

THE MILITARY COMMUNICATION SKILLS PROJECT

My name is Marion Hughes and I am the Manager of the Military Communication Skills Project of the British Council, Colombo. I travel to military training establishments all over Sri Lanka to work on the project. I have worked for the British Council for twenty five years in Hong Kong, Slovakia, Romania and here.

I will tell you about the background, and purpose of the project, what it does and where we do it and then give more specific information about what the project has done in the General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University.

The Military Communication Skills Project started in September 2004. It is funded by the British Government through the British High Commission in Sri Lanka. The Defence Advisor at the British High Commission is in overall charge and the British Council manages the project for him. I am the Manager of the project and I have an Assistant Manager, Ms Hamzi Haniff.

The **purpose** of the project is:

To improve the quality of language and communication skills for military forces in Sri Lanka through :

- design & development of appropriate English and Tamil language training materials;
- promotion of international standards of teaching and learning of both Tamil and English
- interactive and democratic classroom approaches;
- use of up-to-date materials which are effective for communication training and which raise awareness of peacebuilding issues;
- upgrading of teaching & training skills;
- development of sustainable and effective language training systems.

There are six main military training establishments in Sri Lanka:

Joint Services Defence College at Batalanda where a yearly intake of about sixty officers (Major and above) do a full time MA type post-graduate degree course. The MCSP does two week full time pre-sessional courses there to help them with this kind of academic reading, writing, speaking and listening.

General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Ratmalana run by the Ministry of Defence is the three services institution for new recruits to do first degrees in Engineering, Commerce, Arts and in Management and Technical Sciences. The students do a three month intensive course when they first arrive and then do some English throughout the rest of their degree course. There is a Learning Support Centre and a Language Laboratory and four English instructors on staff. The Officer Cadets also do a Tamil course and we are helping to supply materials for both the English and the Tamil courses.

Sri Lanka Air Force Academy (or soon to become it) in China Bay. They do English training for Officer Cadets, Junior Command & Staff College and NCOs. There are only two English instructors at the moment but that number is due to increase and they have a Learning Support Centre. I do business type presentation skills and writing skills for the JC&SC as well as support the intensive course for Officer Cadets. They have a Learning Support Centre in the library.

Sri Lanka Air Force Base, Ekala is the main Air Force training establishment for recruits. They do a three month intensive English course and then training through the medium of English to become Air-traffic Controllers, Dog-handlers, Aircraft Maintenance Technicians, Plumbers, Policemen and many other trades. There are about nine English

instructors and I support the intensive course and I also do English courses for the instructors teaching other subjects. There are three Tamil instructors and all the recruits do a sixty hour Tamil course. They have a Learning Support Centre.

Naval and Maritime Academy, Trincomalee. This is mainly for Officer Cadets but they also do recruit training as at SLAF Ekala. Presently there are five English instructors and they have a Learning Support Centre. The Officer cadets and recruits also do Tamil courses with five Tamil teachers.

Sri Lanka Military Academy, Diyatalawa is only for Officer Cadets because the Army doesn't teach recruits English. They have seven English instructors who do a three month intensive course plus English lessons throughout the two and a half year degree course and they have a Learning Support Centre. I have done English courses for the course instructors there as all the military subjects are taught through English. They have one Tamil instructor who is in charge of a fifty hour Tamil course for all Officer Cadets.

There are some additional places:

Sri Lanka Air Force Base, Diyatalawa has one English instructor and they do courses for Officer Cadets and NCOs. There is no Tamil instructor there at the moment.

There are two English instructors each at Boossa and Poonewa naval bases and one at Welisara. At these bases, there are some Tamil instructors as well.

This year, 2006 to 2007 has concentrated on:

- the completion of the Learning Support Centres in General Sir John Kotalawala Defence University (KDU) Naval & Maritime Academy, Trincomalee and SLAF China Bay
- the integration of the five completed Learning Support Centres into the syllabus and training for librarians, English instructors and technical staff in their use and maintenance
- the continuation of professional development of English instructors by introducing Module One of the In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching
- a workshop of authorities on teaching Tamil to look at best practice and the development of a 60 hour course for beginners
- the development of a CD Rom of English materials for intensive courses developed with KDU

The Military Communication Skills Project in the General Sir John Kotalawala Defence University (KDU)

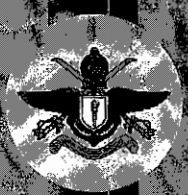
The KDU was one of the first places I visited on my arrival in Sri Lanka in September, 2004. I was immediately impressed by the facilities in the library and in the English Department and by the high standard of English teaching taking place there.

The MCSP assisted the KDU by supplying computers to the library and to the English instructors and then by setting up the Learning Support Centre in the Language Laboratory. The Learning Support Centre was set up with various English language software programmes installed. These include: Tense Buster, English Grammar in Use, Sky Pronunciation and Road to IELTS. The MCSP received the support of the KDU for providing training courses for maintenance of the hardware and software in the LSCs in other military establishments.

The English instructors have taken part in professional development programmes provided by the MCSP. In 2005 to 2006 they did the Cambridge ESOL Teaching Knowledge Test and received excellent marks. This year three of them have completed Cambridge ESOL Module 1 of the In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching, again with excellent marks.

GENERAL SIR JOHN KOTELAWALA DEFENCE UNIVERSITY
2006 - 2007

SILHOUETTE

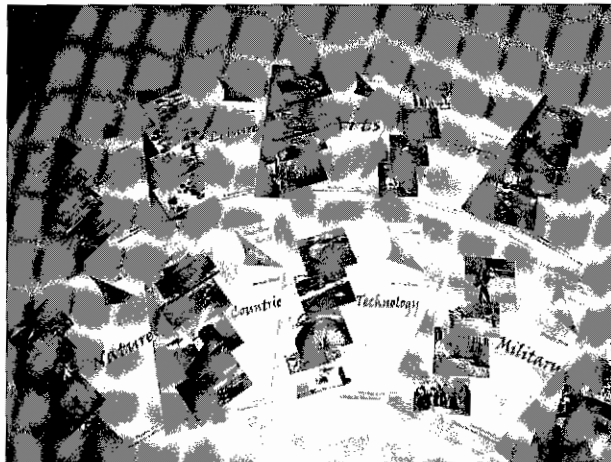


The English instructors in the KDU took on a major task last year by putting together ten modules of material for the English Intensive Course. This material was printed with the support of the MCSP and was trialed with the last group of Officer Cadets. The materials are very attractive and have proved very popular with students in KDU and in other places in the military.



Students looking at a module of English material at KDU.

A listening tape was also produced with the help of the British Council. The revised version will be printed now for the next intake. The instructors have also put together a Teachers' Book for the use of other instructors.



A set of ten modules of English materials

The English instructors will be working over the next year to finalise these materials and to work on a team to write more materials for the use of English intensive courses in other military training establishments. The visiting Tamil instructors of the KDU also involved with MCSP as we are writing materials for a 60 hour beginner course with their help. In addition the MCSP has provided training for library staff and made frequent donations of books to the KDU. MCSP hopes to extend its continuous support to the KDU in future too.

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