

Students' Lack of Interest in Learning G.C.E Advanced Level (A/L) General English: Factors and Remedies. A Survey Research Based on G.C.E Advanced Level Students of T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College, Mutur, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the factors which contribute to the lack of interest of the students of T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College, Mutur, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka in learning GCE (Advanced Level) General English subject and to the gaining of lower results in General English in A/Level examination. Most of the students show their lack of interest to learn General English. Instead, they give more prominence to other main subjects in A/Level studies. As a result, students obtain lower results in General English in A/Level examination. This study was a survey research and a quantitative research. In this study, 25 GCE A/ Level (Grade 13 – Arts stream) students of T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College, Mutur, Trincomalee were randomly selected as the sample. The data were collected using a questionnaire which consists of both open-ended and close-ended questions. This instrument was used to collect the opinions among the students regarding the factors which contribute to the lack of interest. According to the data analysis, the results show that several factors such as giving prominence only to the main subjects, lack of English background, use of traditional classrooms and teaching methodologies, use of advanced textbooks, lack of positive motivation and crowded classroom contributed to students' lack of interest and to the production of lower results in A/Level examination. This problem can be overcome when forming a separate language unit with modern classroom and facilities.

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Teachers should be advised to use Communicative Language Teaching Method. The University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka should implement circular that students should obtain at least Single pass (35 marks) in General English in Advanced Level examination to be selected for state universities. It can motivate them to study and get fine result in General English.

Key words: Advanced Level; Communicative Language Teaching Method; General Certificate of Education; General English; University Grants Commission.

1. Introduction

English has been a significant language and spoken by a large number of people around the globe either as a first language, second language or foreign language since it has been a global language. 1.5 billion people speak English around the world. In this sense, English is learnt and spoken as a second language in Sri Lanka [1]. English language is considered as a highly prestigious language which provides access to all kinds of privileges [2]. State and non-state academic organizations offer English as a main or optional subject in the curriculum. As a result, according to the education system of Sri Lanka, English has been offered as a compulsory subject from grade 3 to 13 at government schools. Although English is a compulsory subject grade 3 – 11 in the school curriculum, To continue General Certification of Education (G.C.E) Advanced Level (A/L), (Grade 12 – 13), English is not considered as mandatory requirement in G.C.E Ordinary Level (O/L), (Grade 11) results. Similarly, in G.C.E (A/L) curriculum of National Institute of Education (NIE), Sri Lanka, General English is offered as a main subject for 3 years and 5 periods (4 hours) are allocated per week for General English subject for each stream such as Biological Science, Physical Science, Technology, Commerce and Arts. The General English books are being issued by the Department of English, Faculty of Languages, Humanities and Social Sciences National Institute of Education, Sri Lanka consists of communicative competence with standard grammar. The syllabus has been designed focusing on four skills of language and personality development. Students can master in English proficiency when they interestingly learn English using General English book. However, Since English is not considered as the mandatory requirement to get the eligibility to continue G.C.E (A/L) studies, students show lack of interest in learning English and their poor performance in examination. Most of the students do not focus on learning General English. Instead they focus on studying only other three main subjects in A/ L studies. They consider English as an optional subject. As a result, English as a Second language (ESL) teachers are not interested in teaching General English subject, furthermore results obtaining is very lower in G.C.E (A/L) examination. According to 2017, 2018 and 2019 G.C.E (A/L) results analysis of T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College, Muttur, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, in 2017 and 2018 results, out of 39 candidates, no any students passed in General English Test. Likewise, in 2019 results, out of 27 candidates, only one candidate passed in General English. However, 23 students out of 27 were formally selected for the state universities. But they do not consider General English like other main subjects in A/Level although it is a compulsory subject in the curriculum. This problem can be overcome when changing the attitude of the students towards English Language.

1.1 Statement of the Problems

According to the G.C.E (A/L) curriculum, General English is one of the compulsory subjects for 3 years. However, most of the students show their lack of interest in learning General English. They give important only to other three main subjects and they focus on studying those main subjects in order to get university admission. As a result, students get lower results in G.C.E (A/L) examination. Moreover, the level of their English proficiency seems the same after 3 years of their A/Level studies. Several factors contribute to the lack of interest in learning General English.

1.2 Objectives of the Research

- To investigate that why the G.C.E (A/L) students of T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College, Mutur, Trincomalee show lack of interest in learning General English and produce lower performance.
- To identify the factors which reason to the lack of interest in learning General English.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

- Most of the students who continue their G.C.E (A/L) studies show their lack of interest in Learning General English
- A large number of students get lower results in General English in G.C.E (A/L) examination.
- Several factors contribute to the lack of interest in learning English and bring out lower results.

1.4 Limitations of the Research

T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College consists of five G.C.E (A/L) streams and over 150 students continue their Advanced Level studies and learn Advanced English. Out of five streams, only Arts stream was selected to limit this study. In Arts streams, there are over 80 students in both first-year and second-year. Out of over 80 students, 25 students were randomly selected for data collection. Therefore, this study was limited with 25 students from first-year and second-year. Moreover, although many students show their lack of interest in other G.C.E (A/L) subjects, this research was limited only with G.C.E (A/L) Advanced English since investigating all the other subjects are having a vast area.

1.5 Review of Previous Studies

Several previous research studies have been carried out investigating about learners' lack of interest in learning English. Interest is the best teacher. Interest can arouse people's creative enthusiasm, curiosity and thirst for knowledge [3]. As reported above, lack of interest will not give success in learning. Therefore, due to lack of interest, students of T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College, Mutur, Trincomalee obtain lower results in examination and fail in attempt to grasp English proficiency. Lack of motivation is one of the factors which contribute to their lack of interest. There are some teachers who do not challenge their students, rarely give homework, are often behind on grading, and give "free" days on a regular basis [4]. Similarly, at T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College, Mutur, Trincomalee also, ESL teachers do not teach General English properly and they are not motivated to study. Further, English learning motivation includes the purpose of learning English, attitudes, interests, and personal values. The teachers have the responsibility to create / arouse interest and curiosity among the students

to learn English [5]. However, students rely on teachers and they do not spend time in learning English on their own. Similarly, GCE A/Level - 13 students are not interested to learn their General English on their own. Instead, they rely on ESL teachers at T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College, Mutur, Trincomalee. In this sense, English is not a subject which can be taught; it is a subject which must be learnt [6]. Likewise, due to lose interest in English, many students have the problem of English learning weariness. Students are unlikely to be very successful at learning anything unless they enjoy the process [7]. Learning a language and mastering is impossible without interest. Further, the findings reveals that if the teachers could not use the technological materials while teaching, learners would show lack of motivation [8]. They got bored easily and lost their attention and interest in the topic or new information. As they mentioned, use of traditional classrooms and teaching equipment and methods increase the lack of interest in learning English

2. Methodology

This study was a survey research, which was carried out to investigate why the students of T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College, Mutur, Trincomalee show lack of interest in learning English and produce lower results in G.C.E (A/L) examination, and the factors which contribute to the lack of interest in learning General English. This study was quantitative research and in this research, 25 G.C.E A/ Level (Grade 13 – Arts stream) students of T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College, Mutur, Trincomalee were randomly selected as the sample of the study, and they were investigated. The primary data were collected using a questionnaire which consists of both close-ended and open-ended questions. It was used to collect the opinions with regard to learning General English and the factors which contribute to the lack of interest and lower production in G.C.E (A/L) examination. The secondary data on the other hand were collected using G.C.E (A/L) results records of T/Mu/Al Hilal Central College, Mutur. The collected primary data through the questionnaire were later analyzed and found why the students show their lack of interest in learning General English and the factors that affect students' interest in learning English.

3. Results

The questionnaire was designed to find out the opinions concerning G.C.E learning General English and the factors which contribute to the lack of interest in learning General English. According to the data analysis of the questionnaire, the first 4 questions were close-ended and yes-no type question. The results show that the first question focused on whether they are interested to learn English at school. Out of 25 respondents, 20 of the respondents responded 'no' and 5 of the respondents responded 'yes'. The second question on the other hand was on whether the students go for English private classes. 22 of the respondents responded 'no' and just 3 of the respondents responded 'yes'. The third question concentrated on whether the students spend time to learn their General English at home. All 25 respondents responded 'no'. The fourth question was on whether students are satisfied with their General English textbook. 11 of the respondents responded 'yes' and 14 of the respondents responded 'no'. The following graph shows the responses of the respondents to yes-no type questions.

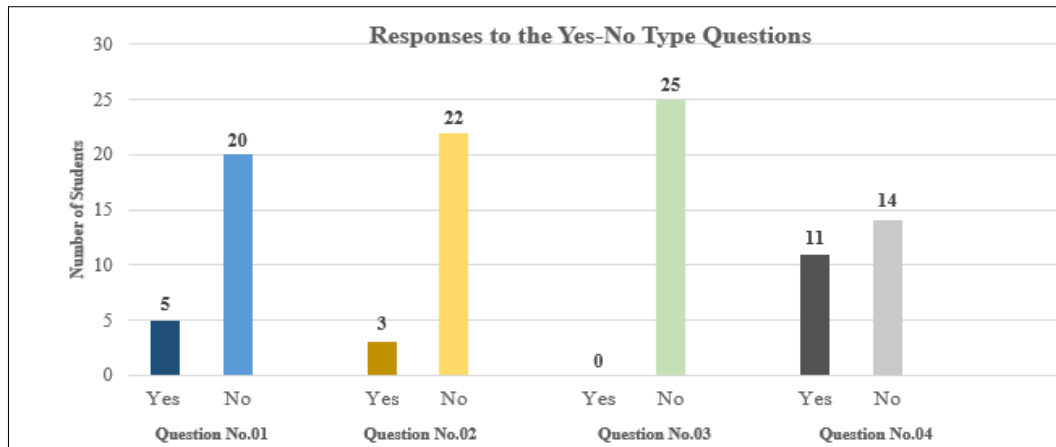


Figure 1

The last question was open-ended question which was set to collect the opinions regarding the factors which contribute to the lack of interest in learning their General English. In this sense, according to the analysis of the factors, the results show that 15 of the respondents said that they give prominence only to the other main subjects in A/Level and they do not give prominence to learn General English. The next factor was lack of English foundation background. 19 of the respondents said that they do not have basic English proficiency to study General English textbook. Use of traditional classroom and teaching methodology was another factor which contributes to the lack of interest, in which 13 of the respondents pointed out it. Use of advanced textbook was one of the factors in which 21 of the respondents pointed out that the General English textbook seems advanced and tough to study. Lack of motivation was another factor. 15 of the respondents mentioned that due to lack of motivation to learn English, they showed their lack of interest in General English. The last factor found among the respondents was crowded and noisy classrooms which make the students bored and deviate their interest. 15 of the respondents pointed out this factor in the questionnaire. The following table shows the factors which contribute to the lack of interest in learning General English and respondents' responses.

Table 1

No	Factors which contribute to the lack of interest	Respondents	Percentage
01.	Giving prominence to other A/L main subjects	15	60%
02.	Lack of English foundation background	19	76%
03.	Use of traditional classrooms and teaching methodology	13	52%
04.	Use of advanced textbook	21	84%
05.	Lack of motivation	15	60%
06.	Crowded and noisy classroom	15	60%

4. Discussion

According to the analysis of the data collected through questionnaire, the findings show that during the two years of A/Level studies, the students focus on studying only the main subjects in their stream. Instead, they think that spending time on studying General English will be waste of time. Although General English is a compulsory subject like General Knowledge, they consider English as optional subject. The reason is, according to the circular of University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka, students should obtain at least 35 marks in General Knowledge to be selected for the universities formally. But English is not considered like that for university enrolment. This flexibility makes the students to arouse a negative attitude in learning English during their A/Level period. The results of the analysis show that 20 of the respondents out 25 do not like to learn English and they do not go for English classes because they schedule their time only for studying other three main subjects. Another important reason for their lack of interest is, most of the students possess lower English foundation background. As a result, they show their lack of interest in learning A/Level General English and they obtain lower results in the examination. As discussed in introduction part, for the past three years, no any students passed in General English in A/Level examination. On the other hand, most of them are formally selected for universities. According to 2019 A/L results record of T/Mu/ Al Hilal Central Collegre, Mutur, Trincomalee, out of 27 candidates, there were 23 candidates formally selected for the state universities. But no any students passed in General English. Lack of motivation was another factor for students' lack of interest in General English because they are not motivated by teachers elaborating the importance of English language for their higher studies and career in this technological era. The results of the data analysis show that 15 of the respondents mentioned lack of motivation as one of the factors which influence to their lack of interest. The students do not like traditional classroom setting like blackboard, chalk and textbook and traditional teaching methodology like Grammar translation Method. T/Mu/ Al Hilal Central Collegre, Mutur, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka does not have separate language unit and modern classroom facilities. These are the factors which contribute to the students' lack of interest in learning General English and obtaining lower results in General English in G.C.E (A/L) examination.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to identify the factors which contribute to the lack of interest of the students of T/Mu/ Al Hilal Central Collegre, Mutur, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka in learning General English and in obtaining lower results in G.C.E (A/L) examination, and to suggest practical remedies and solutions to overcome this problem. As a result, 25 students from G.C.E (A/L) Arts Stream were taken as sample population to investigate the factors which contribute lack of interest in learning General English. A questionnaire was used as the research instrument to collect the opinions among the students with regard to the factors affecting students' interest in learning General English. Therefore, the findings and results of the data analysis show that most of the students show their lack of interest in learning A/Level General English due to various factors such as giving prominence only to other main subjects, lack of English basic background, use of traditional classrooms and teaching methodologies, use of advanced textbooks, lack of positive motivation and crowded classroom.

6. Recommendations

To overcome lack of interest among the students and produce higher results in G.C.E (A/L) examination, each school should consist of a separate language unit with modern learning/teaching equipment. Well-trained ESL teachers should be assigned to teach General English and they should be strictly advised to utilize modern teaching equipment and modern teaching methodology like Communicative Language Teaching Method. In particular, the UGC, Sri Lanka should implement a circular that each student should obtain at least Single pass (35 marks) in General English in G.C.E (A/L) examination to be selected for universities. Since General English is one of the compulsory subjects in the curriculum, it can be considered as a main subject for university enrolments. This implementation can motivate the students to study General English to pass in the examination. It will help them to improve their English proficiency. The Instructors of Teachers can provide the advice to the teachers that, despite of teaching language merely with books and tutorials, they can play some vocabulary games within classroom, competitions in memorizing vocabularies, making some sentences every week, handle some kinds of spell maters games, these will make much interest in learning English Language. Make easy ways to grab the English Language. Illustrate the importance of English Language in Future. Adduce in pleasurable way that English is the easiest language in the world. Furthermore, the teachers who teach to the A/L students also should be trained that how to handle the modern technologies in teaching and learning and make interest in the various ways of learning English Language to the Advanced Level students. The government may offer further money allocation to the remote area schools to improve their English Language. With some helps of other non-governmental organization the school community may find a language laboratory around the school premise.

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7. Appendix

1. Questionnaire

This questionnaire consists of 5 questions. 1 to 4 questions are close-ended and yes-no type questions. Read the questions and select yes or no. The last question is an open-ended question. Read the question carefully and write your opinions.

1. Are you interested to learn English at school?

I. Yes ()

II. No ()

2. Do you go for private English classes?

I. Yes ()

II. No ()

3. Do you spend time to study your General English textbook at home?

I. Yes ()

II. No ()

4. Are you satisfied with your General English textbook?

I. Yes ()

II. No ()

5. Why do you show your lack of interest in learning General English? What are the factors contribute to the lack of interest?