each is now described in turn. The first references teacher experiences of the EGAP instructional curriculum which had been re-designed to incorporate collaborative activities and consists of transcripts of audio-recorded final semi-structured interviews with the teachers (hereafter, ‘the post-activity interview data’). The post-activity interview data provide evidence of the experiences and perceptions of the teachers as they translated an unfamiliar programmatic curriculum into the classroom enacted curriculum. Although they had been uncertain about the planned activities due to the unfamiliar teaching-learning environment, they were overall satisfied by their experience. In general terms, they indicated that they were able to overcome the difficulties they had anticipated at the planning stage.

The following source of data provides evidence of the student experiences of the instructional curriculum re-designed to incorporate collaborative activities: transcripts of audio-recorded final focus-groups with the students (hereafter, ‘the post-activity focus-group data’).

The post-activity focus-group data represent the EGAP students’ reported experiences and their perceptions of learning in the collaborative learning environment which offered them opportunities to overcome their previous negative emotions and to increase their interest in and commitment to learning ESL. The students reported feeling that they had improved their macro skills in English, especially their oral skills, as they were able to mitigate their fear and shyness while speaking.

As indicated above, this chapter is structured into two main sections. The first presents analysis of the post-activity interviews with the teachers and the second an analysis of the post-activity focus-group discussions with the students.

The teachers' final interview data show how they tried to mitigate the gap between curricula by adjusting their conventional teaching approach to better suit their redesigned instructional curriculum. Evidence shows how they noticed the students investing in their learning through their *illusio* in a "less institutionalised" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247) environment. The final student focus group data demonstrate how students themselves experienced the symbolic violence encountered when learning ESL in the school field, and how they realised the difference in teacher-student relationships in the university ESL field. They also recognised that they had more opportunities to *invest* in the *illusio* of the ESL field in the university context (Bourdieu, 1996).

The following section firstly reports on teacher experiences of the enactment of collaborative EGAP classroom events in their re-designed EGAP instructional curriculum.

## **6.2 Teacher experiences of the enactment of collaborative EGAP classroom events**

This section addresses the research question relating to how teachers appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities to their EGAP classes. The post-activity interview data used to address this question were collected from the two participants who provided the Phase 1 teacher data analysed in Chapter 5: TP1, or Miss Srini, and TP2, or Miss Gaya. Post-activity or final semi-structured interviews are indicated as (FSI).

### **6.2.1 Transferring programmatic EGAP curriculum into enactment through collaborative curriculum events: the emergence of a new sub-field**

As reported in the previous chapter, the teachers took careful measures to enable the students' experience of the re-designed instructional curriculum for their EGAP classes. The major challenge they faced was the change of field, the challenge of converting a conventional learning environment into a collaborative learning one. In theoretical terms, the teachers had recognised collaborative teaching and learning activity as a sub-field to emerge in the ESL teaching and learning environment, one with the potential of making changes in students' habitus by incorporating collaborative practices into their EGAP teaching. Working in an online breakout room illustrates both the challenges and the strengths of the sub-field.

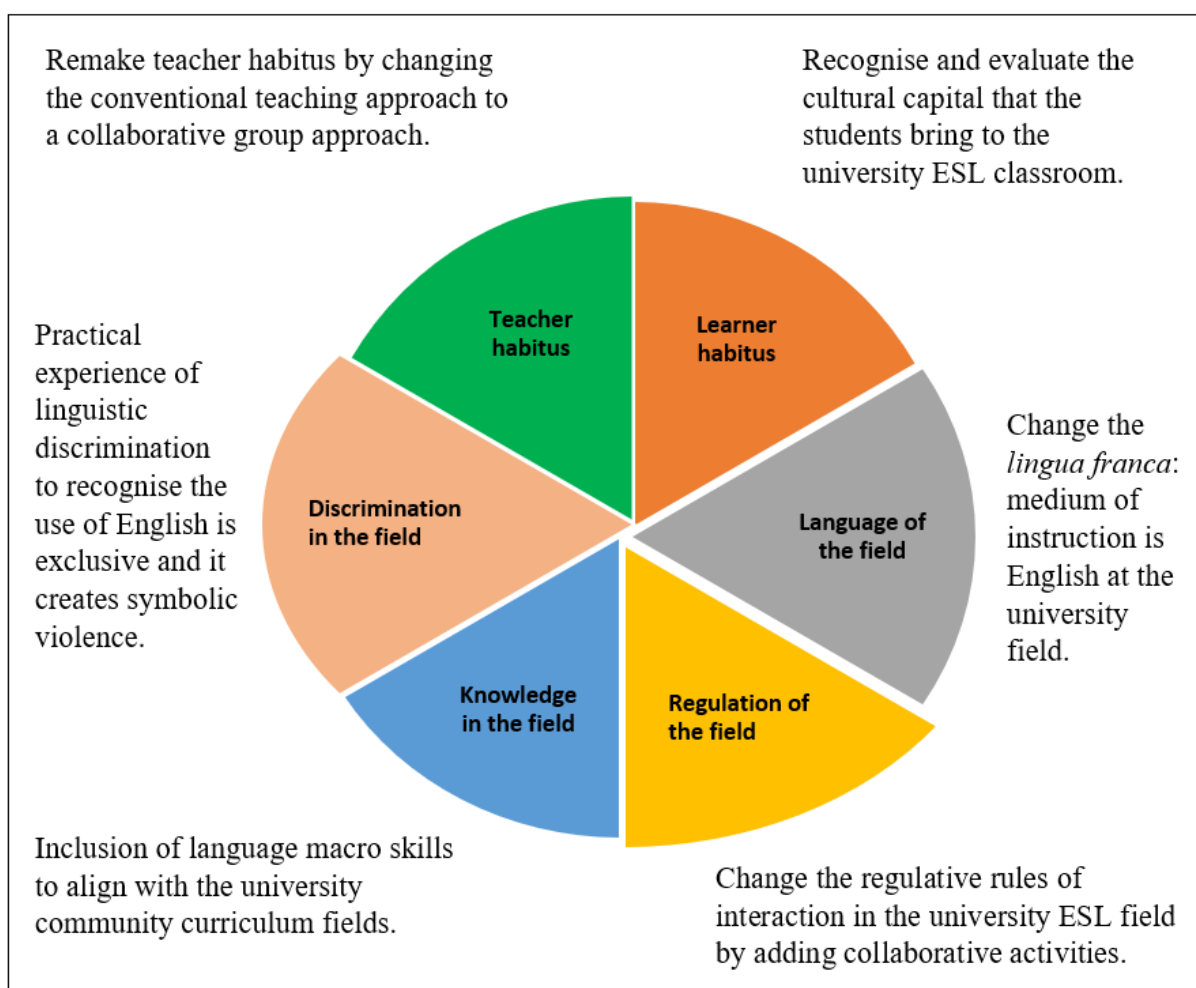
### ***Matching a newly emerged sub-field with the programmatic and institutional curricula***

The teachers thought it was important to talk up-front about the value of the institutional cultural capital that the students could accrue through completing the course. They therefore spoke at the commencement of the course “about the EGAP classes, aims and objectives of the course and the necessity of completing the EGAP course to get the degree of the Premier university [a pseudonym]” (FSI\_TP2). Miss Gaya believed that the students were made “aware about the importance of the EGAP course, and they [were] conscious about it” (FSI\_TP2). This understanding represented an initial step towards transferring the cultural capital of the programmatic and institutional curricula to the instructional curriculum (Deng & Luke, 2008; Dooley, forthcoming). The teachers stressed the fact that the students needed to acquire the embodied cultural capital of English proficiency in order to acquire embodied knowledge in their main courses and institutional cultural capital by completion of the EGAP course (Bourdieu, 1986). Gaya provided an example of indications that the students were taking the institutional requirement seriously: “I have got some emails and asking about the CAT (Continues Assessment Test) tests and request for the model papers and also past papers” (FSI\_TP2). Another email she received reflected the level of emotional experience that students had to navigate as a result of their lack of appropriate linguistic capital when coming to the EGAP classroom and the attendant symbolic violence:

I got another email in Sinhala. It was written in Sinhala saying that *Madam mata EGAP aulwage, Mata English hondatama baha* (Madam, I feel very upset about the EGAP, because my English knowledge is very poor).... and asking that how do I start?  
[FSI\_TP2]

This email reflects the very low level of English of some students, evident in the fact that they used their L1 to communicate with their teacher. The teacher is evidencing the fact that these students were aware of their level of capital and were looking for extra help. In response, the teachers took the initiative of helping the students by providing “extra resources” (FSI\_TP1 & TP2). The above example of students’ seeking help from the teacher on a one-to-one basis indicates how they try to mitigate the symbolic violence that they might face if they were to show their low level of proficiency in front of everyone in the class. By providing extra information and support, the teachers also demonstrated their consideration of the peculiarities of individual students in the instructional curriculum, the different levels of relevant capital they had brought to the class from their previous habitus in secondary school (Deng & Luke, 2008), differences in student habitus as indicated in the sociological template for re-designing EGAP instructional curriculum (Figure: 6.1).





**Figure 6.1**  
**Sociological template for re-designing EGAP enactment with a collaborative learning curriculum**

As the teachers re-regulated the field with their re-designed collaborative instructional curriculum (Figure: 6.1), they were able to see “students’ active participation” in the class. In the new classroom events the students were described as engaging in “a lot of interaction because they have to” (FEI\_TP1). This was a “new experience” for the teachers as well; this was not how beginning students in earlier EGAP courses had acted. They noticed that students shared their linguistic capital, which is an essential component of interactive and collaborative language teaching and learning. "I put them into collaborative teams in the classroom for at least one aspect of a lesson, and every homework assignment I give them for every single session” (FEI\_TP1). Their EGAP teaching experience confirmed what they knew: that “students always love to do group activities” (FSI\_TP2). They had observed this to be the case in their previous teaching; the new approach confirmed this: “... through WhatsApp messages

that students have shared, I can understand that they love to do collaborative learning” (FSI\_TP2). The teachers emphasised that “two hours lecturing won’t work out in teaching English”; English is a language, not just any subject; therefore, a conventional method of transmission model teaching will not work. While the programmatic curriculum had been designed for three-hour face-to-face teaching sessions, the change to emergency online teaching meant that the sessions were reduced to two hours. Teachers therefore had to work strategically to achieve the aims and objectives of the institutional curriculum. They had to mitigate certain constraints in their classroom practices. Clearly the teachers understood the practical logic of the field (Bourdieu, 1986).

They subsequently shared positive observations of the new sub-field at the EGAP teachers’ feedback review meeting. They “suggested the other [non-study] teachers as well to try it [collaborative group activities] out” (FSI\_TP2), adding that due to material barriers such as “technical issues”, “it may not work out at the very first day or two, but it will work out afterwards and the teachers and the students will like it, afterwards that is not a magic because once we practice it, then we are ok” (FSI\_TP2). They had thought it necessary to change their conventional teaching habitus due to the “inactive behaviours” of students that they had experienced “throughout” their ESL teaching. Their observation and argument in favour of the change was that it “breaks the monotony of two hours lecturing”, and that “listening, speaking, reading and writing take place in collaborative learning in breakout rooms” (FSI\_TP2). The teachers re-regulated their practice and accepted the rules of the changes in the newly emerged field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), and tried to share their dispositions with other agents in the field while position-changing themselves (Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

A key characteristic of the diversity of ‘student habitus’ (Figure: 6.1) at the entry point to the course was different levels of linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1986); and the teachers believed that the collaborative environment would allow a sharing of capital in relation to *all* the macro skills, not just those of reading and writing. When they were interviewed they indicated that they were “planning to do collaborative breakout room activities each and every day during next nine days also” (FSI\_TP2), that is until the end of the course. They also reported that the collaborative enactment of their EGAP teaching had given them different insights to their teaching dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990). Gaya noted that “as a teacher participant I gained different insight.... this intervention is a path to think about interesting collaborative learning activities for future EGAP batches” (FSI\_TP2). She also reported that she had already used collaborative group activities in her new EGAP teaching course conducted for another degree

programme managed by the ELT Department. This provides good evidence of a teacher accepting the ‘rules of the game’ in the newly emerged sub-field and re-positioning their teacher habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Musofer & Lingard, 2020). These teachers are trying to change their conventional teaching habitus and move to a different approach which includes collaborative activities. They believe that this will in return impact students’ habitus by influencing their *illusio* and improving their *investment* in the ESL learning field (Bourdieu, 1984). While the three levels of curriculum planning usually occur hierarchically, from the institutional to the classroom level (top-down), the teachers were trying to make their contribution in the instructional curriculum by sharing their experience with collaborative teaching with their colleagues who were not part of the project (Deng, 2010 & Doyle, 1992b).

### ***Material barriers and strategies to mitigate symbolic violence***

According to the teachers’ point of view, the students developed *illusio* by learning English in the newly emerged sub-field of collaborative learning within the broader university field (Bourdieu, 1984). The fact that due to the sudden COVID-19 pandemic interruptions the classes took place on an emergency online platform posed a challenge for the students due to their inexperience in the field. For example, even though some students were keen to engage in the classroom activities, due to material barriers such as “signal or technical problems” they weren’t able to collaborate with their peers or share their cultural capital (Threadgold, 2019). Awareness of these problems was crucial, otherwise, as one of the teachers observed, “I think the students who can talk to each other, who can write on the chat box and collaborate, are doing it very well” (FSI\_TP1), while students who did not have these facilities at the same level will be hindered in relation to active participation in classroom activities, especially in relation to missing out on acquiring the objectified oral linguistic capital of spoken English. This is especially important when “the classroom is the only” field that they have for learning and using English: their “commitment to their *illusio* may be drained by very real material barriers” (Threadgold, 2019, p. 42). When the material barriers cannot be overcome, there results “a form of symbolic violence” (Threadgold, 2019, p. 42). The teachers provided an option for the students to use the “chat box” to talk with them about any difficulties they were facing: “there are some students [who] type in the chat box saying that ‘my mic doesn’t work’, but then they try to type the answers on the chat box” (FSI\_TP2). This reaching out constitutes investment in learning activities (Bourdieu, 1984).

Time, effort, and emotion also impact on commitment or *illusio* (Threadgold, 2019). When the teachers were delivering the content relating to listening skills, they encountered

material barriers as the relevant ‘cultural objects’ (resources) were not available. As Gaya pointed out, “according to the lesson plans, there are many listening activities, but they [university] couldn't upload the recordings properly” (FSI\_TP2); and Srini explained that “listening is basically an individual activity according to this particular program, but we do not have the space and the time to do that in the classroom” (FSI\_TP1). Students get frustrated when they realise that they will not be able to accrue the objectified capital, especially in terms of listening skills, as the required opportunities are limited. Students may consequently experience symbolic violence, which hinders their *illusio* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Threadgold, 2019). The teachers see the possibility of this scenario if students are unable to achieve their aims (to earn objectified capital) as “maybe they don't have the time, or maybe they can't access LMS, or they may be not having signals, or they will not be having data” (FSI\_TP1). As a remedial measure to mitigate the danger of such symbolic violence the teachers report that they “plan to do some collaborative listening activity” (FSI\_TP2) via which students will be able to share the material (capital) amongst themselves, and not be prevented from developing the skills and acquiring the embodied and objectified aural linguistic capital of English.

In these ways the teachers are shown not only to be managing re-designed instructional curriculum carefully by adapting the programmatic curriculum according to the availability of material capital, and they are also trying to build the institutional cultural capital of their students (Musofer & Lingard, 2020) by seeking to re-make student habitus. The following section discusses this in detail.

### **Building institutional cultural capital through re-making student habitus**

The main purpose of the instructional curriculum is to build up institutional cultural capital by transforming the institutional and programmatic curricula in the new field that the students enter in the EGAP course (Deng & Luke, 2008). As discussed in the previous section, the students have not brought to EGAP the cultural capital which was pre-supposed by the programmatic curriculum. They had not accrued sufficient linguistic cultural capital at school. The comments on this issue by both teachers and students have been included earlier in their initial interviews; it has been demonstrated that the teachers faced a great challenge in reforming the students’ habitus to align with the new ESL field at the university. The teachers have tried to mitigate the students’ negative emotions and cultural influences, supporting them to share

their linguistic capital amongst themselves and to help each other to acquire the resources that are valued as linguistic capital in the field of the EGAP class (Bourdieu, 1986).

### ***Working with positive emotions in the newly emerged sub-field***

Online learning and working in breakout rooms was new to the students. This sub-field of collaborative learning was characterised by both challenges and strengths. As detailed in Chapter 5 some of the challenges were associated with practical problems relating to online teaching and learning, such as technical issues and students' existing interests. In practice, however, these obstacles were in part countered by the students being "keen on learning", prepared to collaborate with each other during the online events. This drew the teachers' attention to the strength of the students' *illusio* in learning English: they "logged early" because they did not "want to miss it by coming late to class"; they were cautious about "logging problems like their mics are not working or they don't have signals, or they don't have electricity in their areas" (FSI\_TP1). This is evidence that the students are in fact investing in the new field to acquire the embodied linguistic capital of English (Bourdieu, 1986). Srini provided further evidence, "I also have to say when the class starts at 3.30 (pm), they are on, they are logged in from 3.00 (pm) o'clock onwards. So that shows that they are really interested in coming to class" (FSI\_TP1). This behaviour suggests that the students are re-making their habitus, changing their habits and behaviours (Musofer & Lingard, 2020). They were apparently looking forward to their classes, logging on earlier than the required time. Previously they would not necessarily have attended their face-to-face class at all: according to the teachers' previous experience, "students stop their coming to the classes after the first one or two classes" (initial interview data). The students, the agents, have accepted the 'rules of the game' in the new ESL field, indicating that they believe "that the game is worth playing, that it is "worth the candle"" (p. 98), they are "taken in and by the game..." and consider it "worth pursuing" (p. 116) (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

The teachers noticed that another reason the students liked to join the online classes was that they preferred to work together in breakout rooms. Srini substantiated this observation, explaining "because whenever I ask them whether it is breakout rooms or individual, they would prefer to do breakout rooms" (FSI\_TP1). The teachers therefore "assume that they like to work with the others in the [online] classroom" (FSI\_TP1). They had also noticed students' positive emotions. As Gaya put it, "when I entered the breakout rooms, they were speaking friendly" (FSI\_TP2). With changes to the regulative rules in the field the students were being able to re-make their learner habitus (Luke, 2009; Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

During the planning discussion, the teachers expressed concern in relation to whether students would get on well when interacting online. This concern came from the fact that the students would not have met each other in person in a physical classroom; but the teachers were surprised to see that the students “spoke right away” at the “very first time [they met and met online] like very good friends, like familiar friends”. She commented: “it’s really interesting” (FSI\_TP2) to see how these students interact with each other. They appear happy to work together, to feel more comfortable being together than working alone. The saw this ease as indicating the students’ enthusiasm about working together and that they had taken positively to the collaborative model of learning. The ‘agents’ were feeling comfortable with the new ‘game’; they were re-making their student habitus. “They are interested and emotionally engaged” (FSI\_TP1); “They are getting connected with each other positively and their enthusiasm is observable” (FSI\_TP2).

Gaya brought up a point about certain peculiarities of the students which might seem to arise from cultural habitus (Deng & Luke, 2008). For example, male students may be expected to be reluctant to produce language compared to female students. Gaya projected herself into the head of her male students, speculating that “if I identify his ability, he may think that the teacher will talk to me each and every time, so better to keep quiet” (FSI\_TP2). To her surprise, however, she “heard many male voices in breakout room activities” (FSI\_TP2); she heard “even the boys’ voices are more prominent in the collaborative groups, though they are silent in the main room” (FSI\_TP2). She detailed interesting student behaviour she had encountered in class: “I discussed with one of the girls, and she said that there’s a boy named Dasun [pseudonym] and though he is not speaking during the teaching time, he’s good in doing breakout rooms, that is, he is very active in breakout room activities” (FSI\_TP2). In short, there seems to have been some gendering of student response to collaborative classroom events: male students were noticeably more active in the breakout rooms than in the whole class online forum or in the physical classroom.

In summary, the teachers detected a change in student activity. Students seemed keener to attend the collaborative learning classes EGAP classes compared to the previous attendance of the EGAP; and male students seem to have responded with particular enthusiasm to activities in the breakout rooms, suggesting a gendering element of student action and reaction to the collaborative instructional curriculum. The extent to which any observed student action was a reaction to the socially isolating conditions of the national COVID-19 lockdown cannot be known from the data produced for this study. It is therefore important to not over-interpret findings. With some caution then I suggest that the re-designed instructional curriculum may

have enabled the students to act in ways that, with repetition over time, might sediment themselves into a student habitus as a disposition to learning that is different to that acquired in school. The classroom events which characterised the collaborative instructional curriculum are showing potential for changing the habitus of the students (Bourdieu, 1990).

### ***Cultural capital exchange in the new ESL learning field***

The teachers pointed out that covering the syllabus does not necessarily mean that students have acquired the institutional cultural capital expected in the institutional and programmatic curricula (Deng, 2018; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b). Unlike ESL education in school, EGAP education at university level is not focused only on passing examinations (thereby earning institutional cultural capital). The students are expected to acquire embodied cultural capital which can be converted into the objectified cultural capital of oracy and literacy as required in their English-medium university studies. Similarly, it is expected that they will acquire the same skills – the same embodied and objectified cultural capital – that is required for obtaining employment in fields of work where English is used. The enacted curriculum needs therefore to be ‘practical’; it needs to build strength in all four macro skills as a medium of instruction and for communication beyond the EGAP classroom. Students should be able to apply what they learn in the EGAP classroom to both their university study and their future work life. This is what is required if the institutional curriculum is to be successfully translated into practice. The subject content knowledge and skills that the students gain need to be exchangeable outside of EGAP and in non-educational fields (Deng, 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b).

As discussed in the previous section, students entered the field of EGAP education with different levels of relevant cultural capital, based in part on the habitus for learning they had acquired in school. In the re-designed instructional curriculum they are provided with opportunities to be actively involved in collaborative group activities as a means to accruing additional cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2000). In the newly emergent field there are opportunities for the students to earn objectified linguistic capital by collaborating with their peers. As they brought different degrees of linguistic capital to the EGAP classroom they sometimes “interact with each other in both languages; their mother tongue as well as in English” (FSI\_TP1); and the teachers have observed that they “do take the opportunity to talk to each other in their groups” (FSI\_TP1). Sometimes they codeswitch, using “the mother tongue with a few English words in between”; sometimes they persist in trying with “the English language, maybe not the perfect grammar sentence, but yet again, the idea is there” (FSI\_TP1). In summary, the

collaborative activities are seen to provide opportunities to bring more linguistic resources to the EGAP studies than typically occurred in traditional classroom activities: the mother tongue as well as the second language. As agents, students are seen to be developing a feel for the game while grappling with the shifting logic in the new field (Bourdieu, 2000).

The teachers noticed “a lot of conversation among the team members” who contributed to the activities by using whatever linguistic resources they had. Given their durable dispositions in their EGAP teaching habitus, the teachers had initially expressed doubts about the potential for student interaction in the class; but they observed that most of the students were in fact interacting with each other, working in the collaborative groups instead of working alone. The re-designed instructional curriculum had helped them to act in ways that might, over time, change their habitus in terms of acquiring and using their linguistic capital. In other words, the re-designed curriculum would seem to have the potential to attend to certain aspects of the institutional and programmatic curricula in a more meaningful manner (Deng, 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b).

In re-designing the curriculum to include collaborative activities, the teachers had to think of activities that might be characterised as involving a higher level of cognition than traditional EGAP learning activities, as the university ESL field requires not just the deeply sedimented and finely tuned examination-oriented habitus of secondary schooling, but also the development of dispositions to use the language for communication, and to do so through speaking and listening. This means that the teachers have to focus on the issue of student attention and involvement in speaking and listening, the oral and aural dimensions of the required capital, not only the reading and writing elements that are converted into institutional cultural capital.

When talking about students’ attention and involvement in the breakout collaborative activities, Gaya said that the “majority of the students paid attention” (FSI\_TP2); Srini agreed, noting that “they do because when they come back to class, they have answers. So basically, they have worked with each other” (FSI\_TP1). Both teachers noted that the students are more willing to answer, whereas previously they did not want to respond. These observations indicate that the students are acting with greater confidence in responding to the teachers, which seems to have been a result of their being able to bring their various linguistic resources to group activities to produce ‘capital’ for sharing with the teacher and the whole class. This led the teachers to their conclusion that “they engage very well” during the breakout room activities; that they are built confidence through peer interactions and collaborative activities (Bourdieu, 1993).



Srini also talked about homework assignments. She commented that “they [the students] pay a lot of attention because they go into videos, they go into the internet to find information” (FSI\_TP1). She provided an example of a task she had set:

... one assignment to prepare a particular item of food that is not from Sri Lanka but from outside and subsequently the students had gone to the internet, they had checked out the recipe, they had written it down, they had made it, and they had taken pictures and posted it on the internet ... on the homework assignment. (FSI\_TP1)

The teacher saw this as a success. The students had “collaborated and ... gone out of their normal area of study” (FSI\_TP1), expanding “their knowledge levels” by collaborating with each other and working “beyond the coursebook” (FSI\_TP1). These and similar observations suggest that the EGAP students have recognised the importance of learning English, realising that it is worth learning (see Chapter 5); they are translating their *illusio* into *investment* in the collaborative activities of the re-designed curriculum to develop the forms of embodied and objectified capital other than only those that are convertible into institutional capital in the university course (Bourdieu, 1984). It is possible to speculate here that the students’ habitus for academic and life success has transferred from the ESL school field to the EGAP field of the university; and that the students are acting in ways that might, with repetition, turn into new, collaboratively shaped dispositions for learning. These holds promise for the alignment of the institutional, programmatic and instructional curricula of EGAP. The programmatic curriculum expects students to develop their embodied cultural capital to acquire formative and summative institutionalised cultural capital. At the same time, the institutional curriculum requires students to go beyond passing examinations to develop the cultural capital required to obtain embodied knowledge of the relevant cultural objects and to accrue the objectified cultural capital to suit future employment fields. The re-designed curriculum is more closely aligned than the previous one, in that it tries to cater to the communicative requirements of the programmatic and institutional curricula. To achieve this, the teachers have adapted their conventional classroom practice into less-institutionalised classroom relationships. The following section discusses these relationships in more detail.

### **6.2.2 Mitigating symbolic violence through less institutionalized relationships**

As previously noted, during the re-designing of the instructional curriculum the teachers had to pay special attention to embodied and objectified oral and aural linguistic capital (L2 oracy) as EGAP is a language course. They had therefore considered students’ previous learning

habitus and the relevant cultural capital that they brought to the classroom. Given their own previous EGAP experience, the teachers were aware of the fact that students often try to preempt symbolic violence by not exposing their linguistic levels in the classroom, not making themselves vulnerable to judgement from others in relation to their inadequate or less objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990). The teachers hoped to mitigate symbolic violence by putting their re-designed curriculum into practice. They did this by building up social capital in a collaborative environment, social capital in terms of Bourdieu's theory referring to the resources (e.g., linguistic resources) made available to students through social connections (e.g., in collaborative activities).

As reported earlier, the students shared their linguistic resources, thereby enabling them to exchange their social capital of connection in the collaborative classroom events for embodied and objectified linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1993). However sometimes the teachers noticed that “some students mute their mics, and they are not collaborating” (FSI\_TP2). The teachers assumed that this was probably due to material barriers such as technical issues, but could also be due to the identified issue: “in a typical classroom, I think they have a kind of shyness to talk” (FSI\_TP2), with “the unease of someone who is out of place” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151), ill at ease. Due to their durable dispositions the teachers knew that most students do not talk; that they have what they describe as ‘shy’ behaviour; however, with the re-designed curriculum the teachers knew that students ultimately “have to work collaboratively”. With only a few students in the group, some may feel comfortable to work this way, without the presence of the whole class and the teacher as onlooker.

To elaborate, given the teacher-student power relationship of a typical Sri Lankan classroom, students are generally reluctant to talk. When they are in an environment where they are less dominated by the power of others with more cultural capital (either actually or supposed), they feel free to talk and acquire objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Srin explained that “they do a lot of interaction talk among themselves in both languages, like Sinhala and English and in a mixture, but their final product is a written piece of work in the English language” (FSI\_TP1). Working in the collaborative groups, the students are able to bring their various linguistic resources to the learning activity and leverage their social capital to acquire additional objectified linguistic capital. The teachers therefore believed that it would be productive to continue the type of activities introduced for the purposes of this study which changed field structures at the interactional level and re-valued resources as capital. Gaya commented, “I have another nine more teaching sessions. So, when I do breakout room each and every day and they may be confident and free enough to talk to each other” (FSI\_TP2). The

teachers are seeing that they can minimise the symbolic violence the students often face by changing the regulative rules of the interactions in the field, as the teachers had done in the enactment of the re-designed curriculum by adding collaborative activities (Figure 6.1 *Sociological template for re-designing EGAP enactment with a collaborative learning curriculum*).

Social capital derives from the collective ownership of assets by a group of members in a “less institutionalized” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247) environment. As the above example indicates, when the students are in their own groups they feel more “confident and free” (FSI\_TP2) to interact with each other than when they are in the whole class. The activities create “less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247), as opposed to when the students are with the whole class, where they get the feeling that they are in the typical classroom which is a more “institutionalised” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247) or formal environment in which the teacher is present. In that environment the students feel “the unease of someone who is out of place” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151). This may be why the teacher revealed that even in the previous EGAP instructional curriculum, the students “love to work in groups” (FSI\_TP2).

With the re-designed instructional curriculum, Srini claimed that “the students were very willing to work with collaborative teams” (FSI\_TP1), explaining that “I put them into teams, before they could get to know each other. When they got into the teams, they formed their own groups in the team” (FSI\_TP1). This reflects Bourdieu’s concept of the “solidarity which makes them possible” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). The teachers were able to witness this “solidarity” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247): “I know the bond that they have when they produce their work on their homework pages” (FSI\_TP1). She reported on the extent to which the students had interacted and collaborated when they produced the objectified cultural capital of homework.

Srini had also noticed that the students had acquired very strong social capital: “They do not want to be removed from their groups” (FSI\_TP1), something that became apparent when she tried to reshuffle the groups: “I think they have got very comfortable with each other, working with each other, sharing their knowledge, and giving out, or writing out the assignments that has been assigned to them” (FSI\_TP1). Srini’s observations suggest that despite the fact that the students in the study presented with different levels of relevant capital, which normally creates symbolic violence, they were able to avoid that by acquiring social capital through their “solidarity”; they were thus able to accrue “the profits” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248) of classroom learning events. The teachers also assumed that “their bonds go beyond

the classroom, and that is something that we have created for them which is a lifelong thing.... it is going to be a lifelong thing when they go out in the world” (FSI\_TP1). This is good evidence that the re-designed instructional curriculum has helped the teachers to mitigate the symbolic violence that would have occurred through a “less institutionalised” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247) environment and to create a condition of “solidarity” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248), or a potential disposition to such, among the students which might continue beyond the EGAP setting.

Srini also reported noticing how the students’ “solidarity” functions in order to obtain “[t]he profits that accrue from membership” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248): “Before they submit [their homework], they always want the concurrence of all the other members, to say that whatever the final product is good before submitting” (FSI\_TP1). This indicates the profit of solidarity gained through membership (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248) of the group, with all members being responsible for taking care of any limitations of the group. As discussed earlier, these students come to EGAP with different levels of embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977); working collaboratively helps them to share capital in order to earn further objectified cultural capital together, at the same time potentially minimising the symbolic violence which can occur in the EGAP classroom (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In collaborative ESL learning environments, students have to depend on each other in order to share their embodied cultural capital and experiences, and to enjoy “membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). Gaya, for example, observed that “in each and every breakout room at least there is a very good student who is good in English” (FSI\_TP2) and that this helped the group to complete the given activity. This example reflects the concepts of misrecognition and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990); that is, knowing English is being misrecognised, with students who are good in English being labelled as ‘better’ or ‘good’ students and the others as ‘poor’ or ‘less’ proficient students. In this way some accumulate considerable symbolic capital and power for being ‘good in English’ in the ESL classroom as well as in Sri Lankan society. This is evidence of discrimination in the field, as demonstrated in Figure 6.1 (Luke, 2009); however, while experiencing symbolic violence by being exposed to interaction, the social capital that the students had built up had helped to overcome it (Luke, 2009).

The context of collaborative learning group activities allows learners to become members of collaborative working groups in which they have to share responsibilities in order to gain social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; 1993). They have to depend on each other, to share their knowledge and experiences. The students who have better competency in English gain more

recognition working with the other members of the ESL community, which demonstrates that social capital does not function independently, as it is mutually connected with other forms of capital such as cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986; 1993). Although the teachers had thought at the planning stage that they would not be able to re-make student habitus in relation to earning the objectified linguistic capital of the macro skills, during the enactment they were able to make changes in the students' activities that could indeed change the dispositions of the habitus - where the students expected to continue to act in these ways repeatedly during their EGAP experience (Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

By potentially changing the students' habitus in the new university ESL learning field, the re-designed curriculum was able to tap into students' *illusio* in their learning and to *invest* in the learning events of the field. The following section discusses this in more detail.

### **6.2.3 Creating room for student *investment* and development of students' *illusio***

*Illusio* creates a path to gather embodied cultural capital and to create, maintain and transform the meaning of it (Bourdieu, 1990; Noble, 2004). Being a "field specific" (p. 145) concept, *illusio* plays a vital role in the university ESL field as it influences students' *investment* in the field (Bourdieu, 2000). As detailed previously, the EGAP students did not have very positive initial attitudes towards acquiring the embodied linguistic capital of English because of their prior school experience; and the EGAP teachers had had to pay special attention to building up their interest. The following section details how the teachers approached and observed the issue of students' interest in learning ESL.

#### ***Regular attendees do well***

The teachers believed that it is important for students to "follow the syllabus very well" (FSI\_TP2) in order to acquire institutional cultural capital. Given what they knew about the students' existing attitudes towards acquiring the linguistic capital of English and their previous experience of teaching in the university ESL field, they were very concerned about students' participation in the classes. They had noticed there were a considerable number of "regular attendees" who "do well during classroom activities" (FSI\_TP2): "because when I ask questions, their responses are immediate" (FSI\_TP1); "these students are keen". There were also "a few students who cannot get across" due to material barriers, however, "those students also contribute by giving their answers in the chat box"; "these are keen students" who "are interested in learning" (FSI\_TP1). These students are *invested* in the learning events of the field;

their *illusio* causes them to get involved despite material barriers. It is also interesting to learn that “their answers are given voluntarily”, when more typically teachers would “have to force or ask for their names” (FSI\_TP1). These students are acting in ways that could, with repetition, become dispositions to learning that add new layers to the habitus previously formed in school of dispositions to *not* responding to the teacher in the ESL classroom. This is evidence, therefore, of the teachers re-making student habitus in the new ESL field in the university (Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

### ***The teachers are happy with the student collaboration***

The teachers believe that it is important for the students to work with positive attitudes; only then will they be interested in acquiring the cultural capital of English. They emphasised the fact that “most of the activities are challenging” (FSI\_TP2); however, as Gaya noted, “they participate very well, and they tried their best to come out with the correct answer” (FSI\_TP2). The teachers had not compromised the standards of the programmatic curriculum in their re-designed instructional curriculum; they were able to change student actions and help them to feel that investing in the field is worthwhile (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The result of this support was seeing that “they [the students] had tried their best to” earn objectified capital. Gaya further reported that “when I entered those breakout rooms... I heard that they were talking to each other and trying their best” (FSI\_TP2). The students were sharing their linguistic capital during their “collaboration”, trying their best (FSI\_TP2) to earn objectified linguistic capital by producing the texts expected by the teacher. They were accepting the challenge set them by the teachers, presumably because they had fallen in love (*illusio*) with the process of learning English and become *invested* in the experience (Bourdieu, 1996; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The teachers explained that the experience was “not just reading and writing”, as it had been at school. EGAP is a different field, and “logical thinking should be there” (FSI\_TP2). The students are now university students, acquiring linguistic capital to earn objectified knowledge in the academic field and to fit into the employment field, at the same time acquiring institutional cultural capital. The re-designed instructional curriculum had therefore focused on developing “students’ logical thinking and creativity”; and the teachers were “happy with the students’ collaboration” (FSI\_TP2).

Since the teachers had realised that the “less institutionalised” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247) environment enabled the students to collaborate, thereby leveraging a social capital of access to their peers’ linguistic resources, they set group homework assignments. Srimi in particular had utilised this approach with every lesson, and she spoke more about it than Gaya who had

commenced her homework assignments somewhat later in the teaching period. Srimi reported that “I have had very good results from my homework assignments more than from the book” (FSI\_TP1), noting that “they work collaboratively very well” (FSI\_TP1). She believes that group homework assignments provided better opportunities to apply the knowledge embedded in the cultural objects which the students “learned [to master] in the classroom” (FSI\_TP1). She has in effect customised the programmatic curriculum through her re-designed instructional curriculum (Deng & Luke, 2008). She explained in more detail:

Actually there is a mix and match of the assignment and a mix and match of the peers working together and sharing their knowledge ..... in their writing, listening, speaking and reading knowledge to produce whatever is expected of the team..... collaboration.  
[FSI\_TP1]

In Bourdieu’s terms, she is demonstrating how the students were able to share their cultural capital of macro skills to earn objectified capital from the homework assignments and to accrue embodied cultural capital that the programmatic curriculum expected them to acquire. She uses the phrase “mix and match” to show how the re-designed activities were able to match the knowledge embedded in the institutional cultural objects and the objectified cultural capital that the students earned. Srimi recognises that the students’ *illusio* has made them *invest* in the field; there is “something [that] is exciting, different and novel, but they use the material and the lesson they learned in the class” (FSI\_TP1). Overall, both teachers believed that the students are enjoying their work in the newly emerged subfield of collaborative learning as demonstrated in their “enthusiasm to find out what the homework activity is; enthusiasm to submit their assignment and get their feedback” (FSI\_TP1).

In contrast, when students talked about their ESL learning at school, they did not talk about getting teachers’ “feedback” and therefore were unaware of where they were standing. In the new university environment their *illusio* has created interest not only in earning objectified capital, but also in gaining “feedback” from the teachers: “They look forward to their feedback, because when I send them their feedback, they do have reactions to the feedback” (FSI\_TP1). The students’ reactions to the feedback indicate the extent to which they are now invested in the field; they are acting in ways quite different from their prior dispositions of aversion to being in the ESL classroom, sedimented into their prior habitus by their school experience. Now they are keen to know their position in the English field: “some would say, there are mistakes in our assignment, some would say our assignment has been good” (FSI\_TP1). The teachers’ observations of how the students are behaving suggest that the re-designed instructional curriculum is attending to aspects of the programmatic curriculum in a

meaningful manner, both by incorporating and building the students' cultural capital and by reforming their institutional habitus (Deng, 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a).

The following section presents responses to RQ3.

#### **6.2.4 A response to Research Question 3**

The analyses presented in sections 6.2.1 - 6.2.4 have provided evidence relevant to RQ3<sup>17</sup> which was concerned with how EGAP teachers in a Sri Lankan university appraised the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes. The findings have suggested that the teachers have had some success in mitigating the gap between the programmatic curriculum and the classroom level curriculum by adjusting their teaching approach. They have provided activities whereby students would be able to actively participate and acquire and display the embodied linguistic capital of English required of them. That capital in turn enables them to accrue the objectified linguistic capital of oral and written English proficiency while experiencing positive emotions rather than the destructive effects of symbolic violence which make students 'shy' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). With respect to the emotional and intellectual action of the students, the re-designed curriculum was attending to aspects of the programmatic curriculum in a meaningful manner, thereby, contributing to the institutional cultural capital of the students, and enabling action that might, with repetition, become sedimented as new layers of disposition in the students' learning habitus. The teachers had also noticed that the "less institutionalised" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247) environment of the collaborative learning events provides better opportunities for collaboration and minimises the potential for symbolic violence that might be expected in a more institutionalised environment in a conventional learning habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The following section presents the perspectives of the students.

### **6.3 Experiences and perceptions of EGAP students learning ESL in the collaborative learning environment**

This section reports on findings which respond to Research Question 4 which is concerned with how EGAP students in a Sri Lankan university appraised the introduction of collaborative learning activities to their classes. The post-activity focus group data used to

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<sup>17</sup> RQ 3. How did EGAP teachers in a Sri Lankan university appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes?



answer this question were produced with 12 students: Lakshika, Dilukshi, Harini, Rasika, Tharosh, Thamara, Bhashini, Nurasha, Gihan, Janaka, Pradeep, and Thushari, who expressed their views about being in a new learning environment where they had opportunities to work with their peers, even though they were learning via an online learning platform. The following four sub-sections discuss the students' viewpoints and their reported experiences in relation to learning collaboratively. Post-activity or final focus-groups are indicated as (FFG).

### **6.3.1 Development of students' *illusio* in learning English**

It will be recalled from Chapter 5 that when the students shifted from the field of the school ESL classroom to that of the university EGAP classroom they realised that there were significant differences between the two fields; and that the re-designed curriculum enactment reregulated the field and provided opportunities for the students to re-make their student habitus (see Figure 6.1: *Sociological template for re-designing EGAP instructional curriculum*) (Luke, 2009). This seemed to be changing their learning dispositions; they appear to have fallen in love (*illusio*) with learning English in the new context of the university ESL classroom (Bourdieu, 1996).

#### ***Students' attitudes and learning academic English***

Learning English in the university classroom plays a vital role in the academic life of Sri Lankan undergraduates. When students register for a degree programme they learn that there is the mandatory institutional cultural capital of English proficiency that they have to acquire; they need "to complete the English course to obtain the degree" (Bhashini). This is a new requirement, and their interest in acquiring the capital is crucial. They would have entered the new field of ESL anticipating a similar classroom to that which was familiar from their school field; but they had a substantially different experience, which resulted in a deeper *illusio* towards English learning (Bourdieu, 1984). I now discuss how that *illusio* was developed in the newly emerged (for the university) field of EGAP, enabled by the collaborative activities introduced into the instructional curriculum.

As detailed previously, given the symbolic power accorded to English in the field of higher education in Sri Lanka, students coming with less cultural linguistic capital may step into the new field with a significant degree of uncertainty due to existing negative emotions triggered by *symbolic power* (Bourdieu, 1977). "At the beginning we didn't have a trust that how we are going to follow the EGAP course" (Bhashini); they reported feeling "shy and had a feeling of fear thinking that EGAP will be very difficult and won't be able to complete" (Bhashini). Most began with such negative emotions, fearing that they "will not be able to talk,

not be able to understand anything” (Bhashini); “Sometimes I felt like I need to give up the course as English would be very difficult for me” (Janaka). Some were “frustrated” (Janaka & Tharosh) due to the disposition that they had from learning ESL in school, due to “the unease of someone who is out of place” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151). One student articulated his ESL learning experiences at school as follows:

Tell you the truth earlier learning English was something like ‘*nayata andukola wage*’ [Sinhala proverb to mean that something that cannot be tolerated at all], even the teachers at school did not give any attention to us, but now it is totally different as the EGAP teacher even call us by names, so that creates an enthusiasm to learn English.  
[FFG\_Janaka]

Reference to the Sinhala proverb, which indicates that a cobra (*nayata*) cannot tolerate the smell of leaves of a particular tree (*andu kola*), demonstrates the extent to which some students had hated learning English at school; however, now there are clear changes in disposition, with students ‘falling in love’ with learning English in the new field. The students appreciated that they had the teachers’ attention individually (“the teachers called them by name”), which was something they didn’t have at school. They felt more at ease and more confident: “Earlier I did not believe that I will be able to follow EGAP in this manner, but now I feel that I am learning very actively and effectively and there is no rush also as such” (Bhashini). At the beginning they felt “very shy and fearful”, thinking that they would be required “to talk only in English”; however they became more “comfortable to work in the groups as the teacher did not pressurise” (Bhashini) them, and because she was very approachable. By listening to one another and responding to the teacher's efforts and support, the collaborative learning established a new form of institutional habitus that made students more cooperative and more active. Their behaviour changed, and new dispositions for learning in this form were shaped. This demonstrates that the students’ *illusio* had strengthened their interest in learning English that was part of their learner habitus (see Figure 6.1: *Sociological template for re-designing EGAP instructional curriculum*). This can be considered as a ‘re-making of habitus’ because the teachers had created new positions which the students could occupy; this occurred as the teachers re-regulated the field by re-making their own teacher habitus from a conventional to a more collaborative one, in a different teaching-learning environment through the re-design of the instructional curriculum (Dooley, forthcoming; Musofer & Lingard, 2020; Luke, 2009; Wacquant, 2014).

The change in disposition and habitus has resulted in improved attendance. Unlike previous EGAP cohorts, the majority of the students in the study attended classes regularly,

obviously placing higher value on ESL learning - or at least on the online EGAP classes with their collaborative activities. This improved attendance results from increased positivity and interest in learning English; “unlike in the other classes we get into a smaller group to work and feel good when working as a team” (Thamara); they enjoy the fact that they are “very active in the collaborative groups” (Bhashini); with their changed *illusio* they “learn very enthusiastically” and “feel to attend all the classes without missing any of them” (Janaka). Janaka explained in more detail his shift in *illusio*: “now if someone gives a call in English, I like very much to answer to that even I don’t know English very well”, explaining that he “starts the call by telling the caller that my English is not very good and there can be some mistakes” (Janaka). Janaka’s commitment to *illusio* can be seen here (Bourdieu, 1984; 1996): he knows his position in the hierarchy of the field but he tries his “best to talk in English” nonetheless, whereas in previous classes if he heard “that there is a call in English” he “used to run away ... “personally, I feel that I have improved my English and can talk without fear or shyness” (Janaka). It appears that overall students who had felt “fear” and “shyness” in acquiring objectified oral linguistic capital had changed their negative emotional habitus and “created a desire” to talk; now they actually look for opportunities. This evidence supports the thesis that habitus, which reflects internalised dispositions, can make an impact on students’ interests and *investment* in their learning (Bourdieu, 1984; 1996).

Most the students were of the opinion that “from the first day itself the EGAP classes were not boring” (Rasika, Harini, Nurasha & Pradeep). Nurasha described how her emotional habitus shifted from the thoughts she had on joining the collaborative group activities:

I join the class thinking that I’m not going to take part in the activities actively as they will be boring. But when joined the group activities I realised what I thought was totally wrong, because those activities were really interesting. [FFG\_Nurasha]

Although Nurasha was a student who entered the field with sufficient linguistic capital, she was not interested in learning English at school: “learning English at the school classroom ... it was really boring” (IFG\_Nurasha). She therefore entered the university field also thinking that she was going to have the same boring experience; however she immediately experienced working in the newly emerged collaborative field as “interesting”; her assumption had been wrong. She now “engage[d] in the activities very happily from the first day itself” (Nurasha). With repetition, this type of action has the potential to change her habitus to match the new field, a process driven by *illusio* (Bourdieu, 1984; 1996).

Given their durable dispositions, the EGAP teachers had predicted that “regular attendance” of the students was going to be an issue; but almost all the students “have been to all the EGAP classes”, except for a few who had missed one or “a part of a class” due to material barriers such as “technical” or “technological” issues. One student expressed his regrets, “but I feel like if I could have stayed other 2 hours also on that day would have been better” as he “was able to be in the class only for an hour on the first day” (Rasika). Given the strength of the students’ current *illusio*, it seems that “unless [there is] an unavoidable circumstance”, they “don’t miss a class” (Bhashini & Gihan). They are keen to be in the class and are interested and motivated in acquiring embodied linguistic capital in the new field. The students’ behaviour suggests potentially new dispositions to learning English (Bourdieu, 1990).

In practising writing skills, for example, all students tried to “actively participate”. They “always jot down the relevant and important points” (Nurasha), “take notes then and there” (Janaka), “write down the difficult words and look for the meaning of them” (Gihan) and “engage in the activities as the teacher asks” (Nurasha). The new field had given them a “totally different experience”. Nurasha commented that “normally we do not pay much attention to listening, this is a new experience for me as we have to comprehend the listening text well in order to complete the activities” (Nurasha). The students had understood their position in the new field and tried to take measures to overcome their limitations. Janaka, for example, explained that “if I come across an unknown word, I look for the meaning and try to understand”; and Pradeep reported that “I listen to the listening texts twice because cannot comprehend them at once”. The agents have noticed the changing rules of the field and have accepted the ‘rules of the game’ in the new field; they are taking steps to re-make their habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

Their opportunity to practise the macro skills in English in the collaborative group situation has made the students feel it is possible for them to learn English, creating a desire for them to engage actively in learning. Their habitus, reflecting internalised dispositions, impacts on their interest and desire to acquire embodied linguistic capital and earn the relevant objectified capital. As agents accepting the ‘rules of the game’ and feeling it is worthwhile to engage in it in order to obtain its benefits, the students have accepted the conditions of the group activities and made efforts to improve themselves by active participation (Bourdieu, 1996; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The following section discusses students’ strong investment in EGAP classroom activities through their *illusio*.

### 6.3.2 Strong investment in EGAP classroom learning at university

As detailed above, the re-designed instructional curriculum seems to have created interest. Being in the field of the collaborative learning environment, *illusio* has inclined the students to accept the ‘rules of the game’ of ESL learning in the university field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Examples included above show them taking initiatives to achieve their objectives, while changing their habitus.

#### *Changing habitus*

Having entered the field with different levels of the relevant capital, the students had realised what their position was in the new field (Figure 6.1). Yet given the welcoming nature of the field, their *illusio* led them to *invest* in the classroom events of the field as structured by the collaborative instructional curriculum. Most were initially “reluctant” to get actively involved in the classroom activities, due to the ‘shy’ behaviour generated by the experience of symbolic violence in the school English classroom (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). However, as time progressed, “most of the students are involved in the collaborative learning and gradually improving” and had become “more interested in moving out with the peers in the groups than earlier” (Nurasha). Bhashini made a similar comment: “our active participation has also been increasing”, and Thushari described her experience as “when the peers get together and started to talk, gradually it reduced my fear to talk, and working together makes us to study easier rather than working alone”. Nurasha predicted that “there will be more interactions in the future in the group activities and in the class”, indicating that the students were gradually engaging in new behaviours, taking new actions and possibly acquiring dispositions that would over time become sedimented into their habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). From their arrival, when they did not want to be in the ESL classroom, the students seemed to have (re)-positioned themselves in the new university field. With the reregulation of the field, they are re-making their learner habitus and adapting “to the new logic of practice” (Musofer & Lingard, 2020, p. 388).

As the EGAP included all 4 macro skills in the course, the students realised that acquiring embodied linguistic capital of English is more advanced and challenging than their previous experience in school. In particular, learning listening and speaking was now “totally a new experience”. Evidence shows them *investing* in the new field, as Nurasha indicates when she says, “usually I go through the listening texts and the worksheets before coming to the class” (Nurasha). She pre-prepares for the work - something she would not have done at school. The students had realised that the embodied linguistic capital that they had least accumulated was that of oracy, so “we all focus more on speaking in the breakout rooms” (Janaka). They have

identified their lack of proficiency in this area so have committed to focusing more on it. They realise that the university is the only field where they get to earn objectified oral linguistic capital; so they are trying their “best” to gain the benefit from the new field by acting counter to their established dispositions – which saw them avoiding being involved in language learning opportunities. Given their newly strengthened *illusio*, they show evidence of moving towards habitus change in the re-designed instructional curriculum (Musofer & Lingard, 2020). Bhashini articulated her changed orientation as follows:

At the beginning my focus on the speaking was very less, but after working in the group activities I have improved a lot. Now I know that I have to ignore my shyness and get engaged in speaking. [FFG\_Bhashini]

As the teachers explained, the students usually try to pre-empt symbolic violence by being ‘shy’ and avoiding speaking, not making themselves vulnerable to judgment from their peers for displaying a low level of objectified oral linguistic capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bhashini admits, “actually, during the class, that is in the main class, my speaking is very less”, indicating how she protects herself from symbolic violence. In small groups, however, students feel more comfortable; they are able to (re)position themselves in the new field; “it takes the conjunction of disposition and field, subjective capacity and objective possibility, habitus and social space (or field) to produce a given conduct or expression” (Wacquant, 2014, P. 5).

*Illusio*, closely linked to field and habitus, has brought the students to the point of acceptance of the reality that they have to pay the “fullest attention” in their ‘game’ of ESL learning in order to benefit from the game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). They are *invested* in the field and believe it to be worthwhile for them to get involved. They are conscious of time constraints: “Because we have only two hours as the EGAP online sessions, it is important that we pay our full attention” (Nurasha). Awareness of the limited time frame and of the importance of learning English has made them pay “total attention”. Pradeep also pointed out that it is important “to pay my total attention, otherwise it is a waste of time that cannot be recovered” (Pradeep). Paying attention is now easier it seems: as the class is very interactive; it is not boring. “So, I can pay my total attention during whole two hours” (Bhashini); others too had “paid more attention in a group activity than doing an individual activity” (Rasika & Lakshika), being able to interact with others. Lakshika made a good point: “when working alone we feel lazy, but when working with the friends we are working enthusiastically, and it helps to pay our total attention to the activity; and Tharosh commented that “when it comes to a group activity, the responsibilities are shared and can pay more attention to the part that I have to play without

a stress”. The re-designed instructional curriculum seems to have enabled the field of EGAP to better build the institutional cultural capital of the students while also potentially re-forming their habitus through actions that could sediment as new dispositions to learning. By their curricular re-design, then, the teachers seem to have been able to re-make learner habitus in the newly emerged field (Musofer & Lingard, 2020; Wacquant, 2014).

The students also spoke about material barriers that impacted on their commitment or *illusio* (Noble, 2004; Noble & Watkins, 2003; Threadgold, 2019). For example, they are used to working in a physical classroom, this is the first time most of them are learning online; and this can create challenges: “unlike studying in a real classroom, there are certain disturbances when learning at home, for example, at least a dog barks and that can distract a little and can change our attention in the lesson” (Pradeep). Two students in the group connected to the online classes from their workplaces (Janaka & Gihan), but they too reported paying “fullest attention” unless they had to attend to something work-related. This demonstrates commitment or *illusio*, and *investment* in learning English in the new field (Bourdieu, 1996).

### ***Interested in the course content and classroom activities in the newly emerged field***

The students had realised the significance not only of differences in the new field but also in the nature of the cultural objects associated with it. They described the topics used in the EGAP course as “interesting” and “not boring, because they are different to each other” (Thamara). Gihan commented “these lessons are done with some audio and video material” and “these features help to keep attracted to the lessons”; while Thushari noted that “these topics are good, because these are not only relevant to the EGAP course, but they are also important for our life”, a comment supported by Tharosh, “... they are very practical topics”. Janaka observed that “there are some topics that are helpful for our future such as time management, distance education” which are directly relevant to PUSL students. These various commentaries indicate that the students feel that it is worth spending time on their learning; that is represents not only an investment in acquiring embodied linguistic capital in English, but also in accumulating different cultural capital needed for their academic life at the university. And they are finding the investment enjoyable: “we get attracted to the lessons while we are doing them” (Janaka), and “they make us interested in continuing the next classes” (Bashini).

When commenting on learning activities, the students were appreciative: “activities are good, because all the activities lead ... to learn something new” (Dilukshi); they “get exposed to new vocabulary through these activities” (Tharosh); and “we work together, and the teacher also provides some extra videos for us to watch and listen, so it increases the interest of us”

(Lakshika). In effect the students are accessing additional cultural objects as well as the institutional cultural ones provided and they enjoy working with them in ways that involve all four macro-skills: “enjoy engaging in the activities, because get reading, writing activities, especially enjoy by doing listening activities” (Nurasha). In school they only had reading and writing activities. The comments confirm that the instructional curriculum is connecting with the programmatic and institutional curricula as the students are engaging with a wider range of material and topics that are not only related to EGAP learning but also to the use of English beyond the classroom (Deng, 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008; Dooley, forthcoming; Doyle, 1992a). They further indicate that the teachers have added extra material and activities into their curriculum in order to increase their interest. They appear to particularly appreciate activities related to their practical life being used in the curriculum, which they see as being important (Deng, 2010; 2018). This was in accord with the programmatic and institutional curriculum as laid down in the aims and objectives.

With the re-designed instructional curriculum the newly emerged field of the collaborative learning environment had provided a new experience for students with the re-regulation of the field. The students believe that they “can complete a group activity more successfully than an individual activity” as they “work enthusiastically with a motivation” (Lakshika). They share their cultural capital with their peers and try their “best to complete all the activities” (Thamara & Rasika). Believing that it is worthwhile for them to do their “best” in the field, “we never gave up any activity” (Rasika), “we all work collectively while sharing our knowledge” (Thamara). They further demonstrated their *illusio* saying that “there are no postponements in group activities as we need to work together, somehow the work that we need to do will be completed before the meeting of the group” (Dilukshi). Individual preparation for group assignments is completed on time before they met to finalise the task. The students clearly feel this is an *investment* which is worth the effort; engaging in the activity will enable them to obtain the benefits of the embodied linguistic cultural capital offered by the instructional curriculum. This is the students’ *illusio*, “...the tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game and as practical master of its rules”, and “taken in and by the game...and worth pursuing” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 116-117).

Acquiring the linguistic capital of English is a game for the students, and they have accepted the ‘rules of the game’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992); and they have to work hard to acquire the relevant capital. Their willingness to do so, and the effort that they have made, are demonstrated by their *illusio* and their *investment* in the field: “It gives us also a feeling of that we had done a sacrifice to achieve a good result, so we feel very happy when we are being



praised by the teacher” (Lakshika). The students see themselves getting rewards for their *investment* in the field, and feel it is worth their while to commit to the field. They also believe that “when you do an activity alone you do the activity and do not think beyond that, but when working in a group you need to think more” (Thushari). This comment reflects the value of social capital; working together is more effective and “it is not very stressful” (Thushari).

The students also talked about how their investment can take them beyond the classroom. Some students talked about the “group assignments” given as “homework” (Thamara, Lakshika & Rasika), they commented on how these collaborative group home assignments represented a means to acquiring embodied cultural capital through the interaction with their peers, in addition to earning objectified cultural capital. “When doing homework activities, especially when doing activities as group work, we discuss some of the grammar points and get ourselves corrected” (Thamara). This is evidence of how collaboration can facilitate ‘peer inculcation’, helping students to correct themselves and each other and learn. In general, they were appreciative of the collaborative approach, seeing it as getting “new experience; and this type of activities are more interesting rather than just sitting and learning in a conventional classroom” (Thamara). Overall, the students appear to have accepted the ‘rules of the game’ and the ‘feel for the game’ in the newly emerged field (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and are (re)positioning their student habitus (Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

They talked about their experiences and perceptions of entering a new ESL field at the university classroom as detailed in the following section.

### **6.3.3 Entering a new ESL field in the university classroom**

Acquiring sufficient embodied linguistic capital (English) is vital in the academic habitus of Sri Lankan undergraduates. Once the students enter the university field they become aware of the requirement to accrue sufficient embodied linguistic capital and earn objectified linguistic capital too, as the university courses are offered in the medium of English and it is compulsory for them to complete the English course to obtain institutional cultural capital at the end of their degree programme. Though the students were supposed to have acquired the relevant linguistic capital of English at school, they were not able to do so for many reasons, as discussed throughout this thesis. Acquiring embodied linguistic capital in the university field was therefore a challenge.

#### ***Students are not familiar with academic linguistic capital***

There were a considerable number of students who “withdrew from the Soft Ware Engineering programme due to the difficulty that they had faced in working in English” (Janaka). Once the students in this study arrived in the university field they realised that they were not equipped with the relevant cultural capital, although they had obtained the other academic institutional capital required to register for the degree programme. They admitted that “we can’t understand when others talk in English, and we feel shy to talk in English” (Janaka). There are two issues here: one is that these students were having problems earning objectified linguistic capital due to their lack of embodied capital; the other relates to their ‘shy behaviour’, which results from symbolic violence resulting from occupying a low place in the English medium field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Therefore, Janaka reported on “the students who had withdrawn from the programme, that is around 98% [were] due to the lack of English, because they cannot understand English” (Janaka). These students had struggled to align with the institutional mandate to work in English as the medium of instruction; and because of this, they were denied access to higher education. Janaka elaborated: “They have to work hard if they need to reach the future dreams with a good pay” (Janaka). The young students in this study have their own dreams, to obtain good employment “with a good pay” (Janaka); dreams which require good proficiency in English. Bourdieu (1984) references this symbolic capital, pointing out that, “social order is progressively inscribed in people’s minds through ‘cultural products’ including systems of education, language, judgements, values, methods of classification and activities of everyday life” (p. 471). The students who have better English proficiency benefit in the field of higher education; and when they complete their higher education, with higher levels of English proficiency, they will benefit again, being better positioned in the economic field. This is an example of the misrecognition (Bourdieu, 1977) of English language proficiency, which is accorded significant symbolic value or capital in local and international fields of work.

The students who remained in the EGAP class also faced a challenge in acquiring academic linguistic capital in English. These students “didn’t have a proper idea of what EGAP was at the beginning” as they “thought it is the same English, which have been learning throughout, will be going to learn” (Gihan) in the university field; but the students quickly realised that “what we have been learning is not this English” (Nurasha) and the purpose of acquiring linguistic capital at school was different, as it was “just to pass the examinations” (Nurasha). Even though Nurasha “thought I knew things to a certain extent” she then “realised I do not know some of them properly”:

at the very first day I thought, ah! this is just English, so I had feelings like, do I need to attend to class or not, why should I go to the class because I know English.  
[FFG\_Nurasha]

Nurasha had thought that she knew most aspects of the English language; she had not realised that they were going to learn academic English in the EGAP class. As the teachers explained the aims and objectives of the course on the first day, the students realised that the purpose of acquiring English at university is different to that operating at the school level. They quickly realised that they were going to learn something new: “Now I learn new techniques and skills day by day, therefore, I feel like I need to engage in EGAP learning more and more” (Nurasha). This novelty and change is associated with the students’ *illusio* in acquiring academic linguistic capital in the new field (Bourdieu, 1996, Noble, 2004). The students had recognised the new sub-field that emerged from the field of ESL, that of learning academic English; and they became more engaged.

### ***Negative emotions and the defensive behaviours of the students***

Emotions are generated by habitus, and further triggered as a result of the impact of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1984). In the Sri Lankan context the English language represents significant linguistic capital. Due to its symbolic value, it is misrecognised (Bourdieu, 1990). Students who are rich in linguistic capital enjoy superior status in the field, whereas students with less capital will be less privileged (Bourdieu, 1990). Evidence of this imbalance emerged in the data. For example, for many students speaking English in front of the entire class makes them “feel shy and fear when think that [they] may go wrong while talking” (Dilukshi). Many reported that they “did not talk because of the fear” (Thushari & Bhashini), because they feel that they get de-positioned. This was particularly the case at the beginning due to the influence of their previous habitus and the unfamiliar online learning environment with totally new members in the field. Consequently at the beginning of the course, practising speaking and interacting was for most of the students suppressed by their negative emotions, even though the students knew the importance of it. As Janaka explained, “actually, I wanted to talk, I was switching on and off the mic as I too had a desire to talk, but I was nervous and had some fear at the beginning”.

With regard to reading skills, although the teachers had provided opportunities to read aloud during class, the less proficient students had tried to keep silent - not because they did not want to be involved in the activity, but because they were “scared” to expose themselves,

thinking that they “may go wrong”. “I like to do the aloud reading but bit scared that I may go wrong. So, do silent reading while another one does the aloud reading” (Janaka). Hence, to avoid symbolic violence, the students waited for the more proficient students to perform in front of the class and tried to follow the activity silently.

Most of the students reported feeling “shy, fear and nervous” when they have to talk in class (Rasika, Harini, Dilukshi & Harini), with some confessing to not talking “unless the teacher calls by the name” (Gihan), or “asks a question” (Thushari & Pradeep). Once they have acquired the relevant embodied capital, they are more confident to display it: “If I am sure about the answer, I provide the answer, otherwise keep quiet” (Bhashini). Nurasha, having more developed language proficiency, commented that “sometimes I try to keep quiet, I want to give a chance to the others. If another voice doesn’t come out in answering, I speak out”. This is a different situation: Nurasha is trying to help others by providing the opportunity for them to earn objectified linguistic capital in the field. She is one of the students with greater relevant capital which fits to what is valued in the field, and therefore feels more comfortable. All the students, however, have improved “as the time progresses” by taking advantage of opportunities offered to (re)-position themselves more powerfully in the ESL field (Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

As previously noted, another difference between school and university observed by the students was to do with the power relation between the teacher and themselves. Harini mentioned that “if the teacher asks a question suddenly, I get frightened”, as students do not expect the teacher to ask questions, and they are afraid to talk to the teacher, who has much more cultural capital, therefore they feel embarrassed if they “go wrong” (Harini). Even if they need a “clarification” they are “scared to talk to the teacher” (Harini). This was mentioned also by the teachers as one of the serious issues that they face in their teaching, and which they had tried to address by mitigating students’ negative emotions through the re-designed instructional curriculum. The students appreciate the change: “It is good to engage in the group activities as we get an opportunity to exchange our ideas and can get clarifications ... since we feel all group members are equal, we can talk anything and solve our issues easily by discussing them with all. [FFG\_Lakshika]. The students clearly feel more comfortable interacting with their peers rather than talking to the teacher. They are all ‘subordinators’ “equal” in terms of their power relations (Bourdieu, 1992).

The above examples provide insights to negative emotions generated by the habitus, triggered as a result of symbolic power, with the students feeling deficit in linguistic capital, less proficient in English (Bourdieu, 1977). However avoiding engagement in class lessened as

the students got used to working together instead of working individually, to sharing their linguistic capital, and inculcating each other in their knowledge. This shift is examined in more detail in the following section.

#### **6.3.4 Sharing and inculcation of capital in the new field**

Relevant capital sharing with the teacher as well as with peers is crucial in acquiring linguistic capital in the classroom, especially in a collaborative environment. The sharing and inculcation of capital reflects the extent to which the students are earning social capital which is convertible into embodied linguistic capital and objectified linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1993; 2006).

The following section reports on the students' views on their interactions with the teacher as well as their peers during their classroom activities and homework assignments.

#### ***Prefer to be in “an interactive classroom” instead of a “conventional classroom”***

According to the categorisation of learner habitus in the sociological template for re-designing EGAP instructional curriculum (Figure: 6.1), it is apparent that most of the students had relatively low levels of embodied linguistic capital of English proficiency, and as a result were very cautious about their oral presentations in front of the entire class. With the change in organisation of the field - from the entire class to the sub-field of collaborative groups with only a few members - the students felt more comfortable to interact and learn. Learning in a collaborative field was a totally new experience, having “never done group activities previously and this is the first time” (Rasika); “I feel the difference between learning in these two different classrooms” (Pradeep). While they talked about their previous learning habitus in terms of negative experiences, they felt that “from the first day itself the EGAP classes were not boring” (Pradeep) – a strong testimony to the re-designed instructional curriculum. The students believed that they could bring more to the field when working together than working alone: “when working collaboratively we can bring all our ideas to one point, so there is an advantage, and we can learn things that we don't know individually” (Rasika). In general, agents who bring more cultural capital are those who can then “enjoy” being in the field due to their capital advantage (Bourdieu, 1985); but most of these students had insufficient relevant capital in the field, therefore “unlike working alone, when working together we can improve our knowledge and it is enjoyable” (Lakshika). The re-designed instructional curriculum has helped the students to reduce the symbolic violence which they would have experienced in a conventional

classroom (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), and they are clearly looking forward to continuing collaborative learning: “We would like to engage in more group activities in the rest of the course” (Dilukshi). The experience of bringing their individual learning resources as capital to the collaborative classroom, and sharing capital, was productive (Bourdieu, 1990).

### ***Feeling more connected to the peers now than at the beginning***

In the re-designed instructional curriculum, re-regulation of the field with collaborative activities had allowed the students to re-make their learner habitus by shifting from reluctance to enthusiasm for interacting with each other (Musofer & Lingard, 2020). They were subsequently able to build social capital through the ‘solidarity’ of the group members (Bourdieu, 1993). Students pointed out, for example, that “more than with all the students in the class we are more connected with the group members because sometimes when we are in the class with all, we may not talk as we feel that something will go wrong” (Thamara & Dilukshi). Not wanting to experience the symbolic violence that comes from exposing their lower proficiency levels to the entire class, in a small group they “feel free to talk... even if they go wrong, the other members correct” (Thamara). In other words, they share capital and inculcate each other into that which is valued. There were many comments from students along the lines of feeling “more connected with each other” (Thamara), and “more comfortable to work together” (Dilukshi) in a smaller collaborative group than with a whole class. Some described how this took time, how “at the beginning” they “did not feel much of the connection to the group” (Bhashini & Gihan), “as only a few of the students talked” (Gihan). Further along, Bhashini comments that “gradually I have been feeling the connection to the group members and it makes easier to complete the activity” (Bhashini). After the students had worked collaboratively for a few classes, they “have come to know each other better and are more connected to each other than earlier” (Bhashini). Gihan commented that “now at least our group members express their ideas even in Sinhala” (Gihan), while Nurasha observed that “we are more connected to the members than at the beginning as most of them are moving out with each other and it seems that they have improved compared to the beginning” (Nurasha).

Nurasha recalled her experiences at the outset of the course: “at the beginning during breakout rooms very rarely they interacted with me, but now I have a fair interaction with them” (Nurasha). The initial situation reflected the experience of symbolic violence: the students with insufficient embodied linguistic cultural capital had internalised the negative views that they imagined the more advanced student, Nurasha, might have of them (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). As a result, at the beginning they were “reluctant to interact” with her, because she was

good at English. After engaging with the re-designed curriculum the students were able to make changes to their personal habitus (re-make learner habitus) and adjust themselves according to the logics of the newly emerged sub-field (Musofer & Lingard, 2020). They were no longer afraid of interacting with Nurasha.

These comments indicate that the students were getting “more connected in group activities than working individually in a normal class” (Lakshika). They were gradually improving their connections with each other. As members of the smaller groups they have become members of the ESL social capital network. With this membership comes a willingness to share responsibilities among members of the collaborative groups; and the basis of solidarity is created by “[t]he profits which accrue from membership in a group” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 246).

### ***Acquiring embodied linguistic capital through capital sharing with less institutionalised relationships***

As noticed in the previous discussion, “some students do not talk at all in the main classroom” (Thushari & Pradeep); they may not like to make themselves vulnerable to judgement from the entire class for having low English proficiency. With re-regulation of the field through the re-designed instructional curriculum (Figure 6.1) these students now had opportunities to interact with each other as there were only a few students and they “feel comfortable” to display and share their capital in a such field (Luke, 2009). As Nurasha explained, “breakout room activities would be the only chance that they get to talk, because they might be shy to speak in front of everyone ... I noticed during the last group activity, there was one male student who does not talk in the class, but he has an ability to talk, and he spoke out well” (Nurasha). One of the teachers had previously commented that some of the male students do not interact in the main classroom but were active in the group because they may be feeling less threatened in relation to talking in front of a few members than to the whole group. This is a positive change from their previous habitus from school, where they would not have interacted with the teacher or their peers during classroom activities. These students are trying to pre-empt symbolic violence, as Nurasha noted that “some of them may be feeling if I go wrong what might others think”. As a student who has greater linguistic cultural capital than others Natasha suggests that “if the others in the group also interact properly, maybe even in Sinhala, then can help them in completing the activities”. This is an instance of Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of a “fish in the water” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127): Nurasha has relevant capital which fits the habitus of the field, and allows her to feel more comfortable in exchanging relevant capital in the field, whereas other students may feel less comfortable, and

would have refrained from interacting in English, although they were present in the class or a particular group.

The findings also show that in the collaborative environment, social capital was created through “less institutionalised relationships” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247) as the re-designed instructional curriculum had adapted the programmatic curriculum in a manner that was suited to the other pedagogical possibilities of the context (Deng & Luke, 2008). As a result, the students felt that they “got more involved in EGAP learning work collaboratively” (Thamara, Janaka & Harini). The breakout rooms and the homework assignments groups provide the students with a “less institutionalised” environment than that offered in the main classroom, because the power-relation is “equal”, and all are “subordinators” of the field are the “superior” agents, as the teacher is not there (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). In this context the students feel that “we have the autonomy, that is to express ourselves freely .... we have the freedom to discuss the things with the others” (Nurasha & Dilukshi). Working in this way affords the students social capital, that is “the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247), in addition to the cultural capital that the individuals have in the field. The students therefore think that “we can produce a better answer because it is a collection of ideas that we had put together” (Dilukshi, Thamara & Tharosh). With respect to “the profits” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248) of the field, the students believe that they “can come out with a creative answer” (Dilukshi), and “[t]he profits that accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity that makes them possible” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). As Janaka explained, “I felt that I will be able to learn my English by getting the help from the others as I got an opportunity to interact with the others”. Janaka is identifying “the profits” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248) that he had earned in the field: “... now of course I have more confident than earlier and feel I can do this because I can comprehend lots of things more than earlier” (Janaka). This indicates the potential of social capital, and how effectively the individual is mobilised by it (Bourdieu, 1986) and in return how it helps the students in this study to increase their embodied and objectified linguistic cultural capital.

The students spoke about peer learning, that is, about “sharing knowledge” (Bhashini) through social capital. For example, Bhashini explained that “working in a group we correct each other, for example, if there are some grammar mistakes in my answer, others point them out and get myself corrected by them”. These students not only share their cultural capital with each other, but also those with better linguistic capital help others to acquire that embodied capital (Bourdieu, 1986). There was evidence that as the majority of the students did not have



relevant capital to play the game, they waited for someone who had better capital to initiate it: “I wait for another one to start to talk, then we get together and complete the task” (Bhashini & Thushari). These students know their position in the field, and they try to get help from peers with better linguistic capital in order to minimise the possibility of symbolic violence. Once they were able to build ‘solidarity’, they were able to gain the ‘benefit’ of social capital by completing the activity with a “better answer” (Bhashini & Thushari) than if they had been working alone. The re-designed instructional curriculum had allowed the students to share linguistic cultural capital while building up social capital to accrue embodied linguistic capital and to earn objectified capital - and to do so in a better fashion than if they had worked alone in a conventional classroom.

The students were able to experience positive emotions by acting differently from their established habitus and beginning to acquire new dispositions to learning English (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990). In the sub-field of the collaborative environment instead of the traditional classroom they are able to build positive emotions through sharing relevant cultural capital amongst themselves and inculcating each other into it. The re-designed instructional curriculum had considered the peculiarities of the students as learners, making necessary adjustments in the programmatic curriculum (Deng, 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008; Doyle, 1992a; 1992b). This consequently had increased the students’ desire to learn English, and strengthened their belief (*doxa*) that it is worthwhile for them to commit to their learning and acquire necessary linguistic capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

The following section discusses experiences and perceptions of the EGAP students learning English in the collaborative learning environment.

#### **6.3.5 A response to Research Question 4**

The analyses presented in sections 6.3.1 - 6.3.4 have provided evidence relevant to RQ4<sup>18</sup> which was concerned with how EGAP students in a Sri Lankan university appraised the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes. Findings suggest that the teachers were happy with how the collaborative curriculum was implemented since they were able to get through the obstacles they had foreseen during the design phase. For the students’ part, the modified curriculum provided them with opportunities to overcome their negative

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<sup>18</sup> RQ 4. How did EGAP students in a Sri Lankan university appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes?

emotions and attitudes and to improve their interest and commitment to learning ESL. The students had realised how the classroom environment and their relationship with both their peers and the teacher are different in the university classroom; and they believe that their macro skills in English have improved, particularly their oral skills, due to their being able to overcome their 'shyness' and 'fear' of speaking in front of others.

#### **6.4 Looking ahead to Chapter 7**

This chapter has reported on the analyses of two sources of data: the post-activity interview data that provide evidence relating to the experiences and perceptions of the teachers when translating an unfamiliar programmatic curriculum into the classroom events of the enacted curriculum, and the post-activity focus-group data that represent the EGAP students' experiences and perceptions of learning in the new context.

When considering ESL learning as a field, it is useful to look at the game played on that field. The students who acquired embodied linguistic cultural capital as English to a certain extent are struggling to improve their linguistic capital, whereas the students who have acquired less linguistic capital are striving to acquire the language. However, in the re-designed instructional curriculum with the sub-field of a collaborative environment, with more student-centred classroom learning events, the students had more power and opportunity to share their linguistic cultural capital within the group in order to develop English language proficiency. The teachers were also very careful how they interacted with the students and the type of activities that they designed as they wanted to make the classroom a safe learning place. The aim was to ensure that the students do not experience the kind of negative bodily emotions and sentiments that come to those who know that they do not have much capital in the field.

In the next chapter I present an overview of the main conclusions of the study, and conclude with a discussion of implications that may follow from the interpretation and justification offered in the analysis chapters.

## Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

### 7.1 Overview of the study

This exploratory case-study has investigated student involvement in a collaborative learning environment in an ESL classroom in a Sri Lankan university setting. Despite investing a significant amount of their study time over many years in learning the English language at school and university, Sri Lankan university students consistently struggle to achieve the proficiency level in English necessary for their academic purposes at the university and for their future career opportunities. Researchers have identified the approach to teaching and learning taken in the classroom as one possible explanation for Sri Lankan students' disappointing English learning outcomes. According to the current study, among other factors, collaborative activities - which are uncommon in Sri Lankan classrooms - might be useful for enabling students to learn English more effectively than by conventional approaches. It is suggested that pedagogical adjustments to include such activities might enhance student ESL learning. The premise of this justification is that students learn more effectively when they are engaged in collaborative activities.

To explore this proposition in greater detail, this study has investigated student actions and reactions when taught in a collaborative learning environment in an ESL classroom in a Sri Lankan university setting. In theoretical terms, this has involved re-designing the instructional curriculum for the EGAP classroom. The study pursued a central research problem: *In what manner is collaborative learning valuable to university-level learners of English in a Sri Lankan ESL classroom?*

To investigate the research problem, the study examined several research questions. These probed:

- the challenges and possibilities participating teachers envisaged before introducing collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes;
- student experience of learning English before the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes;
- how EGAP teachers appraised the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes; and
- how participating EGAP students appraised the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes.

To facilitate analysis of data to respond to the research questions a two-step method was applied to planning discussion and interview and focus-group data produced with two EGAP teachers and twelve of these teachers' students. Firstly, inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was utilised to analyse planning data, pre- and post- activity teacher interview data, and pre- and post-activity student focus group data. Secondly, conceptual tools from Bourdieu's *theory of practice* were applied to the themes that emerged from the inductive thematic analysis. These were articulated with theory on curriculum enactment.

In chapters 5 and 6, the findings of the analyses were presented. Chapter 5 presented findings relating to the challenges and possibilities envisaged by participating teachers and to the student experience of learning English before introducing collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes. Chapter 6 presented findings relating to what EGAP teachers and students thought of the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes. The purpose of this final chapter is to present an overview of the main conclusions of the study, and to conclude with a discussion of implications that may follow from the interpretation and justification offered in the thesis.

## **7.2 Discussion**

The study reported in this thesis used an exploratory design. The focus of the exploratory work was the introduction of collaborative activities. In theoretical terms, the introduction of new activities is concerned with regulation of the field (Luke, 2009). To clarify, the EGAP classroom can be viewed as a field of education practice. The action of participants in that field is regulated by mitigating and minimising symbolic violence faced by the students (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Luke, 2009). In these terms, the introduction of collaborative activities into the EGAP classroom constituted a re-regulation of the field. Conventionally that field is regulated by a teacher-centred approach, but the design work changed these regulatory settings by introducing collaborative activities. The data produced in the study provide insight to the teachers' re-regulatory actions.

According to the outcomes of the exploratory work conducted in the study, the re-regulation of the field worked; that is, it was successful. This would seem to reflect the teachers' understanding of student peculiarities which was absolutely crucial to the design activity undertaken for the study. The intent was to re-regulate the field in order to re-make student habitus. Specifically, it was hoped that the collaborative activities would enable students to acquire dispositions to learning English, university pedagogy, and a new learning environment.

Two main elements seem to have helped in re-positioning the students in the newly emerged sub-field of the collaborative learning environment created by the EGAP teachers during the study. One entails building *illusio* and *investment* in English; the other, building *linguistic capital* in English in all four macro skills. Re-regulating the field in the interests of changing habitus generated two outcomes. One related to the students, and the other to the teachers.

- For the students: by talking to each other and working with each other, the students came to understand how language was inflicting symbolic violence on them. With knowledge about where they were located in the hierarchy of English proficiency, they were able to work to fix or address their positioning.
- For the teachers: it seems that the teachers were able to change their habitus. Initially the teachers were positive but somewhat dubious about the possibilities of the collaborative activities. As the study proceeded, however, and the re-designed activities were enacted, they suddenly became really excited about the collaborative activities.

There were five main outcomes of the study, which I now discuss with reference to the sociological template for re-designing EGAP instructional curriculum with an adaptation of Luke's sociological template for whole-school language reform (2009). I have presented these outcomes in Figure: 7.1, *Outcomes of the collaborative learning exploration framed by the sociological template re-designing EGAP instructional curriculum*.

### **7.2.1 Re-regulation informed by teacher understanding and response to student peculiarities**

Luke's sociological template (2009) is built on the assumption that systematic changes in interactional exchanges, that is, altering the regulation of the field, can accommodate diverse learners in the classroom. This involves changing the regulative rules of interaction in the classroom field so that pedagogical approaches match student requirements and levels of competency (see Figure 7.1, *regulation of the field*).

The design work of this study can be understood in these terms. The participating EGAP teachers systematically altered interactional exchanges in the field of the classroom to accommodate the EGAP learners. Moreover, the teachers did this in such a manner that they re-designed the instructional curriculum to take account of students' peculiarities (Deng & Luke 2008). This was required as the EGAP students had different proficiency levels and varied sociocultural and economic backgrounds.

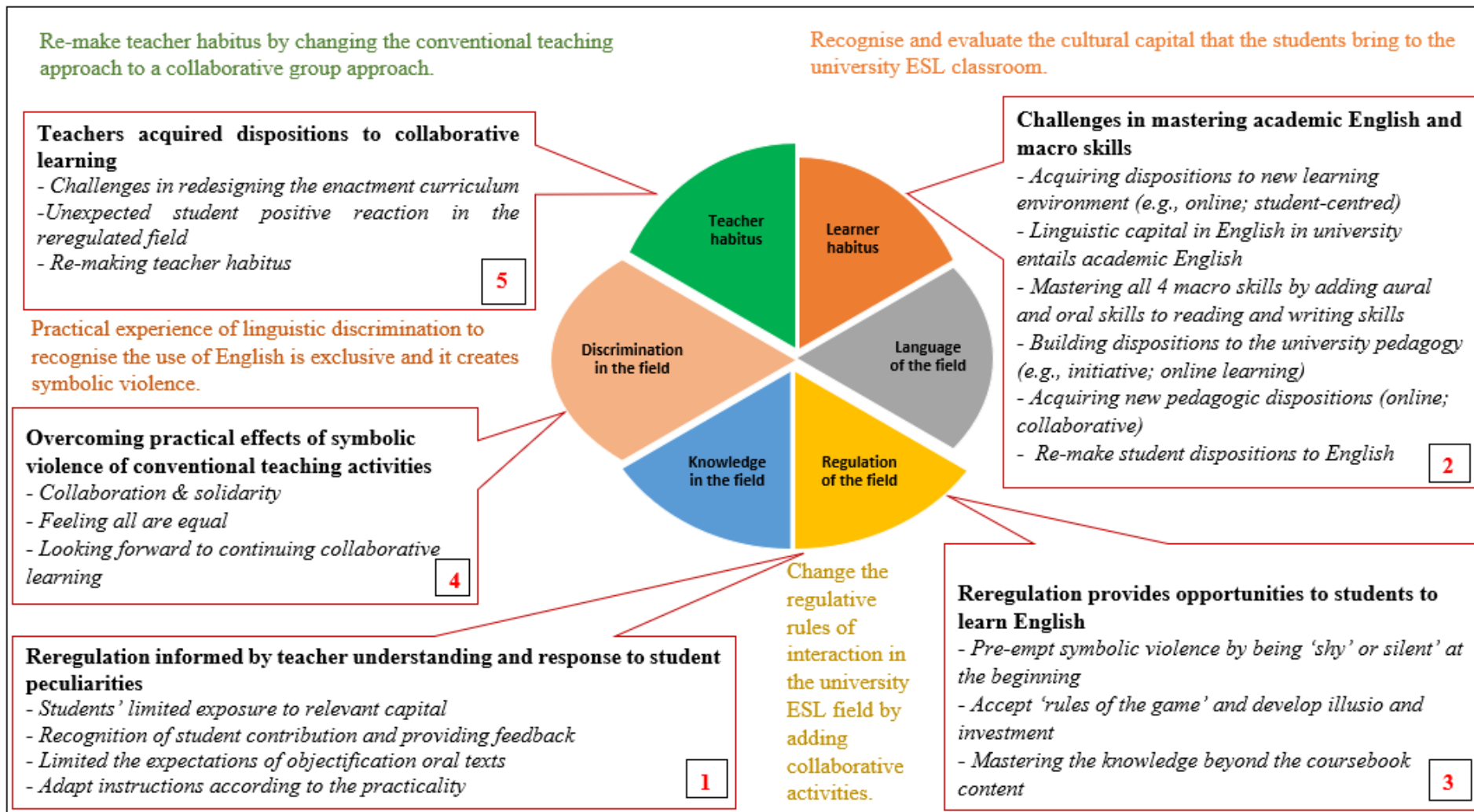


Figure 7.1  
 Outcomes of the collaborative learning exploration framed by the Sociological Template for Re-designing EGAP Instructional Curriculum

The teachers therefore considered the following in planning and working on the re-designed instructional curriculum: (i) students' limited exposure to English, and hence, relevant embodied and objectified capital; (ii) the need to recognise student contribution and provide feedback; (iii) the importance of limiting expectations of the objectified oral texts produced by the students; and (iv) adaptation of instruction according to logistical contingencies.

***Students' limited exposure to English and ramifications for relevant embodied and objectified capital***

The teachers knew that there was a big leap between the students' previous ESL learning habitus and the present EGAP learning field. They pointed out that though the students had been learning English since primary school, when they arrive at university questions arise as to whether the majority have acquired the required level of linguistic cultural capital for the tertiary education field. It will be recalled what the teachers revealed when they spoke about the students' previous ESL achievements in the school field. They spoke about two forms of national level institutional cultural capital: GCE (O/L) and GCE (A/L) results. The students were supposed to obtain this capital - and the objectified and embodied capitals that underpin them - in the school field. The teachers pointed out that "about 85 to 90% of the students barely pass the English language Exam at the GCE (O/L)" (ISI\_TP1). This indicates that the students have not attained an adequate amount of institutional (and underpinning objectified and embodied) cultural capital during their first national examination in the school field (Bourdieu, 1986). When they talked about the GCE (A/L) English examination, the teachers pointed out that even if the students had followed "the A/ Level English which is supposed to be general English" (ISI\_TP1), it was not relevant to EGAP performance as the students need "academic English" at the university ESL field. In other words, some of the capital of English acquired at school seems to have limited exchange value when students enter university.

In this context of capital accumulation and devaluation, the teachers showed their consideration of the students' lack of exposure to relevant cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). They also noticed that the source of the problem was not in the students' habitus; it was rather in the field, because exposure to the relevant capital was shaped by the students' environment (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). That is, it was affected by the home or school fields or the society to which they belonged. In particular, the teachers pointed out the difficulty that the students have in producing oral texts and comprehending aural texts. This is a point of distinction from school where capital for reading and writing was valued; at university, listening and speaking were important alongside reading and writing forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1990).

The teachers, too, were aware of the extent to which it was difficult for ESL teachers in general in Sri Lankan classrooms to get students to develop objectified oral linguistic capital in English. As one teacher said, “speaking is something that is very, very difficult for us, you know, get them to use to” (ISI\_TP1). Hence the teachers considered that the students’ weak dispositions to use English, plus their limited objectified linguistic cultural capital, might bear on their emotional experience and *investment* when collaborative curriculum activities were introduced into the classroom (Bourdieu, 1986; Philp & Duchesne, 2016).

### ***Recognition of student contribution and providing feedback***

It was the teachers’ *doxa* that “the contribution” (ISI\_TP1) of the students also needs to be taken into account during classroom practice” (Bourdieu, 1984). ‘Contribution’ here means the part played by students or the knowledge (e.g., facts, ideas and opinion) brought by them in order to complete classroom activities. Further, the teachers believed that the students’ “contribution” of objectified capital to classroom practice also needs to be recognised and acknowledged. The teachers wanted to make the students play a part in the lessons by providing opportunities for them to contribute to the learning activities. They thought that by doing so they were able to give “some kind of worth” to students’ objectified capital or to add to that capital (Bourdieu, 1986). They hoped that subsequently the students would feel that they had *invested* in the field, and that it was worth making an effort to collaborate in order to complete the work (Bourdieu, 1984). Although the students brought different levels of relevant cultural capital to the field, the teachers wanted to provide all of them with opportunities to contribute to producing new objectified capital (Bourdieu, 1986). This was because they were concerned in their planning of the classroom activities about the students’ behaviour and cognitive aspects of learning.

The teachers’ planning was complicated by the pandemic-induced shift to emergency online teaching and learning. Though the teachers did not have the same facilities in the online classroom that they had in the physical classroom for obtaining student feedback, they were keen to look to this aspect of pedagogy in their re-designed instructional curriculum. Therefore the purpose of the teachers was to get “feedback from the students to understand that they have done the activity” (PD\_TP1). The point here is that students’ responses to what they learn is a part of an enacted curriculum (Deng & Luke, 2008). Those responses represent the students’ interactions with the teachers as well as with the lesson content (Deng & Luke, 2008). In other words, the teachers wanted to ensure that the students have come to the “realization of” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243) embodied cultural capital given the cultural objects available to them



(e.g., classroom learning materials). At the same time, the teachers were aware of the material barriers that the students were likely to encounter due to lack of technical and technological facilities at their disposal. This limited access to learning resources was a consequence of the students' social and economic backgrounds.

### ***Limited the expectations of objectification oral texts***

At the outset of the teaching period, the teachers tried to limit their expectations regarding students' involvements with spoken texts. This was a risk mitigation measure designed to minimise the symbolic violence that the students face when they attempt to produce objectified oral linguistic capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992); therefore the teachers looked into local pedagogic possibilities when re-designing the EGAP instructional curriculum (Dooley, forthcoming; Deng & Luke, 2008). From their previous experience of working with EGAP students they thought that the students "are more comfortable in writing" (ISI\_TP1) than in "speaking" as they initially feel "shy and reluctant to talk" (ISI\_TP2). They attributed these difficulties to what might be understood as the dispositions built up through experience of the dominant pedagogic forms in Sri Lankan schools, as the majority of the students were fresh school leavers and school was the main setting in which they had learned English. The teachers had thought that "for them [students] to talk to the teacher, they are more comfortable than talking to their peers on the first day, because they don't know each other" (ISI\_TP1) because the students brought to the university from their prior schooling dispositions built up from teacher-centred interactions in face-to-face classrooms. However, the teachers were also careful to not homogenise the students: in addition to recent school-leavers, the EGAP cohort included students who were working full-time or part-time, and there was considerable diversity in the students' social backgrounds. Hence when the teachers re-regulated the field they considered the heterogeneity of the students and educational, social and economic influences on their habitus.

The teachers regarded the students' attitudes towards the English language as responses to the experience of being in a once-colonised country. Sri Lanka, a former British colony, is notable for different attitudes to English within the society. These stem from the symbolic value of English in Sri Lankan society. The teachers thought that "with that [societal] background, when they come to the class and then we asked them to speak, they wouldn't, they wouldn't open up" (ISI\_TP1), attributing the silence of the students to negative attitudes that had roots in societal attitudes to English. In re-regulating the field, the teachers considered students' limited exposure to English as relevant embodied and objectified capital from the secondary

pedagogic work of their school education. This was also compounded by the linguistic habitus produced in the primary pedagogic work of families where the languages of the home and community do not include English (Bourdieu, 1986).

As the teachers were aware of the students' behaviours, they tried to avoid symbolic violence in their work of re-designing the curriculum (Deng & Luke, 2008). Specifically, they limited the expectations they had of the students to produce oral texts individually, that is, the demands for objectification of English in class talk. They took measures to avoid symbolic violence by not exposing individuals to the whole class (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), not only when students were practising oral skills, but also when they were practising the other macro skills. For instance, when practising reading skills the teachers used "collaborative aloud reading" instead of "individual aloud reading", which is the more typical activity in conventional ESL teaching. This was their strategy particularly when they encountered students' pronunciation difficulties, which they tried to correct through "collaborative aloud reading" by getting the students to "go back to the beginning of the sentence and read it again" (ISI\_TP1) or to "repeat the word and stress the pronunciation of that particular word" (ISI\_TP2) without exposing "who [it was who] had made the mistake" (ISI\_TP2). The teachers re-regulated the field by also considering the students' socio-emotional state in re-designing the instructional curriculum for the students to spare them the symbolic violence that arises from appraisal or judgement by others in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

### ***Adapt instructions according to the practicality***

As part of re-regulating the field the teachers also attempted to customise the cultural objects of the EGAP course where that was within their capacity. The aim was to match those objects with the requirements of the present cohort of students. This was prompted by the teachers' aim to increase students' interest in their learning. They pointed out that the EGAP course materials need to be "updated" - given what might be understood as changes in student habitus - in order to enable development of *illusio* and *investment* in the field (Bourdieu, 1984). The intent of the teachers to accommodate certain modifications to lesson contents was that they wanted to make the lessons "newer" and "timely" to suit the "current generation.... because we need to move forward in the world" (ISI\_TP1).

The teachers also made certain modifications to their lesson plans based on the students' behaviour in order to mitigate negative emotions and sentiments that the students may experience. They took extra care especially when planning the activities for the first day. For example, they pointed out that "the first lesson according to the schedule that you [academic

department] gave is on page 48” and “see, you're going deep into the book” (ISI\_TP1) and they tried to think from the students’ perspectives. They thought that students would “think immediately, *Aei, issarahatika karanne naththe nedda?* [Why aren’t we going to do the front section?]” (ISI\_TP1). In this instance the teachers tried to consider the students’ potential emotions as they moved to a totally new field, doing so with a lack of relevant cultural capital. The teachers subsequently changed their lesson plan and decided to “delve into the lesson without asking them to open the book” (ISI\_TP1), trying to pre-empt the possibility of the students becoming panicked on their first day of EGAP learning.

The teachers also took measures to adapt instructions according to the practical needs of the students. They were of the opinion that “sometimes the instructions given at the teacher briefing do not go with the students’ needs” (ISI\_TP2); so they took measures to accommodate certain alterations to the programmatic curriculum in order to provide all students with better opportunities to accumulate embodied and objectified linguistic capital in ESL. The teachers provided evidence of their work as active agents in modifying the programmatic curriculum according to student peculiarities (Deng & Luke, 2008), to connect it to the experiences, interests, and abilities of the students in a given class (Deng, 2010; Westbury, 1999).

The teachers wanted to re-regulate the field. They were able to do this through their understanding of the peculiarities of the students, which informed their planning of collaborative activities to be enacted in certain ways. This understanding of the students was essential to re-regulating the field for the purposes of the current study (Deng & Luke, 2008; Deng, 2010; Westbury, 1999; Luke, 2009).

### **7.2.2 Challenges in mastering academic English and the macro skills**

Acquisition of academic English and mastering all macro skills in English are related to student habitus (see Figure 7.1, learner habitus). As previously noted, when the students moved to the university ESL field they realised that linguistic capital of English included all four macro skills, although they had only focused on the skills of reading and writing in the school field; and that the purpose of mastering these skills was also different in the university field. In the school field the students had mastered basic and general English for the purpose of obtaining institutional cultural capital by passing the examinations (GCE O/L & A/L). In contrast, at university the students need academic English for the purpose of obtaining embodied knowledge of the non-EGAP subjects (because of English medium instruction) and general English (at a more professional level than in the school field) when looking for employment

opportunities. The content of the linguistic capital of the school field, therefore, consisted of reading and writing skills whereas that of the university consisted of all four macro skills, including aural and oral skills. The students therefore considered accruing academic linguistic capital and all four macro skills as a real challenge for them. According to Luke's sociological template for language education reform (2009), these challenges faced by the students are related to learner habitus (Bourdieu, 1977).

### ***Adjusting to acquire linguistic capital of academic English at the university field is challenging***

Once the students shifted from their school ESL field to the university ESL field, they found a different habitus was required than the one they had anticipated. They found out that the embodied and objectified linguistic cultural capital required was “more advanced” (IFG\_ Nurasha) than that they had acquired previously; learning academic English was totally new to them. Even the student who seemed to have acquired most linguistic capital from her school field “felt that there is a formality in *academic* English” at university and that she was “not used to that formality” (IFG\_ Nurasha). All the students agreed that it was difficult for them to adjust to the new field, and that they had to work extra hard to accumulate the necessary capital. They had also realised that the value of linguistic capital in English which they brought to the university from school was lower than they had thought; and that to succeed at the university they needed to do really well in English. Their discussion of their school experience revealed very limited opportunities for obtaining embodied and objectified linguistic capital in. Their observations of their English learning included comments that the school field had prioritised the teaching of subjects other than English, that the teaching methods were not appealing, and that they had not realised the importance of learning English as linguistic capital. At the same time, in spite of the broader symbolic value of English in Sri Lankan society, the majority of the students had not had exposure to the language in their home environments (Bourdieu, 1977).

### ***Adapting students to the university ESL field***

Given the teachers' previous experience, they were aware that students come to the university ESL field with limited relevant linguistic capital, and they re-regulated the field to help them adapt to the new field more easily and to re-make their student habitus (Luke, 2009). As the teachers knew that the students have different attitudes towards learning English they tried to make them aware of the importance of acquiring the relevant capital for academic and future employment opportunities. They explained the cultural value of English as linguistic

capital, stressing that succeeding in EGAP is “compulsory” if the students are “to get the degree”; that “English is a must”, a highly valuable form of cultural and linguistic capital for students in Sri Lanka, especially beyond the university where it can be converted into economic capital. In re-regulating the field, the teachers carefully considered the difficulties that students face in acquiring objectified oral linguistic capital in English, the fact that they typically feel “shy and reluctant to talk” (FSI\_TP1; FSI\_TP2); and they helped them to change their learning habitus, adjusting to the fact that they were coming from a teacher dependent and face-to-face learning environment. The university field was different, and the students not only had to adjust to it, but they had to do so in a distance mode, which meant often taking the initiative in their learning rather than relying totally on the teacher.

The teachers customised the programmatic curriculum when re-designing the instructional curriculum in order to re-regulate the field (Deng & Luke, 2008). The main purpose of this was to enable the students to earn embodied and objectified linguistic capital in English through engaging in collaborative activities. One of the teachers described this customisation of curriculum practice as “a mix and match of the assignment and a mix and match of the peers working together and sharing their knowledge” (FSI\_TP1). Unlike in the school ESL field, the students were expected to master all four macro skills. This was something new to the students. They now faced a twofold challenge: to master all four macro skills and to master academic (rather than general) English. The teachers believed that the re-designed activities were able to “match” the knowledge embedded in the institutional cultural objects and the objectified cultural capital that the students earned. Through the re-designed collaborative activities the students were “sharing their knowledge ..... in their writing, listening, speaking and reading knowledge to produce whatever [was] is expected of the team” (FSI\_TP1). They also noted the students’ *illusio* and *investment* in the field (Bourdieu, 1984), evidenced by their “enthusiasm to find out what the homework activity [was]; [their] enthusiasm to submit their assignment and get their feedback” (FSI\_TP1).

### ***Re-positioning student habitus***

The students also indicated that they were aware of the limited relevant capital that they brought to the field. This was evidenced when some sought the teachers’ help individually at the beginning of the course. For example, one of the teachers received an email in Sinhala (L1) saying, “*Madam mata EGAP aulwage, Mata English hondatama baha* (Madam, I feel very upset about the EGAP, because my English knowledge is very poor)” [FSI\_TP2]. The teachers responded to such requests by providing extra assistance. With the re-regulation of the field,

the students had noticeably changed their attitudes towards learning English, demonstrating *orthodox*<sup>19</sup> beliefs about its importance for them, this also forming the basis of their *illusio* with respect to English (Bourdieu, 1977). They now “regret” their past, thinking “what a useless thing we did at the school by neglecting English” (IFG\_Janaka). They have realised that English constitutes essential cultural capital that must acquire in order to obtain other forms of capital; which can be converted, due to its symbolic value, into other forms of capital such as economic capital through employment (e.g., working as software engineers) (Bourdieu, 1990).

The students had re-positioned their habitus in the re-regulated field, and subsequently, with their *illusio*, they had *invested* in the field. They had accepted the ‘rules of the game’ and believed that it was worth playing (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). These students had now given the value once accorded only to their L1 to ESL: “definitely, we need English for our future to go forward and in future we need to use English similarly to our mother tongue” (IFG\_Thamara). The students could be seen as having fallen in love with English. They had identified its symbolic value as a global language, understanding that its value goes beyond the local context. They realise that “it is great to learn English and [they] want to learn it more, because it is a universal language today” (IFG\_Gihan). Although initially they “didn’t have a trust that how we are [they were] going to follow the EGAP course” (FFG\_Bhashini), they had changed their negative mindset into a positive one. They were learning to move beyond feeling “very shy and fearful” when required to produce oral linguistic capital (FFG\_Bhashini). Being in the re-regulated field, engaging with collaborative activities, was “totally a new experience” which was interesting for them. The teachers reported that their attendance was very satisfactory, that they didn’t want to “miss a class unless [there is] an unavoidable circumstance” (FFG\_Bhashini & Gihan). This commitment reflects demonstrates their *illusio investment* in learning English. They now see it as worth their commitment to learning ESL in the university field, which in turn will help them to acquire cultural capital in non-EGAP subjects taught in English, as well as being valuable when entering the employment field. This disposition is what other researchers using a non-Bourdieuian framing have called students’ ‘behavioural engagement’ (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Fredricks & McColsky, 2012).

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<sup>19</sup> Orthodoxy happens when people try to rebuild doxa by reinforcing the prevailing notion as normal again (Bourdieu, 1977).

### 7.2.3 Re-regulation provides students with opportunities to learn English

As the teachers re-regulated the field, they concluded that the new instructional curriculum had worked in the EGAP classroom (see Figure 7.1). The students provided evidence of effective learning. Changes to the regulative rules of interaction in the university ESL field by adding collaborative activities had produced good outcomes.

#### *Pre-empting symbolic violence by being 'shy' or 'silent'*

The teachers were aware that the students had brought very limited embodied and objectified linguistic capital from their school and home experience; and they anticipated that they would try to avoid the humiliating experience of being unable to speak well in English (symbolic violence) by not talking in English with one another in the EGAP classroom; by being 'shy'. When re-regulating the field, the teachers drew on their experience, on what they knew about students and oral tasks. They knew that “there is a lot of foible” (ISI\_TP1) in oral language practice, but that is “not that they don't want to contribute, [it's] because they don't know [how]” (ISI\_TP1). They had noticed that students try to pre-empt experience of symbolic violence in the classroom: “they are scared to talk in the language” because “they don't want to talk in front of another person and be ridiculed for their knowledge level and their language level” (ISI\_TP1). The teachers were therefore careful when designing activities as they wanted to minimise and mitigate potentially negative experience for the students (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

They were well aware of how the symbolic value accorded to English in Sri Lankan society, and the misrecognition of its value, created negative experiences for students who were weaker in terms of language proficiency (Bourdieu, 1977), resulting in defensive behaviours (Bourdieu, 1990). The students had manifested this behaviour in their mainstream classroom. When required to speak in English, they felt “shy and fear”, thinking that they “may go wrong while talking” (FFG\_Dilukshi). Even while practising other skills, such as reading, the students felt the same fear. When offered opportunities to read aloud in class, the less proficient students kept silent, fearful of exposing themselves to others, protecting themselves from potential symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). “I like to do the aloud reading but bit scared that I may go wrong. So, do silent reading while another one does the aloud reading” (FFG\_Janaka). At university the students come to understand the symbolic power and value of acquiring embodied and objectified linguistic capital in English - and they want to acquire this capital. However, they have to overcome the negative bodily emotions and sentiments that are triggered as a result of the symbolic power, which their *illusio* (Bourdieu, 1984).

### ***Students accepting the ‘rules of the game’***

The students entered the university ESL field feeling uncertain about how they would cope with the limited relevant cultural capital that they brought from their school field. They quickly realised that the teachers at the university were different from those at school; and with the teachers’ re-regulation of the field, they came to understand that they now enjoyed better opportunities for acquiring embodied and objectified linguistic capital in English. Changes to the field affected the students’ *illusio*, they accepted the ‘rules of the game’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). From the commencement of the EGAP classes, they felt that they needed to pay “total attention”. This was a shift in habitus; previously they had been reluctant English learners in the school field. Now they had more opportunities and better teacher-student relationships; “now we have to change our minds and learn English and have to create a desire to learn” (IFG\_Dilukshi). They appreciated that “the lecturer who teaches us also talks to us and provides us some opportunity to participate in the classroom work” (IFG\_Janaka). Their appreciation of different opportunities to acquire embodied and objectified linguistic capital in English fed into their willingness to build upon their existing cultural capital based on opportunities in the new field. Students’ behavioural shift to involvement in their ESL learning demonstrates the students’ determination and the amount of effort that they are willing to make, and the subsequent re-making of their student habitus (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). When re-regulating the field, the teachers were confronted with the challenge of managing time frames. Though the programmatic curriculum had been designed for three-hour face-to-face teaching sessions, due to the emergency online teaching approach of the university, teaching sessions had been limited to two-hour online teaching sessions. Hence, the teachers had to work strategically in re-designing the enacted curriculum (Deng & Luke, 2008).

The teachers had also noticed the students’ “active participation” in the re-regulated field. They believed that the students “do take the opportunity to talk to each other in their groups” (FSI\_TP1), an indication of student involvement in the collaborative group activities. The students’ interactions were taking place in “their mother tongue as well as in English” (FSI\_TP1 & FSI\_TP2). The teachers also highlighted the students’ attempts to produce objectified oral linguistic capital. The students had tried to use “the English language, maybe not the perfect grammar sentence, but yet again, the idea is there” (FSI\_TP1). This indicates that the collaborative activities provided opportunities for the students to bring more of their linguistic resources to their EGAP studies than had occurred in traditional classroom activities. This was the case for their use of their mother tongue as well as their second language of English. However, the teachers revealed that though the students interacted in L1 and L2 “their



final product is a written piece of work in the English language” (FSI\_TP1). Given their previous EGAP teaching experiences, the teachers had expressed doubts about the potential for student interaction in the class; however, with the re-regulation of the field, they had worked to re-make students’ habitus over time (Musofer & Lingard, 2020). This applied to the linguistic capital that the students were using and the growth of their *illusio* in relation to English, and to their *investment* in the activities of the EGAP class (Bourdieu, 1984). This is what other researchers, using a non-Bourdieuian framing, have called the *behavioural and cognitive engagement* of the students in their learning (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).

With the re-designed instructional curriculum, the teachers had introduced collaborative group activities instead of a conventional teaching approach. The students found it “more comfortable” to work in the “smaller groups” than in the whole class. The teachers had noticed that the students “preferred to work together” and demonstrated more positive emotions when they were in the collaborative groups. Unlike previous EGAP cohorts, the majority of the study students attended classes regularly. This would seem to be evidence of the high value the students put on ESL learning. The students who felt ‘fear’ and ‘shy’ to talk in the main classroom, when they “get into a smaller group ... feel good when working as a team” (FFG\_Thamara). These students also now look for the opportunity to earn objectified oral linguistic capital: “now if someone gives a call in English, I like very much to answer to that even I don’t know English very well” (FFG\_Janaka). The students had understood their position in the new ESL field and tried to take measures to overcome their limitations by taking the opportunity that the teachers had provided by re-regulating the field. They had accepted the ‘rules of the game’ and felt that it is worthwhile engaging in the game in order to obtain the benefits of the game. They had also accepted the conditions of the group activities and had made an effort to improve themselves by actively participating in the classroom activities (Bourdieu, 1996; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

### ***Mastering knowledge beyond the coursebook content***

The students also reported that they had received opportunities to acquire general English linguistic capital in addition to that of specific academic English in the university ESL field. They took these opportunities, being well aware that this capital can be convertible into cultural capital for “communication with the outside world” (FFG\_Dilukshi, FFG\_Thushari, Gihan). These students were training to become “software engineers or work in the IT related field”, “in an international company” (FFG\_Nurasha, Gihan). They knew the importance of acquiring linguistic cultural capital in English: “even if we get an internship, these things also

use English mostly” (FFG\_Pradeep & Rasika). These explanations by the students demonstrate that the re-regulation of the field had provided them with the opportunity to acquire embodied and objectified linguistic cultural capital in English, and that they were committed to building their capital given the opportunity that they had received. They believed that they would benefit from their *investment*: “if you know your English” you “will be very confident to handle the work at your workplace” (FFG\_Tharosh). This confidence can be read in terms of symbolic power of the English language in Sri Lanka (Bourdieu, 1990).

By re-regulating the field, the teachers assumed that the re-designed instructional curriculum would be more closely aligned with the curricula of the other domains than the previous instructional curriculum (Deng & Luke, 2008; Luke, 2009) due to the fact that it tried to cater to the communicative requirements of the programmatic and institutional curricula. This was said to have occurred because the students “have collaborated and they have gone out of their normal area of study” (FSI\_TP1); they “have expanded their knowledge levels” (FSI\_TP1). The teachers provided opportunities for the students to work “beyond the coursebook” (FSI\_TP1) when they were given collaborative homework assignments; they needed to consult references and materials outside the “coursebook”; and the teachers had observed the extent to which the students had utilised this opportunity, reporting that they “have had very good results from the homework assignments more than from the book”, and that “they work[ed] collaboratively very well” (FSI\_TP1). This finding resonates with the findings of other researchers who framed their investigations using engagement theory, who observed students’ behavioural and social involvements as they made efforts to complete their academic activities as expected by the teacher (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Fredricks & McColsky, 2012). In this instance the teachers are firm in their belief that the students need to be provided with opportunities beyond the “coursebook”. Only then will they be able to apply the knowledge embedded in cultural objects which the students “learned [to master] in the classroom” (FSI\_TP1). The teachers also considered classroom activities characterised as involving a higher level of cognition than traditional activities in EGAP, as the university ESL field demands dispositions capable of using the language for communication through speaking and listening, in addition to the deeply ingrained and highly refined exam-oriented habitus of secondary schooling.

#### **7.2.4 Overcoming practical effects of symbolic violence of conventional teaching activities**

For the students, the most important thing about collaborative learning activities was that they acquired social capital, which was a key element in accumulating the level of English language that they needed to succeed. They were able to earn this social capital as a result of the re-regulation of the field (see Figure 7.1, *discrimination in the field*). Re-regulation included incorporating the learners' community language practices and utilising the students' resources. As they brought different levels of relevant capital to the field, they were able to share with each other, irrespective of their individual proficiency level, by working in the collaborative group activities. This learning environment also provided students with insight to discrimination in the field. This was not via explicit teaching, with activities that thematized linguistic discrimination; it was the experience of the activities that provided practical experience which led to understanding of linguistic discrimination (Luke, 2009). Through the practical experience of working together, the students realised the nature and source of linguistic discrimination in their English classes, and were then able to respond and manage this. In other words, the social capital that the students earned through collaboration helped them to overcome the symbolic violence that occurred due to linguistically-based discrimination in the field. If the students had been in the whole class instead of in collaborative groups, they would have avoided situations that threatened symbolic violence by using defensive behaviours; and they would not have known where they stood compared to others (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

#### ***Earning social capital through collaboration and solidarity***

The most significant fact that arose in the study was that of accumulated social capital derived from the collective ownership of assets by a group of members in a "less institutionalized" environment (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). To clarify, the small groups provided a less rule-bound environment than that of the whole class, and within this environment the students were able to pool their resources as a form of shared social capital from which they all benefitted (Bourdieu, 1993b). Both teachers, as well as the students themselves, spoke supportively of this phenomenon. As frequently referenced previously, students are typically reluctant to speak up in a conventional Sri Lankan classroom because of the teacher-student power relationship. The teachers were aware of this and it was a central point of consideration as they re-regulated the rules in the field; and they consequently achieved positive outcomes, reporting that the students did "a lot of interaction talk among themselves in both languages,

like Sinhala and English and in a mixture, but their final product is[was] a written piece of work in the English language” (FSI\_TP1). They saw the students feeling more “confident and free” to interact with each other in their own group. In the terms of other researchers, this was evidence of beneficial social and cognitive engagement (Moranski & Toth, 2016; Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Sato & Ballinger, 2012; Storch, 2008; Svalberg, 2009). The re-regulated field had created “less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247), which could explain why the students "love to work in groups" (FSI\_TP2), and “were very willing to work with collaborative teams” (FSI\_TP1).

The teachers had also witnessed the “solidarity which make them [students] possible” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). They observed that the students felt “very comfortable with each other, working with each other, sharing their knowledge” (FSI\_TP1 & TP2). Despite having varying amounts of relevant capital, which typically results in symbolic violence, the students were able to build social capital through their "solidarity," allowing them to accrue "the profits" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248) of the classroom learning activities. For example, when working on homework assignments, the students always wanted to consult all members of the group during each step in completing the assignments; and in “each and every breakout room at least there ... [was] a very good student who... [was] good in English” (FSI\_TP2), which had helped the group to complete the given activity. These accounts evidence the growing of collaborative peer social capital, the “solidarity which make them possible” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248).

### ***Feeling all are equal***

Coming from schools where the relationship between teacher and students involves an explicitly unequal power relation, the students appreciated the different experience of working in the collaborative groups, of feeling that they are all “equal”. This contrasts pleasantly with previous situations in which the students’ feel that the teachers are superior, having more capital; in which they experience negative emotions generated by the habitus (Bourdieu, 1993a). Now they have felt that “all group members are equal; we can talk about anything and solve our issues easily by discussing them with all” (FFG\_Lakshika). They have previously felt reluctant to talk to teachers, to ask for clarification in more ‘institutionalised’ relationships, avoiding speaking in English through fear of facing symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1990). However, they now find it easy to interact with each other in a less institutionalised environment, using their L1 when they need to, using English when they can, even if it may not be “perfect English” (FFG\_Thamara). They know that they have “got more involved in EGAP learning by working collaboratively” (FFG\_Thamara, Janaka & Harini); with the social capital

that they have accrued via their ‘solidarity’, they assume that they will be able to “come out with a creative answer” (FFG\_Dilukshi). It is not only the cultural capital that an individual has in the field that counts, it is also a collection of capital to which everyone has contributed (Bourdieu, 1993). Initially some students did not connect easily with the group, but over time they re-positioned their habitus and had “come to know each other better and [were] more connected to each other than earlier” (FFG\_Bhashini). This is evidence of the students trying to change their dispositions and connect with their peers in order to acquire embodied cultural capital (Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

### ***Looking forward to continuing collaborative learning***

The students also felt that they had the opportunity to share their linguistic capital with each other and to inculcate peers into capital in the field through the social capital that they had built up through collaboration (Bourdieu, 1993). In other words, they were able to convert the social capital that they accumulated into embodied linguistic capital and objectified linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The students understood that by collaborating rather than working individually they could contribute more cultural capital to the field; and that collaboration enabled peer inculcation. One student noted, “when doing activities as group work, we discuss some of the grammar points and get ourselves corrected” (IFG\_Thamara) – this is additional value, as well as that of working on the assigned activity; students can discuss “grammar points”, which they would not have done in a more traditional institutionalised classroom. In the more relaxed collaborative environment they feel free to give and to accept correction, and they think that they “can learn things that [they] don’t know individually” (FFG\_Rasika). They are able to manage symbolic violence through the social capital that they had built up by sharing capital among themselves, even inculcating peers in that capital (Bourdieu, 1990; 1993; 2006). The students were looking forward to continuing collaborative learning: “we would like to engage in more group activities in the rest of the course” (FFG\_Dilukshi).

### **7.2.5 Teachers acquired dispositions to collaborative learning**

The teachers’ beliefs changed too; and they were intending to continue the collaborative group activity approach in the future in other contexts (Figure 7.1.). This is indicative of a re-made teacher habitus (Musofer & Lingard, 2020). In general, Sri Lankan ESL classrooms are teacher-centred, with teachers using conventional teaching approaches in both school and university ESL fields. While teachers sometimes use group activities, they would be

conventional activities in which some students do not participate very actively due to the effect of symbolic violence; most students who are lacking in the relevant cultural capital stay silent; they pre-empt symbolic violence by not exposing their linguistic levels in the classroom (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This was one of the main reasons why the teachers considered finding ways and facilitating opportunities for all students to participate. This was a key focus during the planning of the re-designed collaborative curriculum. The teachers wanted to eliminate where possible the ‘shy’ behaviour as defensive behaviour, recognised as one of the main impediments to their EGAP teaching.

### ***Challenges faced by the teachers in re-designing the instructional curriculum***

During the planning stage, the teachers faced many dilemmas in relation to the students’ backgrounds (students from school transitioning into a freshly commencing degree programme), the teaching platform (online), and infrastructure facilities and technology (limited). Though the main concern of the teachers had been the amount of relevant capital that the students brought to the field, they also had to consider the students’ social and economic capital, as these factors also matter in relation to the learning habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). With all these complexities and challenges, the teachers thought of themselves rather as “guinea pigs” (PD\_TP1), embarking on a “trial and error” (PD\_TP1) approach in their introduction to the re-designed instructional curriculum with collaborative activities. Unusually, due to the COVID interruptions, they had to work in emergency online classes mode, and they too were totally “new to Microsoft Teams” (the online platform). It was “like a *Achcharu* (Pickle) situation and..... a nightmare”. The situation was so complicated that they were “having sleepless nights”. However they were committed to move on with the new instructional curriculum in spite of all these challenges, as “all these new set of students are in our hands” (PD\_TP2); the students’ acquisition of embodied linguistic capital and objectified linguistic capital in English depended on the teachers’ commitment (Deng, 2010).

Informed by their understanding of the student peculiarities, the teachers re-regulated the field by introducing the re-designed instructional curriculum with collaborative activities (Deng, 2010; 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008). They had their doubts about how the students would actively engage with the activities due to their previous experiences with EGAP students. Acquiring oral linguistic capital had always been a major concern in the university ESL field; it was a skill that the students had not mastered at all in their previous school field, and the teachers knew they had to pay special attention to teaching it. Since they had to teach online they were concerned about “how are we to know that they’re talking, because if they don’t talk

then what happens?” (PD\_TP1). They knew from previous experience with conventional group activities that typically “only say about two or three would be actively working, and it would be the smarter ones” (ISI\_TP1). Most the students bring limited reserves of the relevant cultural capital to the field, and they do not actively participate in classroom activities. Hence, although the teachers re-regulated the field hoping to re-make student habitus, they had their doubts about the extent to which their plans would be successful.

### ***Experiencing unexpected student positive reaction in the re-regulated field***

Unexpectedly, the teachers experienced very positive reactions of the students to their re-regulated field. In contrast to previous EGAP cohorts where teachers found attendance was low, they observed that the majority attended the classes (online): they obviously wanted to learn, and the teachers too considered it their ‘duty’ to provide opportunities to learn as much as they could. And the teachers noted the results: “the regular attendees do well during classroom activities” (FSI\_TP2); when the teachers asked questions, the students responded immediately; “these are keen students” and “they are interested in learning” (FSI\_TP1); and those few students who couldn’t access the online class due to material barriers “also contribute by giving their answers in the chat box”. The teachers also commented that “their [the students’] answers are given voluntarily”, whereas generally teachers “have to force or ask for their names” (FSI\_TP1); that they were sharing their linguistic capital during their collaboration; and that they “were talking to each other and trying their best” (FSI\_TP2) to produce the texts expected of them. Overall, the teachers reported that they were “happy with the students’ collaboration” (FSI\_TP2) in their re-regulated field; that they believed they had been able to make changes in student learning activities that could indeed change the dispositions of their habitus through their EGAP studies (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984). The re-designed curriculum had been able to tap into students' *illusio* in relation to their learning and enable them to *invest* in the new university ESL learning field (Bourdieu, 1984; Musofer & Lingard, 2020).

### ***Re-making teacher habitus***

The teachers believed that they had re-made their own teaching habitus by moving from their conventional teaching approach to a collaborative group activity approach (Musofer & Lingard, 2020). They witnessed “students’ active participation” in their re-regulated field from the outset of the EGAP course. Although not all the students were able to contribute to the activities at the same level at the beginning, the teachers noticed that they had all begun to interact with the other group members as best as they could. The teachers considered this as a

“new experience” (FEI\_TP1 & TP2) - students did not act this way at the beginning of previous EGAP courses. Unlike in the conventional group activities which the teachers had sometimes used previously, the students were seen to “do a lot of interaction because they have to do” (FEI\_TP1), and because they could, as the collaborative activities offered more opportunities to interact than did regular group activity. The teachers argued that “two hours lecturing won't work out in teaching English” (FSI\_TP2); given that English is a language, and not just another subject, a conventional method of teaching is not effective. They realised that the circumstances in which they found themselves - having to cut three-hour face-to-face teaching sessions down to two-hour online teaching sessions – were helped by the introduction of collaborative activities; they represented a way to mitigate certain constraints strategically.

The teachers have continued collaborative work in their ongoing teaching, and plan to continue to do so in the future; and they have shared their positive experiences in the new field with other [non-study] teachers. They had decided to “do collaborative breakout room activities ... each and every day during next nine days also” (FSI\_TP2), that is until the end of the course. Their experience of the “students’ active participation” in the classroom activities and the homework assignments confirmed for them that this was an effective approach. This finding resonates with that of other researchers whose work was conceptualised in terms of engagement and yielded findings relating to emotional, social, behavioural and cognitive engagement (Philp and Duchesne, 2016). The teachers also reported that by introducing collaborative activities in their instructional curriculum they had “gained different insight”; they commented that “this intervention is a path to think about interesting collaborative learning activities for future EGAP batches” (FSI\_TP2). They had shared their positive observations of the new sub-field at the EGAP teachers’ feedback review meeting and “suggested the other [non-study] teachers as well to try it [collaborative group activities] out” (FSI\_TP2). The teachers stated very confidently that “it [collaborative group activities] will work out afterwards and the teachers and the students will like it” (FSI\_TP2). They wanted to show the other EGAP teachers that re-making student habitus is not as difficult a task as they think: “that is not a magic because once we practice it [collaborative group activities], then we are ok” (FSI\_TP2). They also spoke to the effectiveness of the approach in EGAP teaching in relation to addressing all the macro skills at the same time, describing how students shared their cultural capital within their group, using oral and aural skills even when the focus of the activity might be reading or/and writing. Above all, they highlighted the need to re-make teacher habitus by moving away from the conventional teaching approaches which resulted in students’ “inactive behaviours” which they had all experienced throughout their ESL teaching careers (Musofer & Lingard, 2020).



### 7.2.6 Discussion Summary

The study has found that re-regulating the field by adding collaborative activities and reducing the effects of linguistic discrimination was able to re-make both student and teacher habituses (Musofer & Lingard, 2020). The most significant outcome in terms of student habitus was that of accumulated ‘collaborative peer social capital’, that is, the valued language and cultural resources that the students accessed through working in collaborative classrooms (breakout rooms), shared homework events, and ‘peer inculcation’ (Bourdieu, 1993). These findings resonate with the findings of other researchers who framed their investigations using engagement theory: the social dimension being the dimension of engagement foregrounded in language learning as ‘collaborative peer social capital’ which had functioned as a facilitator between academic engagement and achievement (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Svalberg, 2009) and led students to get involved with other engagement dimensions such as the emotional, behavioural and cognitive (Philp & Duchesne, 2016).

Re-regulating the field on the basis of teacher understanding of student peculiarities was very important in this study (Deng, 2010; 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008). The intent was to introduce collaborative group activities to the EGAP students through re-regulating the field (Luke, 2009); this could not be done without the teachers’ understanding of the students. The purpose was to re-make student habitus (Musofer & Lingard, 2020), which involved two main elements: an environment that is conducive to building the students’ *illusio* and *investment* in learning English (Bourdieu, 1984, and building the capital of academic English by providing opportunities to practice all the four macro skills required to accumulate embodied and objectified linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

By experiencing collaborative group activities in the ESL classroom field the students realised that they were able to build up ‘collaborative peer social capital’, which they had not done previously. They were then able to exchange their ‘collaborative peer social capital’ for embodied and objectified cultural capital by completing the given activities more effectively than they could have done individually, and comprehending the linguistic concepts behind them. Their increased social capital also grew their ‘solidarity’, and they were able to inculcate each other with elements of the desired linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1993), correcting each other, helping each other by clarifying things more easily than by talking to the teacher during class. The ease of working with peers was a noted point of contrast to working with the teacher, due to the effects of the usual power relation between teacher and students in Sri Lankan classrooms.

With respect to discrimination in the field, the EGAP students have now had practical experience of a learning environment in which linguistic discrimination based on English proficiency was reduced. It was not the case that the teachers gave the students activities that thematized linguistic discrimination (as would occur in critical pedagogy); rather, it was that the students had a practical experience whereby they came to an understanding of the discriminatory work of English proficiency in the classroom (Luke, 2009). The collaborative activities enabled the students to understand how symbolic violence was wrought on them (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). It made clear to them where they were placed in the hierarchy of English proficiency in the class. With the social capital that they had earned through team solidarity, they were able to take action to accumulate more linguistic capital and so adjust their position within the linguistic hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1993). Through the practical experience of working together, the students became conscious of the source of linguistic discrimination, that they were then able to tackle with ‘collaborative peer social capital’ and inculcate each other into (Bourdieu, 1993).

In terms of teacher habitus, the teachers found that it was worth moving from their conventional teaching approach to a collaborative activity approach, beginning to re-make student habitus by improving students’ *illusio* and *investment* in their ESL learning, while mitigating and minimising symbolic violence that had occurred due to the varied levels of relevant cultural capital that the students brought to the field (Bourdieu, 1984; 1993; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Musofer & Lingard, 2020). The teachers therefore believed that their re-designed instructional curriculum with collaborative activities aligned with the aims and objectives of the EGAP course which represent the institutional and programmatic curricula in this field. They believed that the EGAP students should be able to better follow their main courses in English and that further down the track they would be better able to find employment in software engineering, a field in which English is mandatory.

The following section discusses limitations of the current study.

### **7.3 Limitations of the study**

There are certain limitations that could not be prevented in this study. Although some of these restrictions were due to the methodology adopted and the data collected, others were due to the participant contexts.

Given the qualitative exploratory case-study design, ESL classes of only one university, including two ESL teachers and 12 students in two focus-groups, were selected. The

generalisability of the findings is therefore limited. There could be limitations in applying the findings in different settings of other universities and higher education institutions (Appleton, 1995). However, given the exploratory nature of the study, the research findings stand to make a significant contribution to knowledge in an under-researched domain.

The other limitation relates to the time frame that was utilised for data collection. Although six teaching-learning sessions over a period of 6 weeks with collaborative group activities may appear to provide opportunities for investigating this experience in collaborative teaching and learning, it actually provides only a brief snapshot of student commitment in their ESL classroom. I was obliged to limit the number of collaborative teaching-learning sessions due to several practical issues. It would be productive to conduct sessions over a longer period of time. The study is useful nonetheless, providing as it does data about the formation of the habitus in an educational field with particular pedagogic settings, a field which has been changed through the inclusion of new activities. This is valuable in its own right.

Due to the unanticipated situation of the COVID-19 interruptions, I had to limit the process of data gathering to teacher planning discussion, initial and final semi-structured interviews, student initial and final focus groups, and gathering documents related to the teaching of ESL at the university. If classroom observation had been possible, the study would have been able to provide observational data yielding in-depth details of the students' observable commitment in the collaborative activities. This type of data has been useful in other research (Fredricks et al., 2004; Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Svalberg, 2009); and future research - which will be more possible in a world in which pandemic lockdowns are not happening - will be enabled by studies such as that reported upon in this thesis.

Another limitation relates to the fact that the study is confined to a single university site, which is also following a distance learning mode, although the EGAP course is usually conducted in face-to-face classes as day schools. It would be beneficial to compare the outcomes of the study with a similar study in a conventional face-to-face university classroom setting. Again, the current study provides a basis for such comparative work.

The linguistic context of Sri Lanka is characterized by three major languages: Sinhala, Tamil, and English. Sinhala is primarily spoken by the majority Sinhalese population, while Tamil is spoken by the Tamil minority. English is widely used and serves as a link language between different ethnic groups. However, due to non-availability of any Tamil speaking volunteer participants, the study was conducted along with the Sinhala speaking student participant. Hence, the absence of Tamil-speaking students may indicate a lack of representation or inclusion of the Tamil-speaking community in the study. This could raise

concerns about the generalizability of the study's findings to the wider population, particularly to the Tamil-speaking community.

One limitation of the study is that while the EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes) course was designed for first-year undergraduate students in various disciplines, the participants in the study were solely from the Bachelor of Software Engineering course. Although this focus on a specific programme provides valuable insights into the experiences of students within that field, it limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of undergraduate students from different disciplines. Therefore, this restriction should be acknowledged as a limitation in the study, highlighting the need for further research involving participants from diverse academic backgrounds to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and applicability of the EGAP course across various disciplines.

Finally, the current study limits its investigation to examination of the extent to which ESL students' acquisition of embodied and objectified linguistic capital of English can be promoted in a collaborative learning environment. It would be worth investigating how students acquire embodied and objectified linguistic capital of English in ESL learning in different teaching-learning environments. Such a holistic approach would provide more insight to the current state of ESL teaching curriculum in Sri Lankan universities. Detailed studies of single approaches such as the current study will provide a basis for designing more complex and comprehensive studies in the future.

#### **7.4 Recommendations for future research**

The outcomes of the study with respect to the teachers' re-designing of the instructional curriculum of the EGAP course suggest that curriculum designers developing the programmatic curriculum need to take into consideration the concerns of the teachers who actually implement the classroom level curriculum practically. It is also necessary to ensure teacher autonomy in relation to making necessary changes according to their experiences and the circumstances in the enactment level curriculum. This will in turn help to align the instructional curriculum with the institutional curriculum in a more practical manner (Deng, 2010; 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008).

In terms of students' concerns and experiences, it is important for the teachers to consider student peculiarities in designing instructional curriculum and re-regulating the field, so that pedagogical possibilities can be informed by students' needs, strengths and weaknesses.

Teachers will subsequently be able to help students to overcome emotional, social, behavioural and cognitive impediments to learning (Philp and Duchesne, 2016).

The current study can be further extended by utilizing the theory that I have employed in the research, which is applicable to analysing the experiences of teachers and ESL learners. This is particularly relevant to the research question that *investigates the value of collaborative learning for university-level learners of English in a Sri Lankan ESL classroom*. Considering the identified value of collaborative activities, the next logical step in the study would involve delving into the details with a high level of nuance, particularly focusing on the experiences of both the teachers and ESL learners. This further exploration would significantly enhance our understanding of the topic and provide valuable insights into the dynamics of collaborative learning within the specific context being examined.

For future research, it is recommended to delve deeper into the linguistic context of Sri Lanka, particularly the intricate language dynamics between Sinhala, Tamil, and English. In studies focusing on language interventions or English language education, it is crucial to acknowledge and explore the potential implications of excluding specific language groups, such as Tamil-speaking students, from the research sample. By investigating the reasons for their absence and examining how this might influence the intervention and study findings, a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of language dynamics on educational outcomes can be achieved.

A less institutionalised environment can be utilised in developing macro skills in English, especially the aural and oral skills of ESL learners, which help to acquire social capital which in turn can be exchanged with embodied and objectified linguistic cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In addition, through the development of social capital, peer inculcation can also be enabled in an ESL/EFL classroom as a remedial measure to mitigate any lack of time for teacher-student interactions, a situation frequently encountered in ESL/EFL classrooms, providing students with opportunities to work in a less-institutionalised environment, and finding a part solution to what other researchers have framed as a problem of engagement, where students are required to be involved socially, emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively in their learning (Philp and Duchesne, 2016; Svalberg (2009). When students learn in such an environment they may feel it is worth *investing* in their field of ESL learning, to realise their *illusio* in better English proficiency (Bourdieu, 2000).

In the original planning of the current study it was intended to conduct the study in a face-to-face classroom where the students and teachers are physically present. Furthermore, it was intended to use design-based research (DBR), where the researcher and the teacher would be

able to engage and interact with each other closely to develop knowledge capable of improving educational practices (Anderson & Julie, 2012; Brown, 1992). COVID put paid to that. Such a study would be useful though. Exploring the acquisition of embodied and objectified cultural capital of English in a physical classroom using DBR would provide a different insight into the findings of the current study. It would be able to see additional possibilities to further improve instructional curriculum - and to identify these while the study proceeded.

Additionally, integrating the analysis of teacher and student data in a more interconnected manner would enable a deeper examination of the similarities, fissures, dialogues, and tensions that emerge between their respective perspectives. This holistic approach would provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in English language education, contributing to a comprehensive and robust analysis of the research findings.

By adopting a more data-focused and integrated analytical approach, future research can ensure that the full potential of the collected data is realized, allowing for a more thorough exploration of the research topic and facilitating a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play within the context of English language education.

Furthermore, the model *Sociological Template for Re-designing EGAP Instructional with a Collaborative Learning Curriculum* (Luke, 2009) used in this study can be employed with students in a different context and adopted when exploring student acquisition of embodied and objectified cultural capital of English as an ESL/EFL in primary and secondary schools and other tertiary educational institutions. It will be interesting to observe how this model is used in future studies to explore the teaching and learning of English in a collaborative environment both in the Sri Lankan and other international contexts where English is taught as a second or a foreign language. The framework offers the potential for additional exploration and consideration of necessary follow-up action for re-regulation of the ESL field.

## **7.5 Chapter Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the pedagogy and curriculum regarding English language programs in higher education in Sri Lanka. The findings demonstrate how collaborative learning activities can effectively facilitate the acquisition of embodied and objectified cultural capital of English among students in ESL classes at Sri Lankan universities. By engaging in such activities, students are not only able to improve their language proficiency but also undergo transformative changes in their habitus, enhancing their *illusio* and *investment* in ESL learning.

A significant implication of this study is the recognition of the potential benefits of a less institutionalized environment within the Sri Lankan university classroom. This environment fosters a sense of collaboration among peers, enabling the development of "collaborative peer social capital" and facilitating "peer inculcation." By leveraging these elements, teachers and curriculum designers can create an atmosphere that encourages and supports students' ESL learning in a more organic and student-centered manner. This insight has the potential to inform pedagogical approaches and curriculum development within English language programs in higher education institutions in Sri Lanka.

Moreover, while the history of English and English learning in Sri Lanka is unique, the study's findings hold relevance beyond its specific context. The insights into ESL instructional curriculum and the benefits of collaborative learning can be of value to teachers and researchers in other countries where English is taught as a second or foreign language. By considering the experiences and approaches identified in this study, educators in similar contexts can potentially enhance their teaching methodologies and adapt their instructional curriculum to create more engaging and effective learning environments.

Additionally, this study makes a contribution to Education studies by employing a Bourdieusian framework. By analysing the dynamics of cultural capital, habitus, and *illusio* within the ESL learning context, the thesis expands the understanding of how sociological concepts can be applied to educational research. This contribution opens avenues for future studies to explore and delve deeper into the intersection of sociological theories, language education, and curriculum development, providing a richer theoretical foundation for pedagogical practices.

Overall, the implications of this study extend to both pedagogy and curriculum, offering insights and informing perspectives on ESL or EFL courses not only in Sri Lanka but also in similar contexts worldwide. The sociological imagination of learners and teacher experiences, as explored in this research, has the potential to catalyse nuanced changes in the teaching and learning environment, considering its complex nature.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Summary of the EGAP Course Content

Course Unit	Reading	Writing	Speech	Listening	Language Structure
Unit 1- <i>World Personalities</i> Contents of DVD: Songs and music	Skimming. Scanning. Reading for detail.	Dealing with basic punctuation. Accuracy in the use of basic word classes, tenses and pronouns. Writing a short, guided account of oneself. Writing a short, guided biographical account of a world personality.	Making a simple self introduction Introducing others. Asking and responding to basic Wh- questions. Enhancing awareness of difference between formal and informal speech	Listening to and understanding a song. Understanding the internal structure of a song.	Basic review of Word classes. Review of basic tenses. Using Wh- words Using pronouns
Unit 2- <i>Distance Education</i> Contents of DVD: Monologue- Presentation by the Librarian, PUSL	Identify and understand the main idea in a short text. Enhance vocabulary skills-using contextual and structural clues to deduce meanings of unfamiliar words	Dealing with the notions of time and place in Writing. Giving directions to a specified place or location. Describing a given place using appropriate words of direction and location.	Engage a stranger in polite conversation; ask for directions politely. Give directions and locations. Give polite instructions.	Listening to and Understanding utterances with time references. Understanding utterances that contain reference to directions and location.	Prepositions of Time, Place and Direction.

<p>Unit 3- <b>Leisure and Sports</b> Contents of DVD: Explanation and description of a process (Bonsai) by an expert.</p>	<p>To understand the difference between main topic and main ideas. To understand and discover the supporting details sub-topics, supporting examples – in a text. To use punctuation to facilitate understanding the meaning of sections of a text.</p>	<p>To be familiar with the language of process/processes.  To be able to describe and report a process.  To be able to write simple definitions.</p>	<p>Listen to and understand the correct sequence of describing a process. Listen to and comprehend the steps of a process with time adverbials. Write down the correct steps of a process while listening to a description of the process. Answer comprehension questions after listening to a description of a process.</p>	<p>Explain a process. Express likes/dislikes. Give opinions on a subject. Ask for someone’s opinions.</p>	<p>Language of instructions. Sequence markers. Passive voice Modals mini-review.</p>
<p>Unit 4-<b>Eco-Tourism</b> Contents of DVD; A Power point presentation on Eco Tourism- definition, examples, advantages, disadvantages.</p>	<p>Deal with and understand a Power point presentation Understand and deal with cause/ effect in a reading text. Text: A passage on Eco-Tourism Understand The structure of a fairly complex</p>	<p>Develop the ability to describe cause/effect.  Develop note-taking skills.</p>	<p>Introduce and enhance note-taking skills while Listening to a Power point presentation.</p>	<p>Identify and understand parts of a Power point presentation- Introduction, Body and Conclusion.  Enhance ability to make a Power point presentation or a speech on a complex topic.</p>	<p>Words and phrases describing cause and effect.  Structure of a presentation- Introduction, Body, Conclusion</p>

	reading text				
Unit 5- <b><i>Religions of Sri Lanka</i></b> Contents of DVD: A multi-speaker discussion on the four major religions of Sri Lanka- Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.	Dealing with main topic, main point, supporting details (examples etc.) in a complex academic passage. Reading passage: The gods of Hinduism.	Develop the ability to deal with comparison and contrast in writing.  Organize according to a selected plan and write a text dealing with comparisons and contrasts.	Develop ability to listen and understand a multi-speaker discussion- points made, facts presented, opinions expressed.  Enhance ability to take down notes during a multi-speaker discussion.	Develop ability to deal with comparisons and contrasts in speech.  Enhance ability to express one's opinions	Language of comparison and contrast
Unit 6- <b><i>Gender and Representation</i></b> Contents of DVD: An academic discussion with illustrations on how women are represented in the media, particularly advertising.	Understanding structure and organization of different types of texts- Problem- solution, General- specific.	Dealing with academic writing – essay writing. Writing a thesis statement, writing supporting points. Organization of different types of texts in writing. Techniques of conclusion.	Dealing with a complex academic presentation containing difficult vocabulary and abstract concepts.	Planning, organizing and delivering an academic presentation	Language of comparison and contrast

(Adapted from Raheem, 2014, pp 14-17)

## Appendix B

### Sample Collaborative Group Activities

#### English for General Academic Purposes Course

#### UNIT 1

#### WORLD PERSONALITIES

Module: Reading

Session - 1 Reading

#### Introduction

Reading is a challenging activity in which you have to put together structure (grammar) and vocabulary (words used) to understand the meaning of the text (the passage you are reading). A fluent reader usually does not waste time reading every word. He / she often uses a number of techniques to read fast. This unit will introduce some of these techniques to you so that you can develop your skills in reading.

#### Objectives

To identify and be able to use the techniques of skimming for overall understanding and scanning specific information.

To read intensively for detail.

To identify and understand the general meaning of a short text.

To use grammar cues to understand unfamiliar vocabulary.

#### Pre Reading

When we read, we usually note the title of what we are reading and form some idea about what we are going to read. In the Pre – Reading Activities which are placed at the start of every Reading Unit, we shall make predictions about what we expect in the reading text. As you may have noticed, the theme of this Unit is “World Personalities.”

#### *Pre Reading – Activity*

**Think** of a world personality that you admire.

**Make predictions** - List some details that you expect in a reading text on that person.

**Share Ideas** - Share your responses with your group / your teacher.  
Add to your existing list.

**While reading** - tick off the details in your list if they are dealt with in the text.

(Source: EGAP Coursebook, Block 1, p. 1)<sup>20</sup>

Sample collaborative activities based on the textbook content:

Unit 1

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<sup>20</sup> I have not referenced this document because that would identify the study university.

## Reading

P. 1 pre reading activity. Ask every member to think of a key figure and make at least 2-3 points and share it with the group. Then they can make one list and present it to the class.

### P.7 Activity 1

Let's assume that there will be 10 groups of 5 students in each.

Ask each student to discuss one type of text and finally to report it to the group with the reason/s for their decision.

### P.9 Activity 3 on Skimming

Ask each student to get the skim for an answer for one question and report to the group. Then they can check the answers together.

### P.10 & 11 Activity 4 & 5

Ask the students to do the activity individually and discuss the answers together as a group.

### P. 12 Activity 6

Ask the students to try at least one question and find the answer. As soon as they find the answer, they can report it to the group and finally to discuss the answer.

### P. 13 Activity 7 Parts of Speech

Let the students do the activity and discuss the answers together. Ask everyone to come out with at least answer/s for a question.

### P.15 Activity 10 Word classes

Ask each student to select a word from the list and write a sentence. At the end to discuss the answers together and do corrections collaboratively.

## Writing

### P. 22 & 23 Personal pronouns

Activity 3 & 4 Let the students find the answers individually and discuss the answers collaboratively.

### P.25 & 26 Adjectives & Adverbs

#### Activity 6 & 7 & 8

Let each of them make a sentence and present it to the group then discuss.

### P. 28 Activity 10

Let the group agree with 3 events for past, present and future. Each student will write 2 -3 sentences. Finally, everyone can get each other's sentences and complete their descriptions.

## Listening

### P.39. Pre listening Activity

Let the students discuss the activity collaboratively

### P. 46 Post listening Activity 4

Ask every student to come up with an answer to one question and discuss the answers collaboratively.

### P. 58 Similarities and differences between formal and informal speech

Let the each of students come up with at least one similarity and a difference. Then discuss the points collaboratively.

## **Unit 2**

### Reading

#### P 61 Activity 2

Let the students check their answers collaboratively at least answering to a question.

#### Pre writing activities

Ask students discuss the answers collaboratively. If cannot find the answer in their group, then can ask the teacher.

## P. 70 Activity 2

Ask everyone to try with a sentence and complete the activity collaboratively

### Sample activity:

Given below are 8 different activities which we engage in daily, weekly, or sometimes occasionally.

1. Arrange your bed from the beginning
2. Cook 'Shakshuka' (check the internet to find out what it is and for directions)
3. Sew a shirt button
4. Make a wooden key tag
5. Plant a Jak sapling
6. Prepare a coconut sambol
7. Tie a Tie, Windsor Knot style
8. Write an envelope for a Registered Letter

Select one topic of the Team's choice. It would be interesting if each group select the topic given under their Team number.

If possible, create or perform the activity to identify each step in detail.

Write down each step that you took to do the selected activity. You can have as many steps as needed. Number each step as 1. 2. 3. etc.

Each sentence should start with the relevant verb form. (You may refer to the Listening lesson on 'Bonsai').

### General Rules

I would like you to take this opportunity to converse with the other team members in the English Language to help you in speaking the language through your Chat/Messaging.

Use your dictionaries to find related/suitable words when writing. If you have problems, you may send me a message. Feel free to ask questions and get clarifications. Never be shy or hesitant to ask questions.

Ensure that you read your work at least twice before posting on 'Files' to avoid careless mistakes such as spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, etc. Remember when typing, you have to leave two spaces after a full stop and one space after a comma.

### Sample activity:

Given below are 8 different topics, which are some of the current issues and problems that we experience in Sri Lanka at this moment.

1. Domestic Violence
2. Nepotism in Politics
3. Alcoholism/Drug Use
4. Child Abuse
5. Police Brutality and Peaceful Demonstrators
6. School Dropouts under Free Education
7. Failing Public Transport
8. Debt-Ridden Economy

Select one topic of the Team's choice.

As discussed in the class,

1. Prepare a mind map for
  - a. The Causes –include as many as you can
  - b. The Solutions – include solutions to the causes you identified

2. Then, select 3 main/key causes, according to your opinion.
3. Write an introductory paragraph for your Essay.

Your introductory paragraph can have upto 10 sentences.

*As the youth of this country, and children born in the new millennium, you are expected to be critical in your thinking of what is happening around you. If we need to live in a better world, we need to be the game changers. Your ideas are the stepping stones for such a world. So let's talk the truth and what we can do to change it for our own future.*

I have uploaded a MS Teams approved Mindmap program – MindMup – under Group 13 Files. You may use that to create your mind map.

### **General Rules**

I would like you to take this opportunity to speak to the other team members in the English Language to help you in speaking the language through your Chat/Messaging.

Use your dictionaries to find related/suitable words when writing. If you have problems, you may send me a message. Feel free to ask questions and get clarifications. Never be shy or hesitant to ask questions.

Ensure that you read your work at least twice before posting on 'Files' to avoid careless mistakes such as spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, etc. Remember when typing, you have to leave two spaces after a full stop and one space after a comma.

Speaking and writing activity related to the Course Book:

Today in our EGAP Class we learnt how to read graphs and charts and also to describe them in an academic manner. You can re-visit your Course Book – Block 3 - Unit 6 – Part 1 – Social Media to re-capture the lesson. The Course Book also introduced you to vocabulary that is used to describe a chart or a graph, and gave you an example on how to describe a Line Graph (pages 41 and 42). In addition to the Course Book, the PowerPoint presentation related to Session 11 also gave you additional material and vocabulary for this lesson (uploaded on MS Teams – Group 13 – General – Files).

Given below are 8 different situations related to Sri Lanka's economic growth in different fields of interest. You may know some of these situations, or may have experienced or read about some already. Each situation is depicted by a graph or a chart.

Follow the guideline given in page 42, and describe the selected graph or chart as detailed as possible using the words learnt. You may refer to the Course Book - page 40, and the PowerPoint presentation slides 23, 25, 28.

The 8 different situation related to Sri Lanka's economic growth in different fields of interest:-

1 Reviving the 'Granary of the East' - New lease of life for rural economy with increased guaranteed price and purchasing strategy for paddy. Article by W.A. Nalaka Wijesooriya – Senior Research Officer, Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research Institute and Training Institute. (Daily News of Wednesday, February 19, 2020)

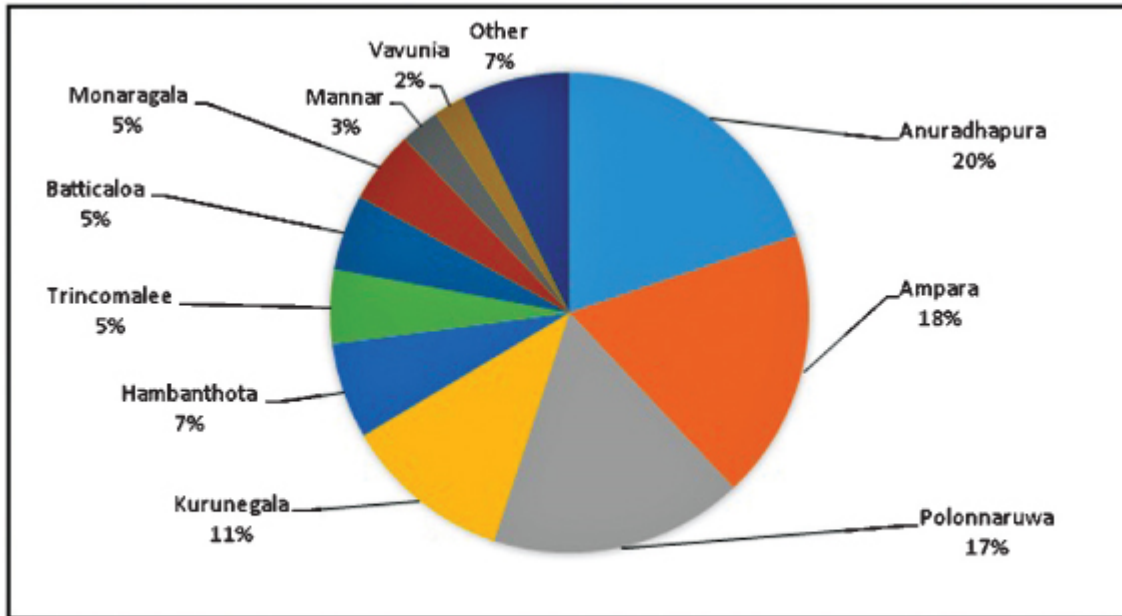
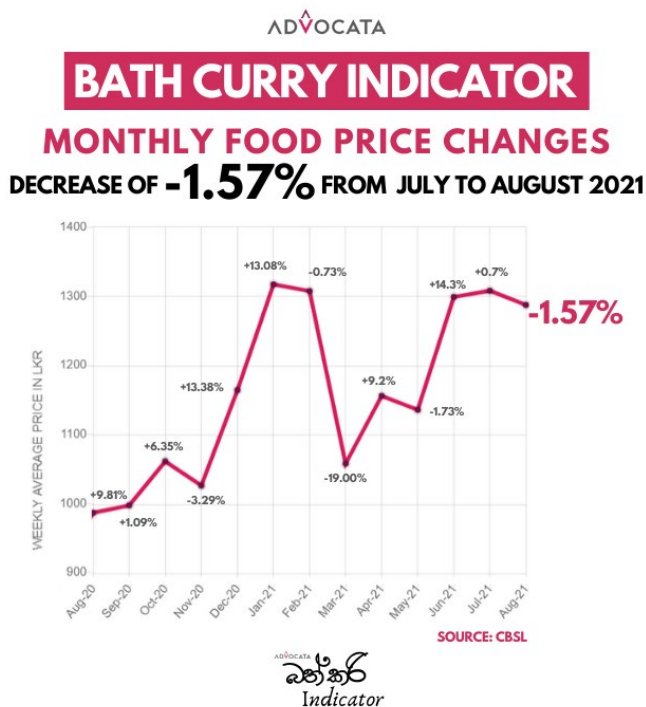


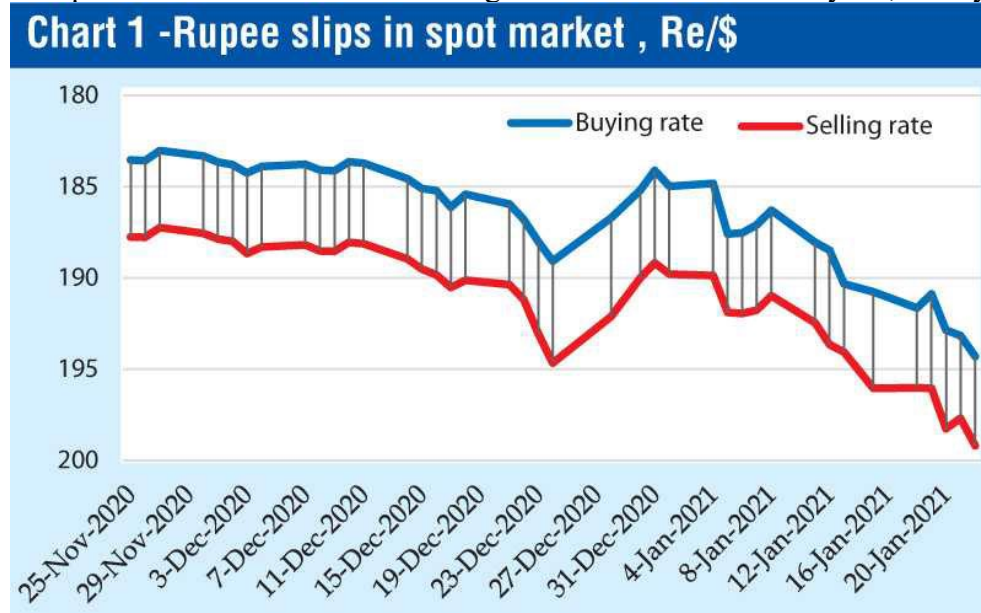
Figure 1: Annual Marketable Surplus of Paddy in Sri Lanka (%) in an average production year, 2013  
 (Source: Department of Census and Statistics)

2 Excerpt from <https://www.advocata.org/media-archives/tag/COVID19> - 7th September 2021. Downloaded on 12 September 2021

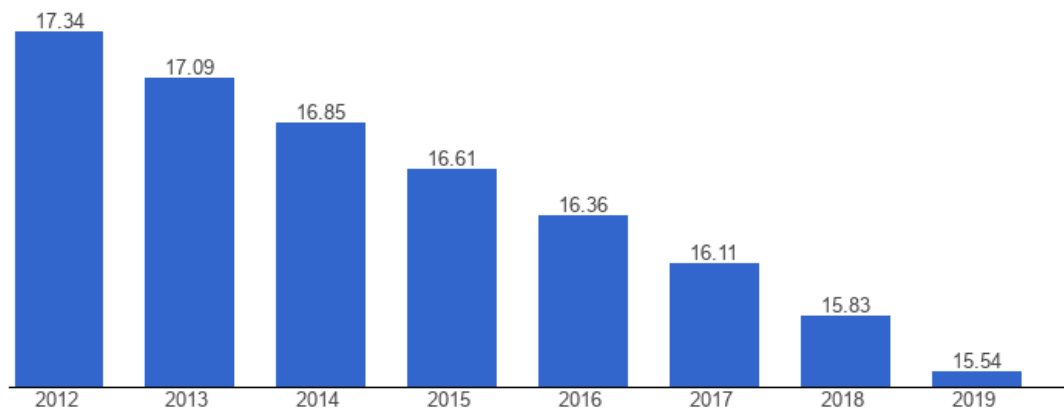




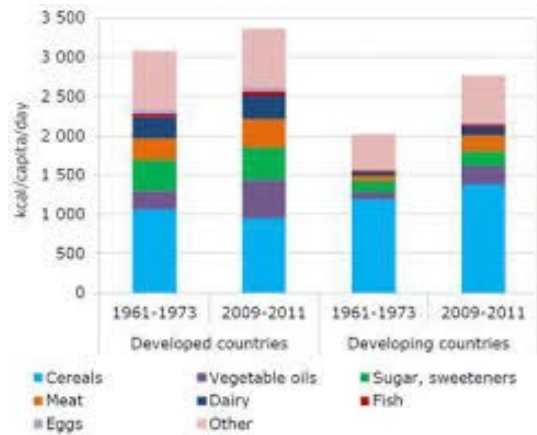
3 Rupee is under stress with mounting debt commitments - Daily FT, Friday, 29 January 2021



1. Sri Lanka: Birth rate (measure: births per 1000 people; Source: The World Bank) [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Sri-Lanka/birth\\_rate/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Sri-Lanka/birth_rate/)

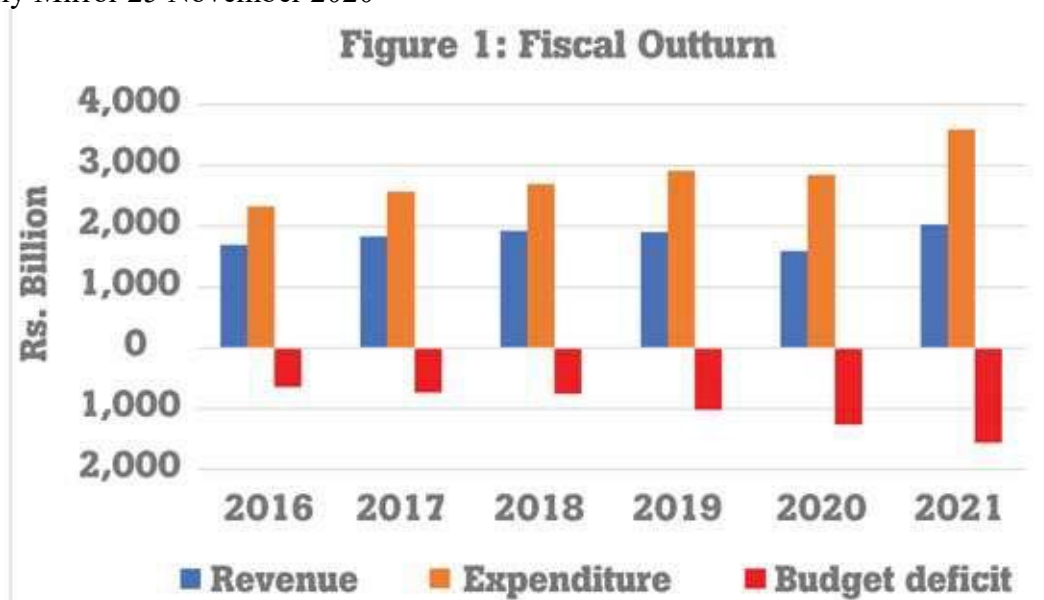


2. Changing Energy (food) Consumption in Developed and Developing Countries - Overarching Agriculture Policy (Draft) August 2019



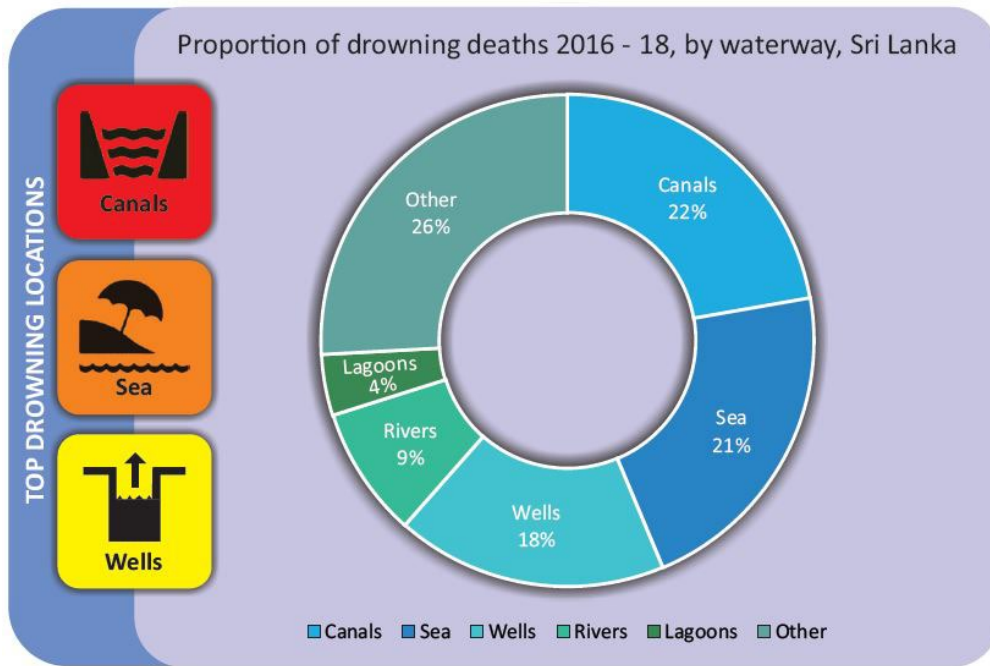
Source: duplicated from: European Commission (2015); World Food Consumption Patterns, trends and drivers

3 Budget 2021 likely to worsen macroeconomic instability amidst COVID-19 pandemic, Daily Mirror 25 November 2020

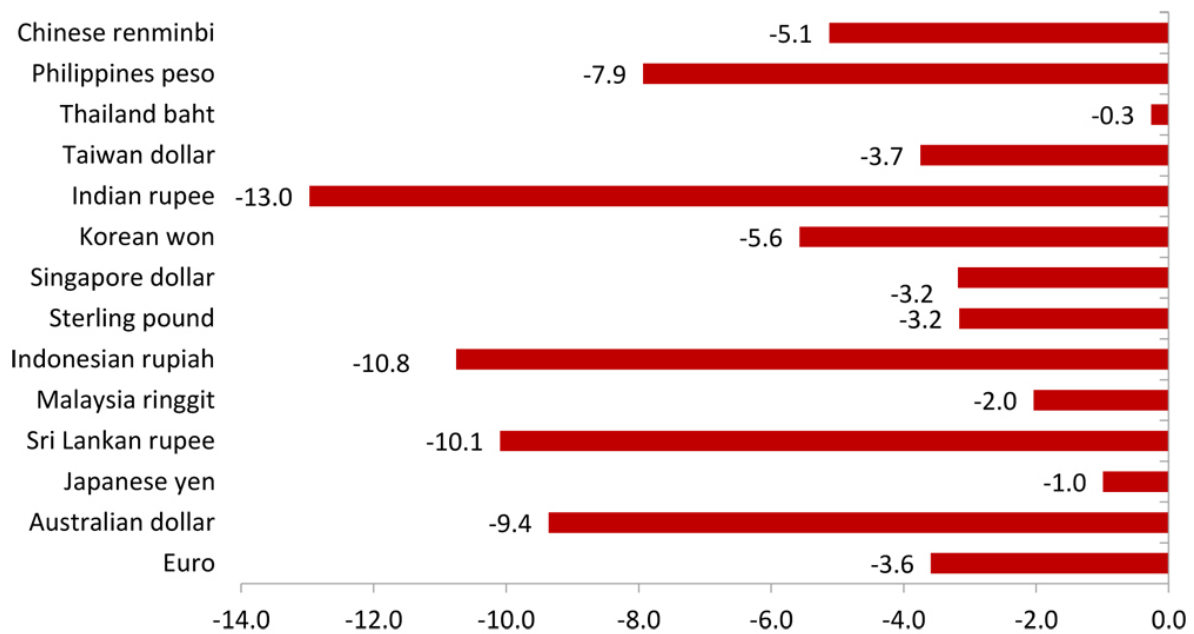


4 Sri Lanka Life Saving – Taking action to prevent drowning in Sri Lanka

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2020/01/07/sri-lanka-life-saving-taking-action-to-prevent-drowning-in-sri-lanka/>



3. CB Responds to Misleading Newspaper Articles on Rupee Depreciation. October 12, 2018  
<http://bizenglish.adaderana.lk/>



Activity:

Upload the description with the graph or chart as follows in your Team ... , under Files –

Then present it to the class as a group.

## Appendix C

### Sample questions for initial and final focus-groups and semi-structured interviews with students and teacher participants

#### Initial semi-structured interview and focus-group questions

The following questions focus on Research questions 1 and 2.

RQ1. What challenges and possibilities did teachers envisage before introducing collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes in a Sri Lankan university?

#### Questions for initial semi-structured interviews with the teacher participants

1. Do you think there are some challenges that you as teachers face in teaching English language at the university? If so, what are they?
2. What is your opinion about students' attitudes towards learning English?
3. Do you think students' attitudes towards learning English impact on effective teaching in the ESL classroom?
4. To what extent do students actively participate in classroom activities in ESL learning?
5. To what extent do students perform (underperformance, satisfactory) in ESL learning?
6. What do you think of the mother tongue influence of the students (linguistic structure: difference in English and Sinhala/Tamil syntax, pronunciation, vocabulary) regarding English language learning? If so, how does it impact on ESL teaching in the EGAP Course?
7. What psychological factors (anxiety, shyness) of students' impact on ESL teaching?
8. What is your opinion about the EGAP curriculum?
9. How do you think that load of workload in the EGAP curriculum (pre-determined curricular schedules) impacts on effective classroom practice?
10. Do you think it is a challenging task to handle large classes in ELS teaching in the EGAP Course? If so, how does it affect providing quality ESL teaching?
11. What challenges do you face in relation to the infrastructure (proper classrooms, technology, course material etc.) related to the ESL teaching in the EGAP Course?

RQ 2. What was the student experience of learning English before the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their EGAP classes in a Sri Lankan university?

**Questions for initial focus-groups with the student participants**

1. Do you think there are some learning challenges that you as students face in learning English language at the university? If so, what are they?
2. What are your attitudes towards learning English?
3. What benefits do you expect from learning English?
4. Do you believe that you get enough exposure to English, that is English an speaking environment?
5. To what extent do you get an opportunity to practice English other than in classroom?
6. What do you think of the mother tongue influence (linguistic structure: difference in English and Sinhala/Tamil syntax, pronunciation, vocabulary) regarding your English language learning?
7. What do you think of the EGAP Course syllabus?
8. How do you feel about the classroom activities used in English language teaching in the EGAP classroom?
9. How do you feel about the teaching methods that the teachers (instructors/ lecturers) use in the English classroom?
10. To what extent do you get an opportunity to practise language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) proportionately?
11. What do you think of the infrastructure facilities (proper classrooms, technology, course material etc.) that you have in learning English?

## **Final semi-structured interview and focus-group questions**

The following questions focus on Research questions 3 and 4.

RQ 3. How did EGAP teachers in a Sri Lankan university appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes?

### **Questions for final semi-structured interviews with the teacher participants**

#### **Part I**

##### **Emotional experience**

- 1.1 Do you find any differences in students' motivated involvement in the course of academic activities in relation to conventional learning environment (usual classroom) and the collaborative learning environment?
- 1.2 If so, can you explain the differences that you noticed?
- 1.3 What have you noticed about the students' feelings of connection and disconnection in relation to their peers in the classroom or their activity interlocutor (partner)?
- 1.4 What can you say about students' positive feelings (interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment, purposefulness and autonomy) and negative feelings (frustration, anxiety, and boredom) when you are teaching in the EGAP classroom?

##### **Social action**

- 2.1 To what extent do students interact with their teachers and their peers in the ESL learning classroom?
- 2.2 Generally, do students participate in all EGAP classes (absenteeism)?
- 2.3 Have you noticed that some students withdraw from their academic activities (disrupting the teaching and learning of others)?

##### **Cognitive involvement**

- 3.1 To what extent do students have willingness to participate in their classroom activities in ESL learning?
- 3.2 To what extent do students pay attention in ESL classroom activities?

##### **Behaviour**

- 4.1 To what extent do students actively participate in their ESL activities in all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing)?

The following questions were based on the mediating effects of dimensions of engagement, that is activating (strengthening) and deactivating (inhabiting) engagement behaviours.

## **Part II**

### **Emotional experience**

- 1.1 How did you find the students' interest regarding the topic/s or task/s prompts and their focus on different language skills related to the collaborative activities and how they felt about engaging in the activities (whether they enjoyed them, were excited or felt anxious, frustrated)?

### **Social action**

- 2.1 What did you notice about EGAP students working with their peers in collaborative group activities (enjoyed, distracted, spent time on task because of social aspects)?

### **Cognitive involvement**

- 3.1 To what extent did the students complete their tasks (focus was only a few tasks or all the tasks; got help from others and worked together; challenge resulted in frustration) and how did they complete their activities when working with their peers in collaborative group activities?
- 3.2 To what extent did students show willingness to participate in collaborative group activities in ESL learning?
- 3.3 To what extent did students pay attention in collaborative group activities in ESL learning activities?

### **Behaviour**

- 4.1 What did you notice in relation to students' completion of the collaborative group activities in relation to their focus on language learning and paying attention to the tasks (focuses attention, prompts deep thinking; task completion at a superficial level; prompts needed to do more; boring or frustrating to complete; help to communicate with others; too competitive and disrupted social relations)?

RQ 4. How did EGAP students in a Sri Lankan university appraise the introduction of collaborative learning activities into their classes?

### **Questions for final focus-groups with the student participants**

#### **Part I**

##### **Emotional experience**

- 1.1 Do you find any differences in your motivated involvement during academic activities in relation to your conventional learning environment (usual classroom) and the collaborative learning classroom?
- 1.2 If so, can you explain the differences?
- 1.3 How do you describe your feelings of connection or disconnection in relation to your peers in the classroom or your activity interlocutor (partner)?
- 1.4 How about your positive feelings (interest, enthusiasm, and enjoyment; purposefulness and autonomy) and negative feelings (frustration, anxiety and boredom) when you are in your EGAP classroom?

##### **Social action**

- 2.1 To what extent do you interact with your teachers and peers in your ESL classroom?
- 2.2 Generally, do you participate in all EGAP classes?
- 2.3 Even if you come to class, do you have some situations in which you withdraw from academic activities (behaviour, disrupting the teaching and learning of others)?

##### **Cognitive involvement**

- 3.1 To what extent are you willing to participate in your classroom activities in ESL learning?
- 3.2 To what extent do you pay attention in your ESL learning activities?

##### **Behaviour**

- 4.1 To what extent do you actively participate in your ESL activities in the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing)?



The following questions were based on the mediating effects of dimensions of engagement, that is activating (strengthening) and deactivating (inhabiting) engagement behaviours.

## **Part II**

### **Emotional experience**

- 1.1 How interesting was/were the topic/s and your focus on different language skill/s related to the collaborative activities and how did you feel about engaging in the activities (enjoyed, were excited or felt anxious, frustrated)?

### **Social action**

- 2.1 What was/were your experience/s (enjoyed, distracted, spent time on task because of social aspects) of working with your peers in collaborative group activities in learning English?

### **Cognitive involvement**


- 3.1 To what extent did you complete your tasks (focus was only on a few tasks or all the tasks; got help from others and worked together; challenged results in frustration) and how did you complete your activities when working with your peers in collaborative group activities?
- 3.2 To what extent were you willing to participate in collaborative group activities in ESL learning?
- 3.3 To what extent did you pay attention in collaborative group activities in your ESL learning activities?

### **Behaviour**

- 4.1 What was your experience in relation to completion of the collaborative group activities in relation to your focus on language learning and paying attention to the tasks (focuses attention, prompts deep thinking; task completion at a superficial level; prompts want to do more; boring or frustrating to complete; help to communicate with others; too competitive and disrupted social relations)?

## Appendix D

### Ethics approval from QUT University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC)

	<b>University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC)</b> <b>HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE</b> <b>NHMRC Registered Committee Number EC00171</b>
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**Date of Issue:** 1/2/21 (supersedes all previously issued certificates)

Dear Prof Karen Dooley

This approval certificate serves as your written notice that the proposal has met the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and has been approved on that basis. You are therefore authorised to commence activities as outlined in your application, subject to any specific and standard conditions detailed in this document.

<b>Project Details</b>		
<b>Category of Approval:</b>	Negligible-Low Risk	
<b>Approved From:</b>	1/02/2021	<b>Approved Until:</b> 1/02/2026 (subject to annual reports)
<b>Approval Number:</b>	2000001023	
<b>Project Title:</b>	Engagement of Sri Lankan ESL learners in a collaborative English language learning environment: an exploratory case-study	

<b>Investigator Details</b>		
<b>Chief Investigator:</b>	Prof Karen Dooley	
<b>Other Staff/Students:</b>		
<b>Investigator Name</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Role</b>
Dr Radha Iyer	Internal	QUT Associate Supervisor
Ms Imali Bogamuwa	Student	Doctoral (Research)

<b>Conditions of Approval</b>		
<b>Specific Conditions of Approval:</b> No special conditions placed on approval by the UHREC. Standard conditions apply.		
<b>Conditions of Approval:</b>		
1. Conduct the project in accordance with the principles of the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007, the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, any additional specific conditions defined by the UHREC, any associated NHMRC guidelines and regulations, and the provisions of any legislation which is relevant to the project;		
2. Conduct the project in accordance with the standard and any additional specific conditions defined by the HREC, the principles of the NHMRC National Statement		
3. Obtain any additional approvals or authorisations as required (e.g. from other ethics committees, collaborating institutions, supporting organisations);		
4. Maintain research records and data in accordance with MoPP D/2.8 Management of research data.		
5. Respond promptly to the requests and instructions of UHREC;		
6. Declare all actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest (NS 5.4);		
7. Immediately advise the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI) of any concerns, complaints or adverse events including (NS 5.5.3):		
o If any unforeseen development or events occur that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project;		
o If any complaints are made, or expressions of concern are raised, in relation to the project;		
o If the project needs to be suspended or modified because the risks to participants now outweigh the benefits;		
<i>If any details within this Approval Certificate are incorrect please advise the Research Ethics Advisory Team immediately.</i>		
End of Document		

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## Appendix E

### Ethics approval from PUSL Research Unit (the Sri Lankan university)

Personal file

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உமது இல.  
Your No. }

Office of Director Research

22.03.2021

Ms. Imali N.J. Bogamuwa  
Victoria Park Road,  
Kelvin Grove,  
QLD 4059,  
Australia.

Through: Head/Language Studies Department

Dear Ms. Bogamuwa,

Ethical Clearance Application

This refers to the Ethical Clearance Application you submitted to the Research Unit/ [REDACTED]  
The Ethics Review Committee (ERC) members have evaluated your application and, I wish  
to inform that Ethics Review Committee has given approval for your Ethical Clearance  
Application to conduct research at the [REDACTED] premises.

Thank you, [REDACTED]

## Appendix F

### Samples of Phase One Inductive Thematic Analysis: Planning discussion with the teacher participants

#### Planning discussion with the teacher participants: Initial themes, categories, and codes

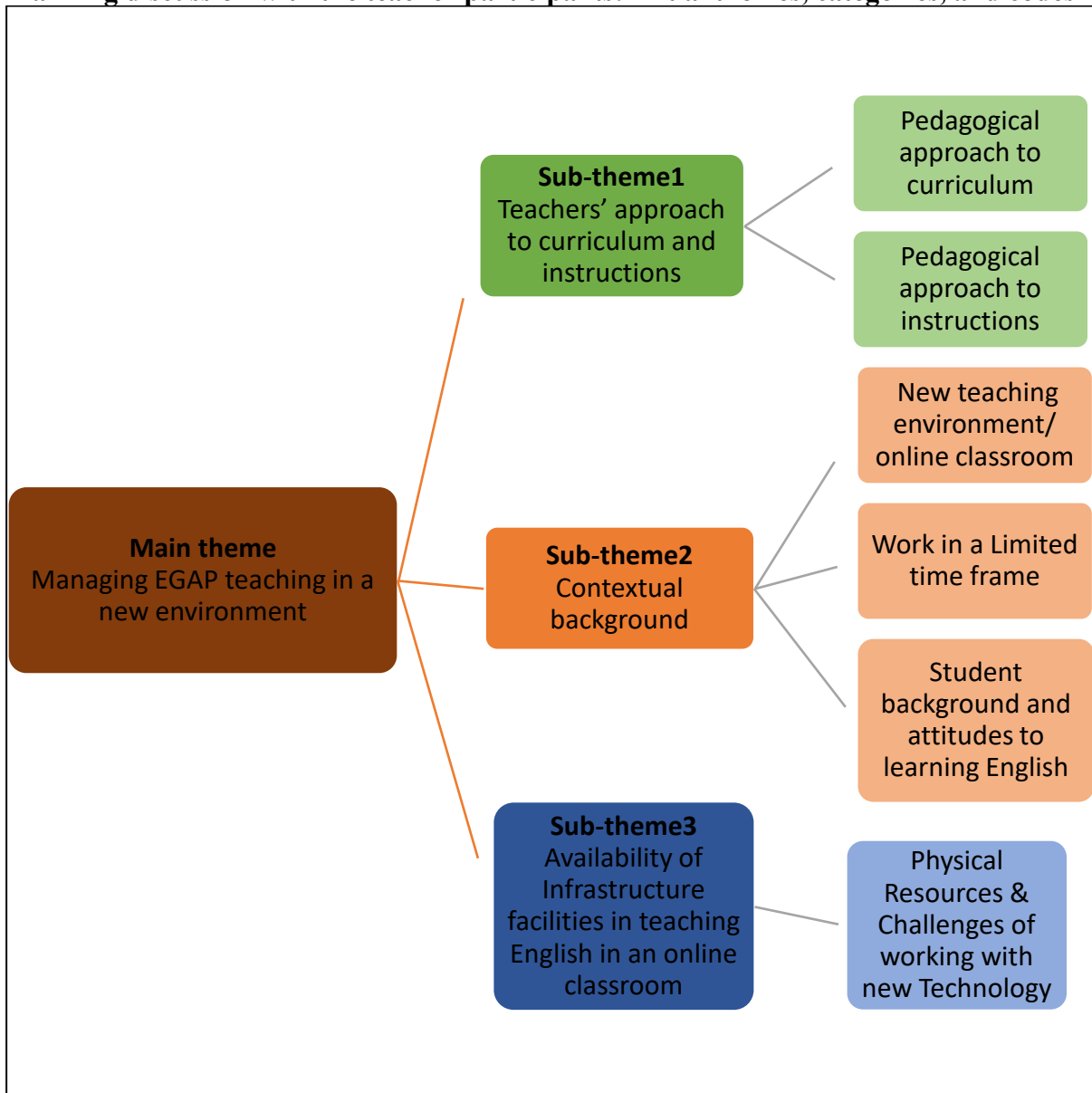


Figure: Themes and categories of the thematic analysis of the planning discussion of the collaborative group activities (initially)

## **Initial Themes:**

### **Sub-theme 1: Teachers' Approach to Curriculum & Instructions**

#### **Curriculum**

Need all the students to follow the schedule lessons

Involve in collaborative group activities

Implementation of the collaborative group activities in a real classroom

Lesson planning needs to be adjusted by the teachers

Need to follow the lesson given plans by the academic department

Practical issues: course material need to be updated

#### **Instructions**

Practising collaborative group activities in an online classroom

Necessity of all student participation in collaborative group activities

Requirement of all student participation

Instructions: students need to be given some scaffolding

Dealing with the freeloaders or free riders in group activities

Instructions: handling students with less intimidation

Getting the student feedback

Necessity of getting student feedback

### **Sub-theme 2: Contextual backgrounds**

New teaching environment/ online classroom

Managing the first class

Large classroom: handling large number of students in group activities

Difficulties in monitoring student participation in online classroom

Collaborative group activities as a remedial measure in online classroom

Working in collaborative groups help the teachers to keep records of their progress

Actual situation and practical issues

Needed some time to get used to new technology with MST

Trial and error/ being the guinea pigs in the new teaching environment

Want to do a pre-planning before every teaching session

#### **Work in a Limited time frame**

Managing the time frame: new EGAP course schedule

Handling group activities in a limited time frame.

Covering up the assigned work

Practising listening skills

### **Student background and attitudes to learning English**

Student behaviour of the very first day of the course

Students do not feel comfortable in speaking in English

Student attitudes and cultural influence

Grouping and working on MST

### **Sub-theme 3: infrastructure facilities**

#### ***Challenge of working with new Technology***

Technology: use of new online platform

Working with unfamiliar technology

Practical issues with the technology and practising listening skills

Need to have practice on technical requirements

### **Revised themes**

#### **Sub-theme1: Teaching & Learning of academic English**

Teachers' Approach to Curriculum & Instructions

- Curriculum
- Instructions

Contextual backgrounds

Infrastructure facilities

#### **Sub-theme 2: Student diversity**

Student background

#### **Sub-theme 3: Student attitudes to learning English**

#### **Sub-theme 1: Teaching & Learning of academic English**

**Teachers' Approach to Curriculum & Instructions**

##### ***Curriculum***

Need all the students to follow the schedule lessons

Involve in collaborative group activities

Implementation of the collaborative group activities in a real classroom

Lesson planning needs to be adjusted by the teachers  
Need to follow the lesson given plans by the academic department  
Practical issues: course material need to be updated

### ***Instructions***

Practising collaborative group activities in an online classroom  
Necessity of all student participation in collaborative group activities  
Requirement of all student participation  
Instructions: students need to be given some scaffolding  
Dealing with the freeloaders or free riders in group activities  
Instructions: handling students with less intimidation  
Getting the student feedback  
Necessity of getting student feedback

### **Contextual backgrounds**

New teaching environment/ online classroom  
Managing the first class  
Large classroom: handling large number of students in group activities  
Difficulties in monitoring student participation in online classroom  
Collaborative group activities as a remedial measure in online classroom  
Working in collaborative groups help the teachers to keep records of their progress  
Actual situation and practical issues  
Needed some time to get used to new technology with MST  
Trial and error/ being the guinea pigs in the new teaching environment  
Want to do a pre-planning before every teaching session

### **Infrastructure facilities**

#### ***Working within a Limited time frame***

Managing the time frame: new EGAP course schedule  
Handling group activities in a limited time frame.  
Covering up the assigned work  
Practising listening skills

### ***Technology***

Challenge of working with new Technology  
Technology: use of new online platform

Working with unfamiliar technology

Practical issues with the technology and practising listening skills

Need to have practice on technical requirements

### **Sub-theme 2: Student diversity**

#### ***Student background***

Student behaviour of the very first day of the course

Students do not feel comfortable in speaking in English

Student attitudes and cultural influence

Grouping and working on MST

### **Sub-theme 3: Student attitudes to learning English**

Student behaviour of the very first day of the course + students do not feel comfortable in speaking in English (same point)

student attitudes and cultural influence

grouping and working on MST



## Appendix G

### Samples of Phase One Inductive Thematic Analysis: Initial semi-structured interviews with the teacher participants

#### Initial semi-structured interviews with the teacher participants: Themes, categories, and codes

Table1: Initial themes and categories of the thematic analysis of Initial semi-structured interviews with the teacher participants (initial)

Broader theme	Categories	Sub-themes
Teaching & learning of academic English	- Pedagogical approach  - Contextual backgrounds	Teachers' approach to curriculum, instructions, and evaluation Contextual background
Student diversity	- Social linguistic background  - School education	Impact of social linguistic background Learning English at school education
Student attitudes to learning English	-Emotional engagement -Social engagement -Cognitive engagement -Behavioural engagement  - Cultural impact	Impact of student attitudes on engagement dimensions  Cultural influence on learning English
Infrastructure facilities in teaching English at University	- Physical Resources  - Technology	Availability of resources for teaching English in university classroom Use of technology in teaching English

Table2: Revised themes and categories of the thematic analysis of Initial semi-structured interviews with the teacher participants (revised)

Broader theme	Categories	Sub-themes
Teaching & learning of academic English	Pedagogical approach	Teachers' approach to curriculum, instructions, and evaluation
	Physical Resources & Technology	Availability of Infrastructure facilities in teaching English at a University classroom
Student diversity & Contextual backgrounds	Social linguistic background	Impact of social linguistic background & contextual backgrounds
	School education	Learning English at school education
Student attitudes to learning English	Emotional Social Cognitive Behavioural	Impact of student attitudes on commitment to learning and Cultural influence on learning English

## **Theme 1: Teaching & Learning of academic English**

### **Sub-theme 1: Pedagogical approach**

#### ***Teaching macro- skills***

Instructions: collaboration in the group activities

Instructions: collaborative reading in classroom practice in reading skills

Instructions: individual work in writing activities

Instructions: teacher-oriented teaching in writing skills

Instructions: getting student contribution in writing practice & they

Instructions: students need to be a part of teaching

Instructions: helping students to correct pronunciation through scaffolding

#### ***L1 influence***

Instructions: lack of exposure to proper pronunciation

Instructions: L1 structure being influenced in ESL learning

Instructions: teaching structure without explaining

#### ***Working with mix-ability groups***

Instructions: student grouping does not take place according to the proficiency levels

Instructions: need to cater to students from different levels

Instructions: need to cater to students from different levels

Instructions: sometimes no regular attendees

### ***Teacher preparation***

Instructions: teaching schedule & teacher guide provide sufficient teaching instructions

Instructions: Teacher guide & teacher briefings

Instructions: Teachers get instructions mainly at the teacher-briefing

Instructions: coursebook and teacher guide

Instructions: follow the curriculum in own way / adapt teachers' own instructions

Instructions: adding teacher's experience and incorporate experiences into teaching instructions

Instructions: integrate own experience in teaching instructions

Instructions: teaching is interesting and challenging but do not get the regular attendees

Instruction: using and sharing extra material in teaching

### ***EGAP course and the teacher preparation***

Curriculum: shifting from ESP to EGAP

Curriculum: aims and objectives of the course

Curriculum: pre-determined curricular and teacher preparation

### ***Need more improvement to the curriculum***

Curriculum: course materials need to be updated

Curriculum: need to match the course material content with the present students

Curriculum: need to update the content of the course materials

Curriculum: need of teacher contribution in revising the course

Curriculum: needs more resources to be added

Curriculum: students need more speaking skills and presentation skills

Curriculum: but not employable because of the soft skill on the language problem

Curriculum: need classroom practice on all macro skills

Curriculum: heavy syllabus some extra material and activities can be used only at the beginning

### ***Classroom practice***

Curriculum: teachers use additional work beyond the curriculum

Curriculum: adding some online material with technology

Curriculum: being very critical about the pre-determined curricular

### ***Need more details about the evaluation***

Curriculum: needs documents regarding details of the evaluation

Evaluation: teachers need more information on exam preparation

Evaluations: achievements of the course objectives

Evaluation: student achievement in cats

### ***Pre-preparation***

Evaluation: pre preparation for the evaluation

Evaluation: pre-preparation for the evaluation

Instructions: online classroom is difficult due to time constrain

### ***Testing on macro-skills***

Evaluations: no testing on speech

## **Sub-theme 2: Physical Resources & Technology**

### ***Infrastructure facilities: physical resources***

Needs more resources to be added

Less classroom facilities

Large classroom (handling large classes with less physical resources)

Congested classrooms and cannot do proper group activities

Need better facilities for practicing and testing on speech

Don't have sufficient physical resources and proper

Lack of physical resources for the teachers

differences in regional centres in handling classrooms

### ***Technology***

Teaching language macro-skills with less technological facilities

Need appropriate technology to work accordingly to the curriculum

Students cannot have collaboration among themselves at the same level

Use of very limited technology in classroom

Lack of technological resources for the teachers

Online classrooms have practical issues and students cannot make proper contribution

Students do not get the sufficient information for their pre-preparatory work

### ***Ideal classroom situation***

Blended learning: use more technology in teaching classroom facilities

Infrastructure: classrooms with facilities for macro skills  
handling a large classroom with sufficient facilities

## **Theme 2: Contextual backgrounds & Student diversity**

### **Sub-theme1: social linguistic background**

Lacking in basic English knowledge  
Lack of academic English  
Learning English for higher education  
New to distant learning situation  
Lack of exposure to foreign accent  
Learning English as a skill  
Lack of exposure to L2  
No opportunity for speaking practices  
Lack of interest in reading and practice of reading skills  
L1 structure being influenced in ESL learning (syntax)  
Majority has not got proper grounding in ESL learning  
L1 influence: direct translation  
Lack of soft skills

### **Sub-theme 2: School education**

Exam oriented teaching  
Learning English as a subject, not as a skill  
Conventional methods  
No speech and listening practices

## **Theme 3: Student attitudes to learning English**

Teachers are motivated when students have positive attitudes (moved from Contextual background)

### ***Emotional (E)***

Changing negative mind set  
Emotional factors of the students in the ESL classroom  
Less anxiety in collaborative reading

Teacher appreciation of the student contribution

Students are not stable emotionally in commencement of the course

Students' feeling of connections and disconnections

Emotional factors of the students matter in teaching

Equal opportunities to be given to the students

Students are scared to talk and (e & b)

Students are shy to talk (e & s)

Students need some time to get settled

### ***Social (s)***

Negative mindset

Student engagement in previous year online teaching

Online classroom attendance is satisfactory (s & b)

Inactive participation in speaking practice (s & b)

Positive mindset (s & b)

Positive mindset and purposefulness (s & e)

Student commitment affects their attitudes (motivation) (s & e)

### ***Cognitive (C)***

Gradually students will understand their mistakes and develop themselves

Students do not maximise learning opportunities

Engaged in the speaking tasks (c & b)

Better attention and concentration and feel comfortable (c & b)

Important to have positive mindset of students to create a good environment in teaching (c & b)

Can do better classroom practice in a large classroom with sufficient facilities (c & b)

Student interactions and collaboration among them (C & B & S)

### ***Behavioural (B)***

Active participation

Less student contribution in group activities in writing skills

Cultural influence: negative mindset

Student attendance: positive mindset

Scared to talk; do not actively participate in the classroom activities (E & B)

Shy to talk and do not actively participate in the classroom activities (E & B)

## Appendix H

### Samples of Phase One Inductive Thematic Analysis: Initial focus-groups with the student participants

#### Initial focus-groups with the student participants: Themes, categories, and codes

Table1: Themes and categories of the thematic analysis of Initial student focus-groups

Broader theme	Categories	Sub-themes
Learning of academic English & adapting to the university classroom practice	Pedagogical approach	Teachers' approach to curriculum, instructions, and evaluation (in the university classroom)
	Physical Resources & Technology	Availability of Infrastructure facilities in teaching English at a University classroom
Socio-economic & Contextual backgrounds	Social linguistic background	Impact of social linguistic background & contextual backgrounds
	School education	Learning English at school education
Student attitudes to learning English	Emotional Social Cognitive Behavioural	Impact of student attitudes on commitment to learning and Cultural influence on learning English

#### **Theme 1: Learning of academic English & adapting to the university classroom practice**

##### **Sub-theme1: Pedagogical approach**

##### *Challenges faced in the university classroom*

Learning academic English is new

Grammar rules have become the challenge and it impacts students' speaking skills

Learning all macro-skills have become a challenge

Speaking skills is the biggest challenge

Cannot involve in speaking and listening due to lack of vocabulary

Difficulties in adapting to the changes of medium of instructions

Getting tired of working in English, specially working with the academic English and the vocabulary

Inequal practice of the macro skills

Students practice of all macro skills are limited to classroom and the given homework, which are also very limited.

Some difficulties in following the syllabus due to lack of background knowledge

Need to get used to academic English

Teacher's use of only English in teaching

Unfamiliar learning mode: distance learning

### ***Positivity experiences in the university ESL classroom***

Create positive emotions: to learn English in the university classroom

Create positive emotions: students take part classroom actively

Create positive emotions: through teacher interactions

Create positive emotions; gaining self-confidence

Have noticed differences in teaching methods in schools and university classroom

Learning English as a life-long learning

Teacher tries to get all the students to get involved in the classroom activities

Interactive teaching in the university classroom

Like group activities and peer-learning

Group activities provide opportunities to interact with the students

Better opportunities to actively participate in the classroom activities

Group activities provide opportunities for practical use of the language

Teacher follow ups are good

### ***Like university ESL curriculum***

Good to have all macro skills and getting opportunities to practise them

Textbook themes are interesting and persuade to learn English

Opportunities to practising speaking skills

Syllabus covers grammar

EGAP curriculum is presented logically

## **Sub-theme 2: Physical Resources & Technology**

No equal opportunities for all macro-skills due to lack of facilities



Use of the softcopy of the course material is difficult: do not have appropriate technological facilities

Students like to have hardcopy of the textbook

Practical issues of use of technology

University provided good facilities including some technology (LMS: learner management system)

## **Theme 2: Socio-economic & Contextual backgrounds**

### **Sub-theme 1: Social linguistic background**

Lack of opportunities to use English outside the university classroom

Classroom is the only place to use English in speaking

Working environment provides better opportunity to use English, however, lack of speaking opportunities

Government school children don't speak in English

Due to cultural influences, students may not volunteer in the activities

#### ***L1 influence***

Direct translation and L1 influence

Tend to think in Sinhala and translate it into English

Some Sinhala terms come into the talk without knowledge

Less awareness of the structural differences of L1 and L2

### **Sub-theme 2: Learning English in the school classroom**

Have not learnt all four skills separately previously

Learning English at school was limited to reading and writing

Did not get good learning of ESL at the school education

In school education, children didn't realise the importance of learning English

Lack of practice reduces the fluency

Considering learning English as a trouble

Teaching English also as the other subjects

A big difference in learning English in school and university

Conventional teaching approach at the school classroom

Least opportunity in speaking

Limited writing skills

General English is not formal as academic English

### **Theme 3: Student attitudes to learning English**

#### ***Positive attitudes towards learning English***

Self-motivation being in the university classroom

Motivation to speak in English

Learning ESL enthusiastically in the university classroom

Pre-preparation is important, and it is important to get the maximum benefit from the facilities provided to the students.

Use of target language itself in teaching is more effective than use of L1 in teaching

Becoming aware of the importance of learning English

Need English for the outside world communication

#### ***Online learning***

Good to have online classes

Breakout room activities (group) are interesting

Good to use technology and group activities in learning ESL

Use of technology provides advantages to the students

Learning in online classroom helps to work in future

#### ***Prefer to learn in a physical classroom***

Like to have personal interactions

Physical classroom would have provided better opportunities for interactions

Online classes are good only for the self-motivated students and not for all

More speaking opportunities at face-to-face classroom than in online classroom

There can be some technical issues when it comes to some rural areas

In-person classroom is more effective cognitively than in online classroom

## Appendix I

### Samples of Phase One Inductive Thematic Analysis: Final semi-structured interviews with the teacher participants

#### Final semi-structured interviews with the teacher participants: Themes, categories, and codes

##### **Theme 1: Teaching & Learning of academic English**

##### **Sub-theme1: Pedagogical approach**

##### *Teaching macro- skills*

Listening skills: needs lots of time for classroom practice, practical difficulties, program considers listening as an individual activity, limitations to practice in the classroom; students had done listening activities collaboratively on their own

Writing skills: do more during the class; students preferred to do breakout groups

Reading skills: students need more vocabulary

Speaking skills: get involved in speaking skills throughout the collaborative group activities; getting opportunities during the breakout room activities

##### *Classroom practice with collaborative activities*

Students need to interact during the collaborative learning

Breaks the monotony of two hours lecturing

All macro-skills are taking place

Got more opportunities, and have own space to learn

Students preferred to do breakout groups in all 4 macro skills

Collaborative group activities as homework assignments

Student active participation and use of L1 and L2 in interaction

All the students get opportunity for their contribution

##### *Teacher recommendations for collaboration*

Homework assignments: teamwork happens very well

Preference to work on the activities given outside the textbook

Student contribution in teaching and learning

Two hours lecturing won't work out in teaching English

Planning to have collaborative activities in each lesson

Incorporating the collaborative group activities in the rest of the course

Suggestion to other teachers also to practice collaborative group activity approach

### **Sub-theme 2: Physical Resources & Technology**

#### ***Infrastructure facilities: physical resources and technology***

Logging issues and signal problems

Power-cut interruptions

Not having sufficient data

Cannot access LMS resources (listening) properly

### **Theme 2: Contextual backgrounds & Student diversity**

#### **Sub-theme 1: Cultural influence on student behaviour**

Volunteering does not work

Influences school classroom practices

Students do not question the teacher

### **Theme 3: Student attitudes to learning English**

#### ***Emotional (E)***

Students getting connected with each other

Enthusiastic in learning together

Students feel comfortable to work with each other

#### ***Social (S)***

Like to work with others

Formed their own bonds

Student commitment affects their attitudes (motivation) (s & e)

Students share their knowledge with the group members

Students have formed a bond among them

Teamwork happens well

Helping each other (better proficient students and less)

#### ***Cognitive (C)***

Peer learning

Involved in more thinking capacity

Pay better attention to activities

***Behavioural (B)***

Active participation

Keen to learn

Regular attendance and active participation

Student active participation and codeswitching

## Appendix J

### Samples of Phase One Inductive Thematic Analysis: Final focus-groups with the student participants

#### Final focus-groups with the student participants: Themes, categories, and codes

#### Theme 1: Learning of academic English & adapting to the university classroom practice

##### Sub-theme1: Pedagogical approach

##### *Challenges faced in the university classroom*

At the beginning fear of talk in English

Learning academic English is a new experience

##### *Positive experiences in the university ESL classroom*

Learning new techniques and skills

Teacher does not pressurise

Feel more comfortable to work together

Created a desire to learn English

Experiencing positive teacher interactions

Learning very actively and effectively and there is no rush

First time experience in collaborative learning

Teacher is very approachable

Teacher's personal attention

##### *Like the university curriculum*

English is compulsory requirement

Activities are very interactive

All language macro-skills are included

## **Sub-theme 2: Physical resources & technology**

Technical issues

Poor connections

Availability of lesson materials and video recordings of the lessons

## **Theme 2: Socio-economic & Contextual backgrounds**

### **Sub-theme 1: Social linguistic background**

Withdrew from the programme due to difficulty in working in English

Majority are lack of English proficiency

Need to learn English for a better future

### **Sub-theme 2: Online learning**

Prefer to learn in a physical classroom

Get more opportunities to connect with the peers

## **Theme 3: Student attitudes to learning English in collaborative groups**

### ***Advantages***

Peer learning

Gives a feeling that we are in a physical classroom

Engage in the activities very happily

Easy to interact with peers

Lesser number of students, we get more chances to talk.

Can share knowledge

Able to codeswitch (L1 with L2)

### ***Positive feelings***

Do not get bored or distracted as need to work together

Felt comfortable to work in the group

Would like to engage in more group activities in the rest of the course

Feeling of having autonomy

Motivation to continue learning ESL

Work enthusiastically

### ***Negative feelings***

Have to talk only in English and felt very shy and fear that I will go wrong

At the beginning feeling shy and fear; thinking that EGAP would be difficult

Get frightened when teacher asks questions

### ***Behavioural:***

Had good attendance

Trying to cover missing classes

Active participation and improvement of the time being

Brings more happiness and a self-satisfaction

Taking part in all skills attentively and actively

### ***Social:***

Having more connections with the group members that the entire class

Have a good interaction with the teacher

Team spirit

### ***Cognitive:***

Peer learning

More confident and can comprehend better than at the beginning

Can create a better answer and complete the activity

Pay total attention to all macro-skills

Pre-preparation

Have good focus on the macro-skills

Utilise total thinking capacity