

## Attitude of the students towards the A/L General English

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### **Abstract**

*Even though English isn't the highly use language in the world, as a recognized international language English use in many countries. Statistically, nearly 2 billion people using English. According, to the Statistics of Department of Examination nearly in 2017, 250,000 students were sat for the AL and among them, nearly 59% of students were fail the General English paper. This will be cause for students for their future education and when they enter to the job market. Because of that to find out the students' attitude towards the general English paper is the main objective of the research. Research were used the primary data and the school were selected from the Kelaniya educational one under the cluster sampling method. Questionnaire was used to collect the data and analyzed findings were presented by using descriptive statistic methods. According to study 86% of students concede that English is useful and 63% of students didn't agree to add General English marks to the score. A considerable amount of students have a positive attitude towards the General English paper and students were proposed that practical sessions should be compiled to the syllabus. The final result of the research indicated that though the students were spending 13 years of the time period for learning the English language at school, they have less fondness on English and though they concede that the English language is useful they have under estimation towards the General English.*

**Key words:** *Advance Level students, Attitude, English Language,*

### **1. Introduction**

Today, educators are faced with the challenge of addressing the needs of the growing number of students whose primary language is not English. While mastering other skills and content in other subject areas, there are the necessity learners to gain proficiency in English. Teaching English as a second language to all Sri Lankan school children irrespective of their social, economic or geographical background has

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been a major educational policy of successive governments in Sri Lanka since the early 1950s. This continues to be the declared government, educational policy as in recent years more than ever, the country's need for English speaking citizens have come to be realized.

Teaching of English at the Advanced Level is considered an appropriate means of achieving the goals to equip them with the necessary knowledge and technical skills required for the modern employment market.

The result of this cross research analyzes the attitudes of students to the GCE Advance Level General English course in a well-known reputed school in Kelaniya education zone. This dissertation further attempts to develop a model for builds a direct relationship between student aspirations and English studies in order to achieve greater levels in the GCE Advanced Level General English. The findings made in this study regarding the attitudes of students to General English may provide useful insights for improving educational policy with regard to English education, as well as the quality of the English course offered by schools and improve the teachers teaching qualities.

### ***1.1. Research Problem***

Even though learner of English language spends an appreciable time for learning English their competency is not very successful. When they sit for the General English paper most of the students came with lack of results. Sometimes the students who come with the best result in Ordinary Level also how retreat in Advanced Level. This can be seen among the all four streams and more than 50 percent of students will not obtain required marks to pass the test paper.

Research has pointed out that the programs are only minimally successful compared to the large investments made on it. They also argue that the majority of Sri Lankan youth do not possess the required English proficiency to compete in the private sector job market.

In addition, also in government sector get in the highest positions English is exceptional qualification. To handle Information and Communication Technology, to communicate with different nations English is essential. Though students learning English from grade one to thirteen, they have not, necessarily, knowledge in English to continue their higher education's at universities. Even the students' eligible for university with the higher merits, they confront a very complicated situation.

To find out the rising problem of the decreasing of results in General English is the main aim of the research. What is the attitude students have towards the General English course is to be found out in this research.

### ***1.2. Research Objectives***

1. Understand the attitude of the students towards the General English.
2. To understand whether there are any other reasons to decrease the results of the General English.
3. To understand that what are the most complicated areas in the syllabus.
4. Contributing proposals to increase the General English results and some modifications to the General English course.

### ***1.3. Description of the Sample***

As the representative from all the four streams, the sample was selected. The sample consisted with 40 students by representing 10 students from each stream (Art, Maths, Science, and Commerce). These ten students will be selected randomly and the data will acquire from them by distributing questionnaires to them.

All the data were collected without any pressure and advice. Students are privileged to answer the questionnaire freely. Sample can be consist with different races, nationalities and different knowledge levels. So, it may help to collect accurate data to approach the objectives of the research.

### ***1.4. Limitations***

Even though all the students in Advanced Level classes, study General English as the subject, randomly selected 40 students have represented the aggregation.

Even though students in suburbs area are also learning English, because of the facilitate of the study sample is selected from the school situated in western province.

The study will not measure the knowledge of the students and it will only consider about the attitude of the students.

Because of the convenience of the study the selected sample completely consists with the females, and the attitude of the students is sustained as the Advanced Level students' entire attitude.

## 2. Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted to explore the nature of students' attitudes towards learning foreign language in general and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in particular, compared with the studies concerning the attitudes of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners during the past three decades (Al-Zahrani, 2008). For instance, Shams (2008) conducted a study attempting to investigate students' attitudes, motivation and anxiety towards the learning of English. The findings underlined that the students had affirmative attitudes and high enthusiasm towards English. This also highlighted that most of them showed positive attitudes towards English language and its learning which, in turn, emphasized the value of English language efficiency in the daily life. Momani (2009) also investigated the secondary stage students' attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language and their achievements in reading comprehension. The findings showed that the respondents had neutral, positive attitudes toward learning English. Also, there was a strong correlation between the students' attitudes toward learning English and their performance in reading comprehension. The findings of study by Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) on Petroleum Engineering students' motivation and attitudes towards learning English revealed that they had positive attitudes towards the use of English in the Yemeni social and educational contexts. They also showed affirmative attitude towards the culture of the English-speaking world. In terms of the year of study variable, Al-Zahrani (2008) conducted a study to determine the attitudes of Saudi students towards English. The statistical analysis revealed that there was not any clear difference between the three years in their attitudes towards Learning English as the descriptive statistics showed that the respondents in the three years had the same level of attitude. Regarding the gender variable, Fakeye (2010) investigated the correlation between attitude and achievement in English among 400 senior secondary students selected randomly from five secondary schools. The findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between attitude and achievement. Additionally, it was explored that students' attitude is not gender-related. Thus, there was not a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of male and female students.

## 3. Methodology

The research process identifies through the questionnaires and it will be helps to evaluate the accurate quantitative data. A questionnaire will hand out to the non-probability sample and collect the data throughout out them. Comprehend about the

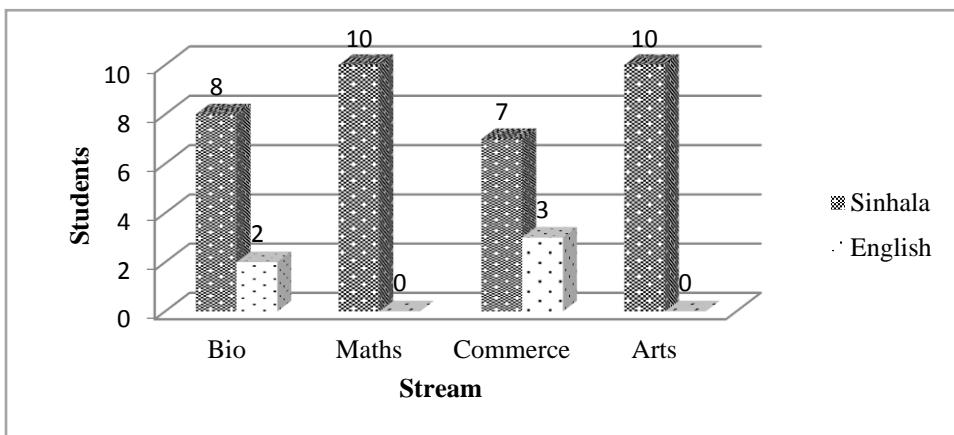
attitude of the students towards their Advanced Level General English course, questionnaire make way to collect confidential qualitative data. And also, the data which willing to distribute as anonymous, can be collected credibly.

The questionnaire included ten questions and questions arranged by including closed format questions, rating scale questions and open format questions. The data which collect by distributing questionnaires are converted to quantitative data. The sample which taken randomly will represent the aggregation of Advanced Level students and the attitude of the students towards the General English course will analyze throughout them.

#### 4. Presentation of the Data

This section, which highlights the findings of the research, shows several controversial attitudes of the students to the GCE Advanced Level General English.

Figure 1. Responded Medium



Source : Sample Survey (2018)

Both Sinhala and English medium questionnaires were distributed to the students to understand, how much they have confidence in answering to the questionnaire in English medium. Analyzing of the data, researcher reveals that the highest number of students answer in Sinhala medium. It depicts that even the fondness of the students towards the General English also not high. Sometimes it may indicate that the students nervous in answering the questionnaire except in native language or their mother tongue.

Table 1. Fathers' Education Level vs Student Attitude

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.968 <sup>a</sup>	4	.410
Likelihood Ratio	3.643	4	.457
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.236	1	.266
N of Valid Cases	40		

Source : Sample Survey (2018)

Table 2. Mothers' Education Level vs Student Attitude

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.704 <sup>a</sup>	4	.319
Likelihood Ratio	4.040	4	.401
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.586	1	.208
N of Valid Cases	40		

Source : Sample Survey (2018)

To find out whether the parent education level effect to change the child's attitudes towards General English, two hypotheses were built up,

H<sub>0</sub>: Fathers' education level isn't effect for the attitude of student.

H<sub>1</sub>: Fathers' education level effects for the attitude of student.

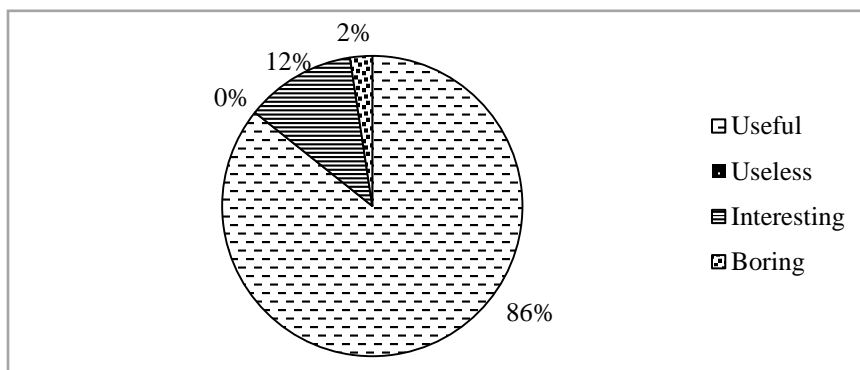
According to the chi square test Pearson correlation value is 3.698, p value is 0.410. And H<sub>0</sub> was rejected. It means that there is a statistically significant association between fathers' education level and student attitude towards AL English language.

H<sub>0</sub>: Mothers' education level isn't effect for the attitude of student.

H<sub>1</sub>: Mothers' education level effects for the attitude of student.

The effect of mothers' education level for the attitude of student towards AL English language, interpreted chi value is 4.704 and p value is 0.319. As the significance value is greater than the p value, H<sub>0</sub> was rejected and we can conclude that mothers' education level effect for the attitude of the student.

Figure 2. Attitude for the General English



Source : Sample Survey (2018)

When compare the data with the four scales 86% of students think General English is useful, most of the responders, state that it is useful because it is an international language and it helps to find out a good job. And also, state that, to continue the highest studies at university it is essential to have a good knowledge in English. There are some answers that say why General English language is useful, because it helps in maintaining their social status. The students who answered that General English is boring, state that it is additional weight to be done General English with their studies. One of the respondent states that learning General English with science subjects is very hard and it is a just a loss of their valuable time to unnecessary thing.

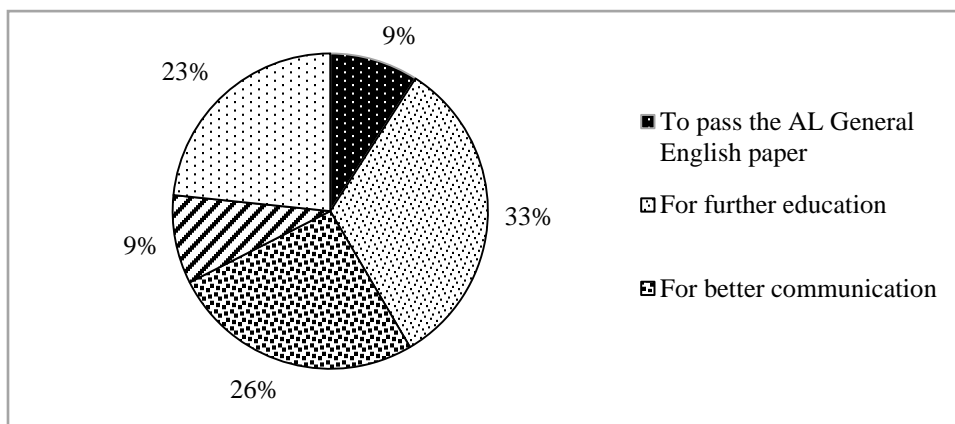
Table 3. Attitude to the General English text

	<b>Very Poor</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
Lesson materials distributed in class	15	2	19	4
Reading components	2	3	26	9
Speaking & listening components	4	1	29	6
Writing components	0	6	24	10
Grammar & language component	0	6	25	9
Appearance & the size of the textbook	0	11	18	11

Source : Sample Survey (2018)

To measure the attitude to the General English text Likert scale question were used and most of the students are confident and satisfying about the text. According to the table it indicates that, more than 50 percent of students are satisfied in all the six components of the text. It can be used to hypothesis that above six components are not affect to less fondness of the students' attitude towards the General English course. Students are confident in the text and it may not be an impact to their attitude.

Figure 3. Reason for Learning General English



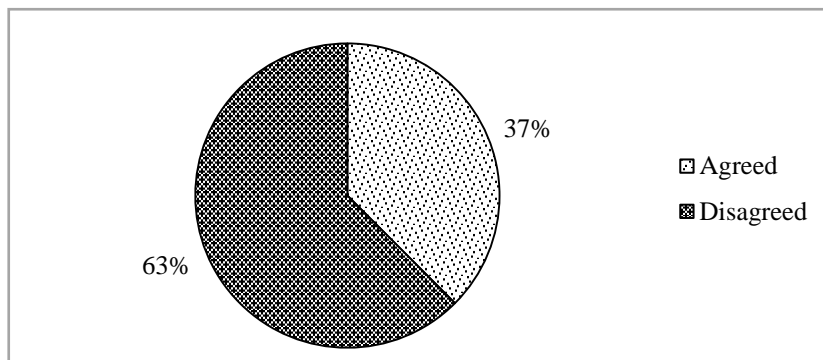
Source : Sample Survey (2018)

As shown by the figure 3, a smaller number of students learn General English in order to get through the examination. The highest number of the students thinks it is a requirement for higher education. A considerable number of students are learning General English, because it is compulsory to sit General English paper for entering the university. Otherwise, they think they may not able to learn General English as a subject.

Even though during the thirteen years of time period, students are learning English as compulsory subject when the students answer the question of requirement of adding General English marks to z-score most of the students are not agreed. It illustrates that, even longer period of time they are learning English they are not confident about their knowledge.



Figure 4. General English Mark Added to Z-score



Source : Sample Survey (2018)

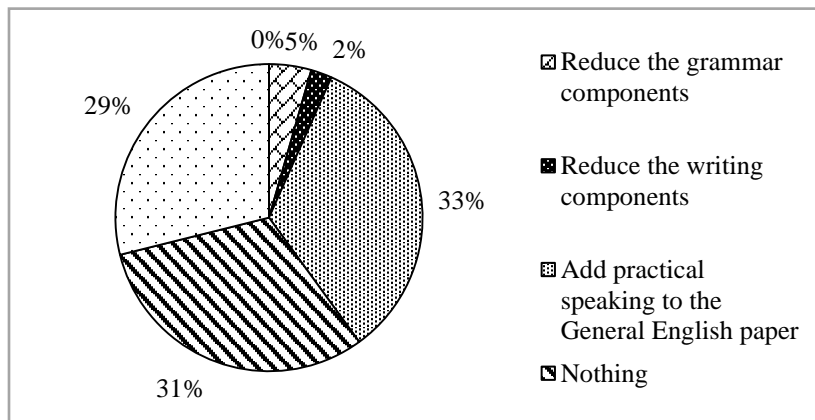
More than half of the respondents strongly recommended that General English marks should not be added to z-score. Out of the 15 respondents who stated impracticability of adding marks, the largest number of respondents indicated that, less proficient learners, who come from diverse backgrounds, would find it difficult to enter the university due to the language barrier. And also, students state that adding General English marks to z-score has affected too much to the students who are learning science and mathematics streams, because they state that they have not much time to spend attention into English and even most of the students are eligible in thorough knowledge in main three subjects which they had selected, as sometimes they have not necessarily knowledge in English. And also, there are some respondents answered that, “English is not our mother tongue and why does we are paying more attention in English more than Sinhala”.

Students who are agreed to adding General English marks into z-score convey that, it will be a reason to the students to pay attention, who are not much consider about General English. It will be a good motivator to generate enthusiasm towards General English. And also, there were a some responds that say it is good because the students who learning bioscience and mathematic streams must do their higher educations at the university in English medium and it is good to drop the foundation at the school level.

According to the results presented in the figure, it is obvious that almost 69% of students felt that certain modification is required in the exam. Respondents state that it is needed to reduce the inadequate design of the exam as it should be more

simplified. And also, it needs to add a practical session (speaking session) to examine is stated that most required requirement.

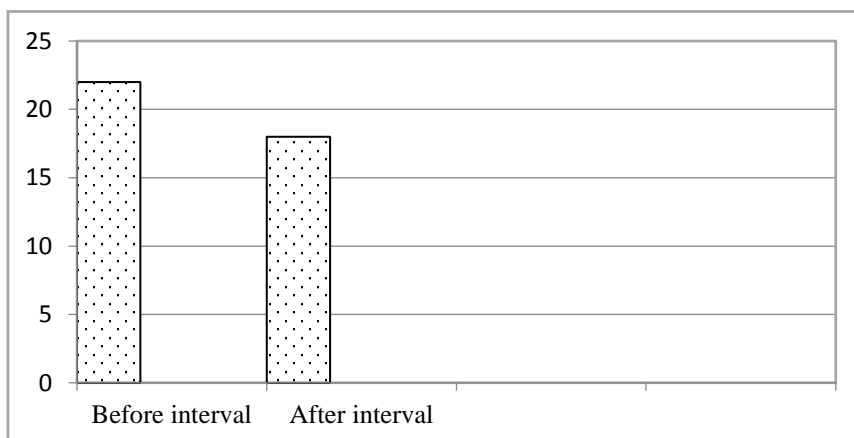
Figure 5. View Introducing Changes to the General English



Source : Sample Survey (2018)

The results given in figure 6 demonstrates that 22 students in the sample identified the preferable time to learn General English is from 7.30 A.M to 10.30 A.M. However, reasons which indicate the learning General English ‘After Interval’ and which justified ‘Before Interval’ seem contradictory since ‘easy to concentrate’ has become a response of both categories.

Figure 6. Preferable Time to Learning English



Source : Sample Survey (2018)

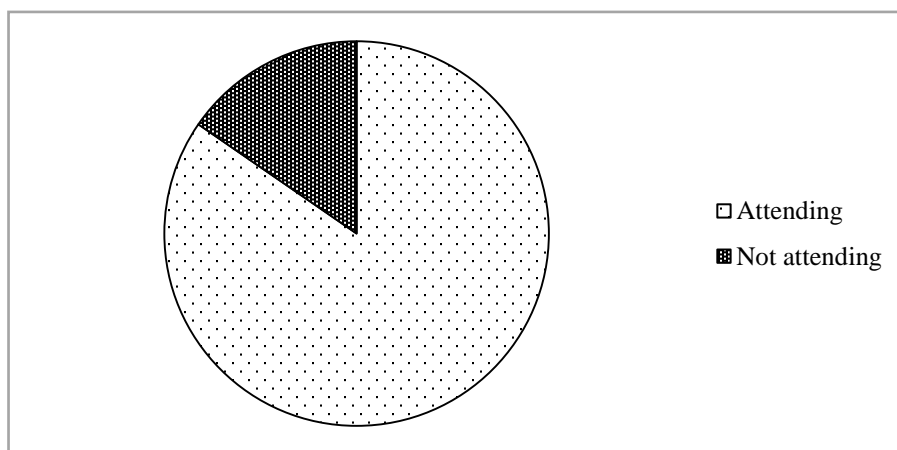
All participants were asked to give reasons for attending tuition classes for General English. Respondents mentioned individual reasons and then they were organized into categories which emerged in the pooled data and displayed in the table 4.

Table 4. Reason for the Preferable Time

Before Interval	No. of Response	After Interval	No. of Response
Easier to concentrate	9	Easier to concentrate	6
Better attention in the morning	14	Less work load	11
Others	0	Others	0

Source : Sample Survey (2018)

Figure 7. Attending Tuition Classes



Source : Sample Survey- 2018

The largest percentage of responses, attending tuition classes and they stated that the requirement of having spoken ability and to have further more knowledge made them to attend tuition classes. The students who are not attending tuition classes state that it is no need to spend much time on that and some students says that it is a practical subject and no need to attend tuitions.

## **5. Conclusion & Recommendation**

### ***5.1 Conclusion***

Even the students learn English during thirteen years of the time period they have nervous in the use of the English language. Parents' education level was affected by the situation and whether they think and concede that learning English is very useful and important, to eligible with sufficient knowledge in English they haven't fondness and stimulus to learning English.

Students are satisfied and confident about the General English text and it will never impact to students' attitude towards General English. The aggregation of adding General English marks in to z-score was not a good idea in responders' view. It means that they have not good attitude and confident about their own knowledge.

Student attitude towards the General English text paper at an appreciable level, the time of the learning English should be changed in the morning hours and it also can affect change the attitude in good ways in students' mind.

There is requirement of practical sessions and students also think it is important to that improve their speaking abilities. Even the student knew about the importance and value of English as an international language, the reason to neglect the English can be less bondage between teachers and student relationship.

### ***5.2 Recommendation***

The major aspect of this research is to conceive about the attitudes of the students towards General English and give further details to future educationists, to do adequate modifications to the relevant areas in General English.

To increase the existing level in the schools in the English, it must be made systematic curricular to teaching methods. Teachers should be given appropriate training in teaching in complicated areas of grammar and other components. Distribute materials and notes must be simple and it should be understandable to every student at any knowledge level.

The weight of the syllabus should abbreviate or it must be given required time period in timetable to complete the syllabus. It is not enough the time that provided in the timetables at the school to complete the General English paper. There is a huge

difference when we compare it with the time period which schools have provided. The attention that schools provide to the English also effect to the attitude of the students towards General English. The school also has responsibility in the developing good attitude towards General English in students' minds.

It is very essential that to have compile practical session in to the General English course. It is needless that just adding dialogues to the syllabus. It must be systematic method, to improve skills in the speaking among the students.

Adding General English marks into Z- score is not a good idea, also as the most students said. If the marks will be added to the z-score government must responsible to fill omissions with the teachers and other learning materials in all the areas of the country. Most of the schools in rural area have vacuum in teachers in English. Otherwise, students have not compatible environment to improve English knowledge.

The weight of the test paper should be reduced and it must be consonance to the syllabus. Grammar and other components also must be tallied with the taught components at the classrooms. Vocabulary must be improved in the syllabuses.

It is confirmed that for more concentration English should be taught in the morning hours and it is comfortable for students that make attention towards General English even they haven't fondness.

There must have a good way in the syllabus, to improve weaker students' knowledge little by little. Such as adding group-oriented learning systems, held small competitions will carry students' knowledge in English to forward.

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