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Research Article

A Case Study on the Sri Lankan English Language Learner in the field of Creative Arts

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ABSTRACT

This article reports the findings of a study that investigated the attitudes of creative arts undergraduates and the attitudes and perception of English as a second language (ESL) teachers from different faculties in three Sri Lankan universities about the motivation and proficiency of their students. Employing a qualitative approach in which a 20-item 6-point Likert scale questionnaire and eight (8) item online questionnaire served as the instruments respectively for randomly selected 25 students and the 10 ESL teachers. The results of the study revealed that the undergraduates were aware of the role played by the English language in terms of the potential utility, importance of learning and the potential impact on their future employment. According to the data analysis, the undergraduates in the faculties of medicine and science are motivated than their counterparts in the faculty of creative arts. Differentiations were observed in terms of independent thinking, enthusiasm for classroom tasks and critical thinking between the same.

Keywords: attitudes, creative arts, ESL, motivation, perception

Introduction

Due to the decades of mother tongue education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels in international contexts, teaching English has been a challenge for teachers of all levels. Low levels of English language learning at school have resulted in the students often being unable to grasp the language at the tertiary level.

Some of the reasons for this situation are common in teaching English to undergraduates the world over: these include non-English speaking backgrounds, environments that are

non-conducive to learning English and lack of exposure during their schooling and afterwards, to name a few.

In terms of the context of the research conducted, each year, ESL teachers confront a new batch of students who enter the university. Their motivational level in the English language classrooms varies. Some of the students have high motivation at the beginning of the academic year with no motivation at all towards the end of the semester. While for some, the motivation does not change as they keep it in a straight vertical line. For many of these

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undergraduates, the medium of instruction in their degree course is Sinhala (L1) and because of the content of the subject and the way they are made to think, they become “less exploratory”. As identified by Fernando (2005), “their courses of study, both general and special degrees, are conducted mostly in their first language, Sinhala”. (p. 7). This is one of the characteristics, I explored in this study. The question that confronts me is “do I make these students ‘less explore’? What are the remedial measures that can be taken in the English classes? This may be the leading cause for them to be ‘less motivated’. Fernando (2005) reported her findings of the baseline test conducted for arts students. 85% of the student cluster has scored 40% or less in the test, thus revealing the characteristics of their low proficiency in English language competency and the “less exploratory” background of their secondary education. Despite many new programmes introduced, i.e., content-based learner modules according to the necessities of the faculties and many interactive lessons in ESL classrooms at the university, undergraduates still have low motivation in their English classes.

Research Objectives

This study explores the attitudes of undergraduates towards learning English. This study specifically seeks:

1. To investigate the attitudes of performing arts undergraduates to learning English.
2. To investigate the attitudes and perceptions of teachers of English from different faculties – (Visual and Performing Arts and Science and Medicine) concerning the motivation and proficiency of their students in learning English.
3. To examine the factors on which these attitudes are based.

Research Question

Based on the research objectives, the following research question was formulated:

1. Are the teaching methodologies and content applied in the classroom environment suitable for undergraduates in the university?

Literature Review

This study is based on theories related to learner motivation and mother tongue influence in learning ESL contexts. The academic needs of the undergraduates of the visual and performing arts do not have a direct relation with English. 99% of their lectures and practical sessions (dance, drama, music, painting and sculpture are done through mother tongue). The teachers in the ESL classrooms find it difficult to initiate at least a small talk among students in English. It can also be pointed out that low levels of English language learning have become an important source of the problem where undergraduates experience incapability to grasp the language at the tertiary level. Ram-eeez (2019) reported the view of an ESL teacher attached to the university where his study was conducted with 25 students:

Students have no genuine interest in learning the language properly; they attend the classes simply to pass the subject and complete their degree. If the 80% attendance was not a compulsory requirement, most of them would have failed to attend the English classes regularly. (p. 204)

In the field of foreign/second language learning, motivation has long been recognized as one of the key factors that determine L2 achievement and attainment. Abeywickrama (2008) in a cross-sectional survey, analyzed the attitudes of students at the General Certificate of Education General English Course with special emphasis on schools of the Balangoda Educational Zone in Sri Lanka. She reported an obvious and essential reduction of weightage given for the components of grammar, speech and writing in the general English textbook at least to a certain extent. Abeywickrama has also suggested an initiation to change the appearance and the size of the textbook and further to simplify the text using simple vocabulary to address learner needs. A survey done by Ahmed (2015) revealed that the learners are interested in learning all the language skills with equal emphasis and he further pointed out that the learners are not confused as to what they want or expect from a language class. It was also reported that the learners are aware of their needs very much and ready to go to any length to meet their needs.

Cheng and Dornyei (2007) stated that motivation in learning a language has become a very popular topic among researchers in the field of ESL. Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) identified motivation from a social psychological perspective. Cheng and Dornyei (2007) mentioned that L2 act as a mediator between different ethnolinguistic communities and it also plays a powerful role in promoting or hindering intercultural communities. A study conducted by Rahman (2005) on Bangladesh undergraduates identified that students learn a foreign language mainly for its utilitarian value rather than integrative motivation. In terms of the undergraduates involved in the research are concerned, the motivation level of the majority is based on its practical value. Altiner (2018) in her study explored Turkish EFL learners' motivation in studying a second language (L2). The study also focused on the relationships between learners' motivation and different variables: gender, interest in continuing English language learning and achievement scores.

The study of Mori and Gobel (2010) used motivational models: expectancy-value theory, and Gardner's socio-educational model firstly to define foreign language learning motivation in a particular EFL setting and secondly, to explore the differences in motivational sub-constructs based on the variable of gender. Brown (1981) distinguished three types of motivation (1) global motivation consisting of a general orientation to the goal learning an L2; (2) situational motivation, which differs according to the situation in which learning takes place and (3) task motivation, which is the motivation for executing a learning task. The second concept introduced by Brown, the situational motivation whereby the motivation of the learner varies according to the situation depicts the condition prevailing with the research participants, who at the same time, became the students in the ESL classroom.

The students in this study attend their ESL lectures in a form of transformation. By the time they come to the ESL class, they have been painting, sculpting, engaged in designing apparel for evening parties or in the formation of their 3D cartoon character for the upcoming project. It is understood that the mindset of

these students is unfitting for a language class as they have been engaged in their practical studies throughout the day. Moreover, many supportive arguments strengthen the argument stated here. As mentioned by (Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Turnbull, 2001; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002), the overuse of L1 reduced the learners' exposure to the target language input. According to Lightbown and Spada (1999), the patterns transferred from the L1 are the fundamental sources of errors in L2 learning. Similarly, emphasis on the 'comprehensible input' and 'meaning' by Krashen and Terrel (1983) also demand maximum exposure to the target language in the L2 classroom.

Krashen (2002) mentioned that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are well-equipped for success in L2 acquisition. On the other hand, many arguments focus on the positive influences of L1 use. Ervin-Trip (1974) stated that the older learner is smarter. The child's capacity to solve problems, to make sub-rules, to carry in mind several principles increase with age. We should expect rule learning to be faster with age in both phonology and syntax. Cook (1992) in his studies declared that language learners generally access their L1 while processing the L2. He further mentioned as advice to teachers not to ignore L1 in ESL classrooms as it would isolate learners. Auerbach (1993) in line with Cook (1992) mentioned that "L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners' lived experience, allowing them to express themselves—the learner is then willing to experience and take risks with English.

Methodology

Population and Sample

Sample

Twenty-five undergraduates studying Creative arts were randomly derived as the sample from a total population of 97 as the student sample. The students were enrolled in English for General & Academic Purposes- Intermediate Level ESL course offered by the university. Their ages varied from 22 - 25. The mother tongue of all the undergraduates is Sinhalese and they were also educated in Sinhala medium government schools. Most of these students

were educated in mixed schools. The students represent all the geographical locations in the country. 99% of the students are Sinhalese. All the student sample had returned their questionnaire after completing them.

Teachers

Ten teachers who teach English as a second language in some local universities located in Colombo city participated in the research. These teachers have been teaching English in Arts, Medicine (western), Commerce and Management and creative arts faculties attached to the universities.

Instruments

- Questionnaire for Undergraduates

For the undergraduates, a questionnaire was developed with 20 questions. The undergraduates were expected to read the questions and mark their answers. The students had to read the first two questions to underline the answer given in the question itself. The students also had to read and make decisions for the rest of the 18 questions. The options given were *strongly agree*, *agree*, *cannot say*, *disagree*, *strongly disagree* and *other*. The students could either underline one option or could share their opinions and make comments. The first two items examined whether the students take the English language as a subject and their medium of instruction in their main degree course.

Item 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 18 and 20 are about their attitudes towards learning English as an L2. Item 10, 11 and 12 deals with the technique used to remember the subject related facts when they were schooling and in the university. Item 13, 14, 15 investigated the attitudes of the undergraduates towards the undergraduates who are attached to the fields of bioscience and medicine. Items 16 and 17 asked about any special technique these undergraduates use to remember their subject-related facts. Item no. 19 asked about the students' preference for their employment in the future. The last item was provided with five options.

- Online questionnaire for ESL Teachers

The teachers were encouraged to share their opinions and make comments freely for the items given to them in the questionnaire. The first item given in the questionnaire for the teachers asked about the faculty they are engaged in teaching. In the second item, teachers were asked about their teaching experience and four options were provided for them to underline. Item 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 encouraged teachers to write freely and the items specifically focused on their teaching experience.

Procedure

The questions given for students were filled out by mostly the second and third-year students whose experience in learning English at the university level is comparatively more than that of their first-year students. All the participants were selected randomly from different levels of academic years. The online questionnaire for teachers was also randomly sent through email— these teachers work for the Faculty of Arts, Medicine and Science in several universities simultaneously.

Data Analysis

The data collected through questionnaires were analyzed utilizing frequency and percentage calculation and the data collected from an online questionnaire given to the teachers were analyzed using narrative analysis.

Findings

Questionnaire given for students

All the findings show that the medium of the majority of the undergraduates is Sinhala in the faculty. The first item given in the questionnaire for students focused on whether they study English as a subject (as compulsory or as optional) in the university. 84% of the students mentioned that they studied English as a subject whereas 16% of the students said that they did not study English as a subject. The students were also asked about the medium of their degree course in the second item and the following table elaborates the figures.

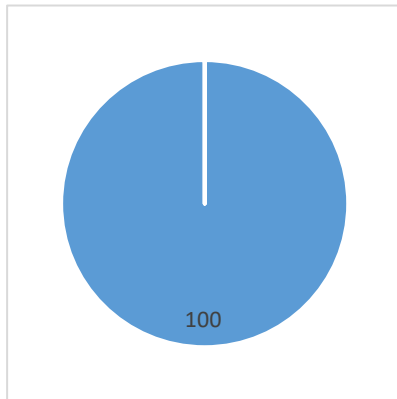


Chart 1. The medium of the Main degree course

According to the Chart 1, the medium of instruction of the degree course of the students is Sinhala which is their L1.

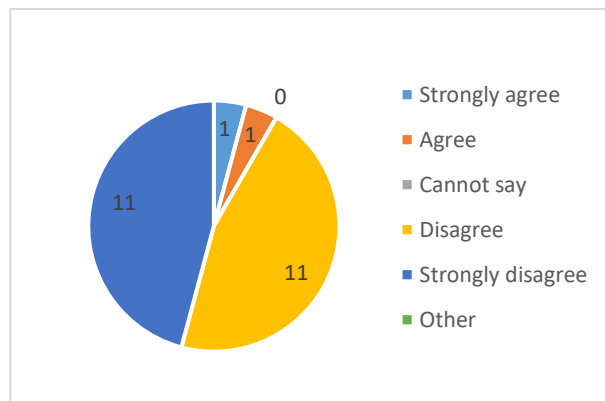


Chart 2. Undergraduates' perception on whether the effort spend on learning English is a useless endeavour as their medium of instructions is Sinhala

When asked about whether the students think the effort spent on learning English is a useless endeavour as their medium of instructions is Sinhala, 44% of the students strongly disagreed with the option while another 44% opted for disagreeing. Two students selected the other option; however, they did not provide answers in the right column.

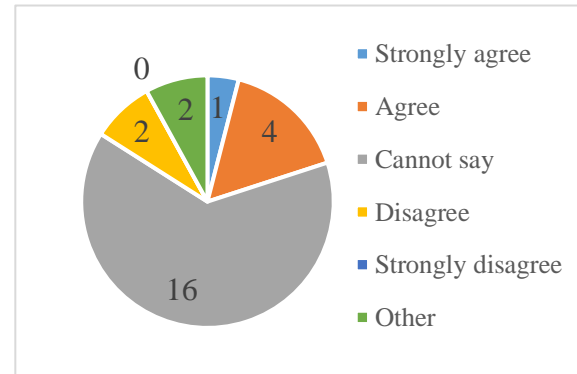


Chart 3. The time spent studying English is more useful than studying another subject

In the next question, students were asked whether they thought the time spent studying English was more useful than studying another subject. 64% of students responded with the option cannot say while 16% agreed that they found the time spent on learning English was more useful than studying another subject.

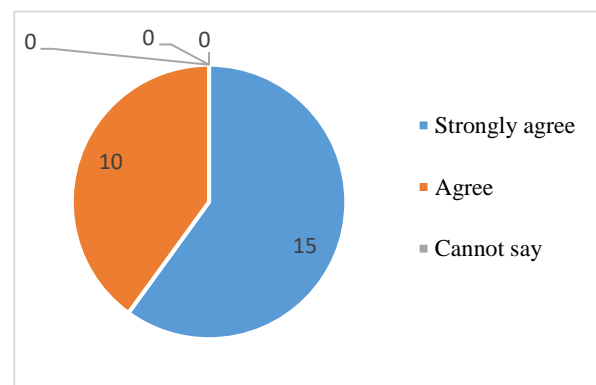


Chart 4. Students' Views on Utility Value of English in Their Future Employment

Chart 4 given above shows whether learning English is useful in their future employment. 60% of the students' sample strongly agreed with the idea that learning English was useful in their future employment while 40% had agreed.

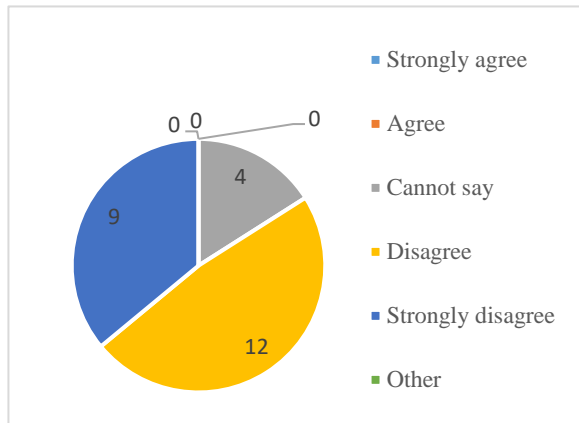


Chart 5. Students' perception on whether they are not interested or motivated to learn English

In the next question, the students were asked whether they were not interested in or motivated to learn English. 48% of the students disagreed with the idea presented to them while 36% disagreed with it. 16% of the students opted for cannot say.

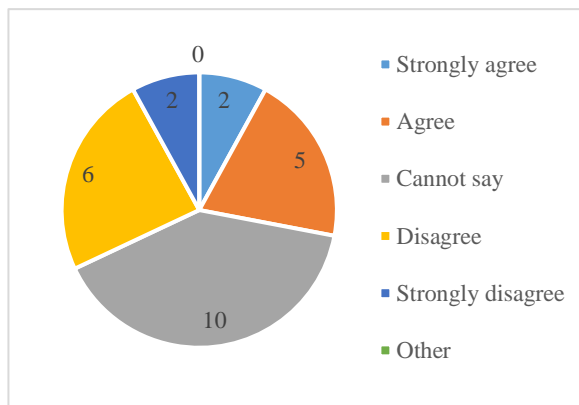


Chart 6. Students' views about the usefulness of English in receiving a promotion in terms of the future employment

The students were asked whether they thought English was useful in receiving a promotion in terms of future employment. 40% chose cannot say option while 24% disagreed with it. Only 20% agreed that English was useful in receiving a promotion in the future.

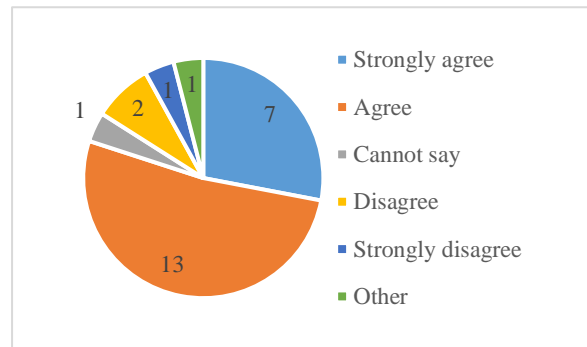


Chart 7. English is important in future employment because of the social status it receives

The students were then asked whether English was important in future employment because of the social status it receives. 52% of the students agreed with the idea presented while 28% agreed with it. Only 8% of the students disagreed with it.

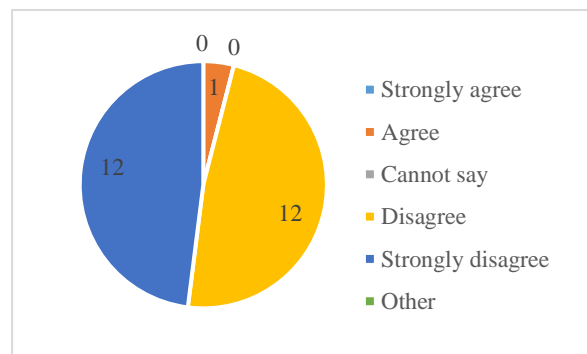


Chart 8. English does not give any kind of beneficiary for the future employment

The item given above investigated whether the students did not get any kind of beneficiary from the English language in their future employment. 48% of the students disagreed while another 48% disagreed with the suggestion. The next three items evaluated the methodology that undergraduates

applied while studying and memorizing subject related matters during their schooling and at present.

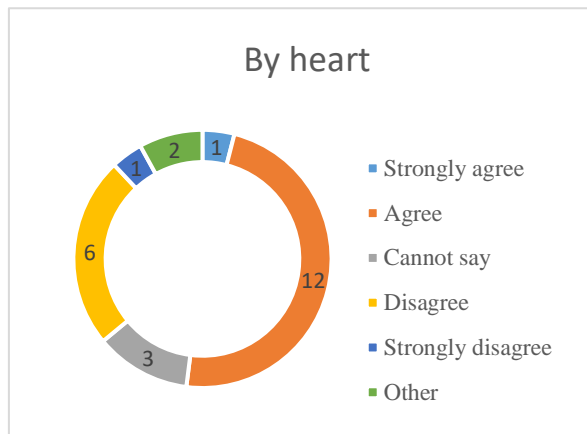


Chart 9. The methodology that undergraduates applied while studying and memorizing subject related matters

48% of students adhered to learn English by memorizing during their studies while 24% disagreed with it. 12% of the students opted for cannot say option.

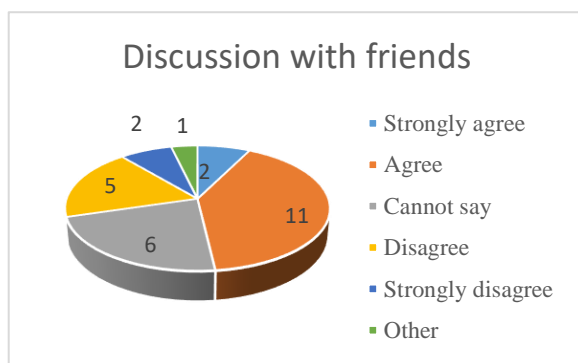


Chart 10. The methodology that undergraduates applied while studying and memorizing subject related matters

44% of the students agreed that they preferred the discussion with friends in studying and memorizing subject related matters while 24% opted cannot say as their response. Only 20% disagreed with it.

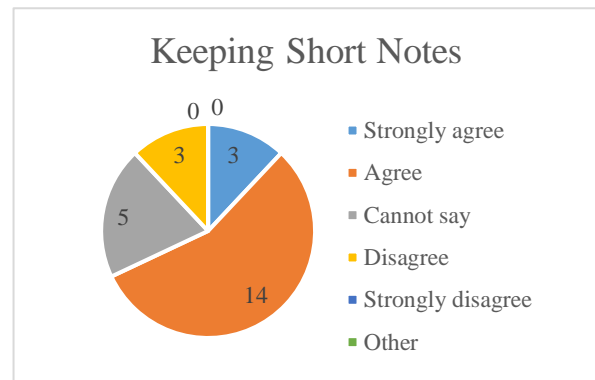


Chart 11. The methodology that undergraduates applied while studying and memorizing subject related matters

The item given above investigated whether students kept short notes during their studies. 56% of the students agreed that they kept short notes during their studies while 20% opted for cannot say option. 12% of the student sample disagreed with the suggestion while the same percentage of the students strongly agreed. The next three items given in the questionnaire were focused on the perception of the undergraduates in the arts faculties towards their peers in the Faculty of Biosciences and Medicine.

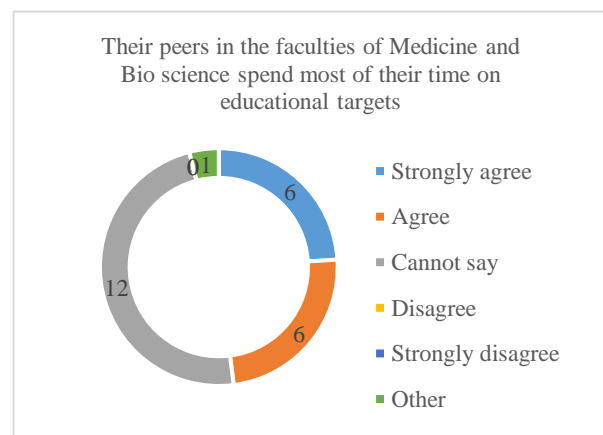


Chart 12. The perception of Arts Faculty undergraduates towards their peers in the Faculty of Bio-sciences and Medicine

48% of the students selected cannot say option while 24% each chose strongly agree and agree option. Only 4% opted for the other option with no response provided.

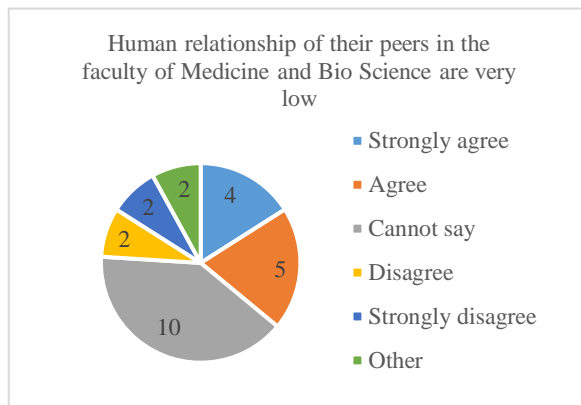


Chart 13. The perception of Arts faculty undergraduates towards their peers in the Faculty of Bio-Sciences and Medicine

40% of the students in the sample selected cannot say option and 20 % selected agree option. Only 16% chose strongly agree while 8% each opted for strongly disagree, disagree and other options.

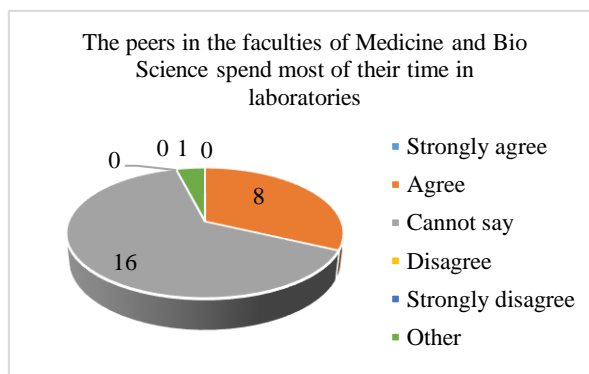


Chart 14. The perception of Arts faculty undergraduates towards their peers in the Faculty of Bio-Sciences and Medicine

The above item given in the questionnaire focused on the perception of the undergraduates towards their peers in the Faculty of Bio-Sciences and Medicine spending most of their time in laboratories. 64% of the sample chose cannot say option while 32% opted for agree option. Only one student selected the other option but with no response provided.

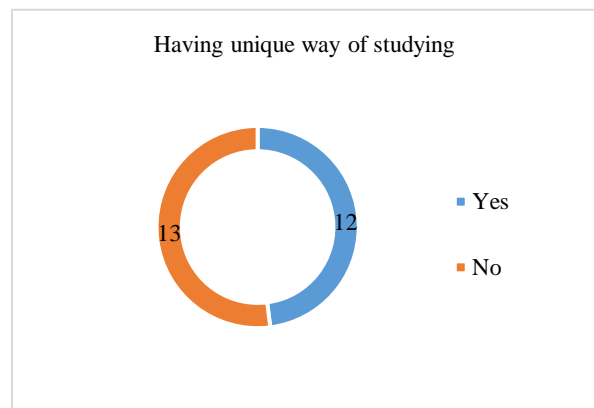


Chart 15. Students' perception on whether they practice a unique way of studying or memorizing subject related matters

The item given above in the questionnaire investigated if the undergraduates had special ways of studying or memorizing subject related matters. 48% of the student sample said yes while 52% said no as their responses.

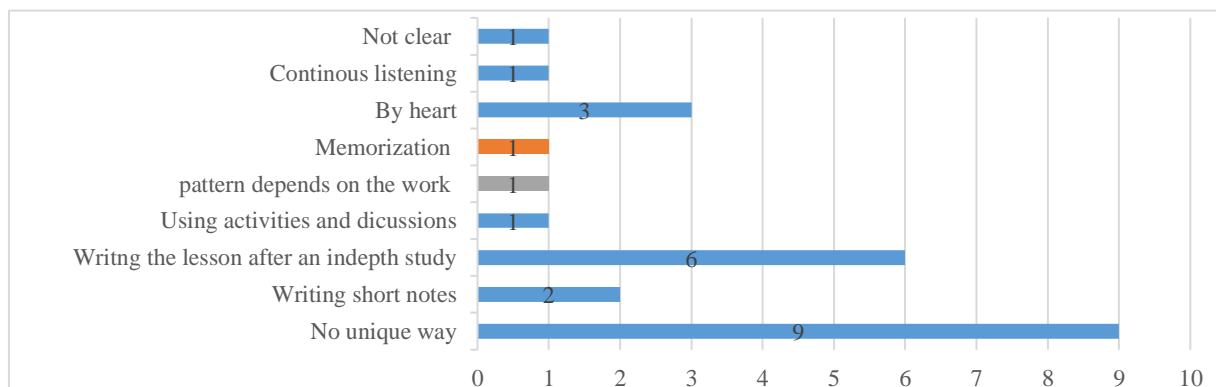


Chart 16. Students' perception on whether they practice a unique technique of studying or memorizing subject related matters with examples from their own

36% of the students expressed that they did not have a unique way of studying or memorizing subject related matters with examples of their own while 24% said that they rewrote the lesson after the lecture. 12% revealed that they commit to memory the lessons taught whereas 8% said that they made short notes to help them in their studies. 4% each opted for continuous listening, memorization, using activities and discussions. Another 4% of the students mentioned that their unique technique depended on the work that they were involved while 4% of the responses were not indicated. The answers given by the students were included into 04 codes as given below in terms of the skill that the students involved in studying or memorizing. When coding only the first letter of the skill has been used in front of the practice to indicate it.

E.g., R stands for Reading, L stands for Listening, S for speaking, W for writing, C for Creative skill, etc. Using memory power / cognitive elaboration

- A. Loud reading to by heart the facts and writing short notes out of memory - R / W/ Memory skill
- B. Rewriting the things that have been by hearted - W / Memory skill
- C. Loud reading and writing short notes for main points in a lesson - R and W
- D. Rewriting the facts that should be remembered and comparison - R
- E. Making short notes and studying them further and drawing sketches - W and C
- F. Constantly listening by recording - L
- G. Making short notes and discussing with friends - W and S
- H. Highlighting special points and writing them out of memory and teaching the content to another person - W / Memory
- I. Making short notes and loud reading them in order to memorize them - W and R
- J. Making short notes and loud reading them in order to memorize them - W and R
- K. Rereading the lesson and by hearting the special facts - R / Memory skill
- L. Memorizing the lessons through activities and short notes - Memory skill /W

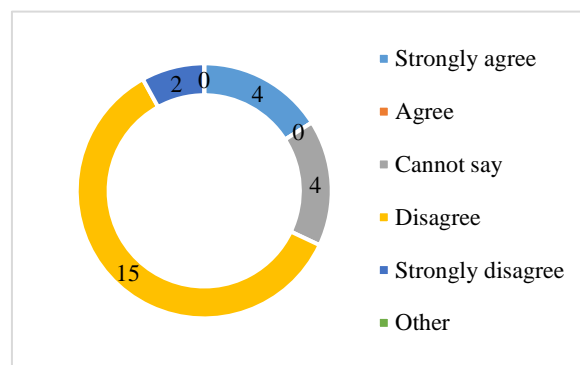


Chart 17. Undergraduates' perception on whether learning English is not important as the scope of employment-related to the area where they are studying is very limited

60% of the students disagreed with the statement while 16% each opted for cannot say and strongly agree option. 8% of the students opted for the strongly disagree option and the clubbing can be given as shown above. The next item investigated the student's preference for their future employment.

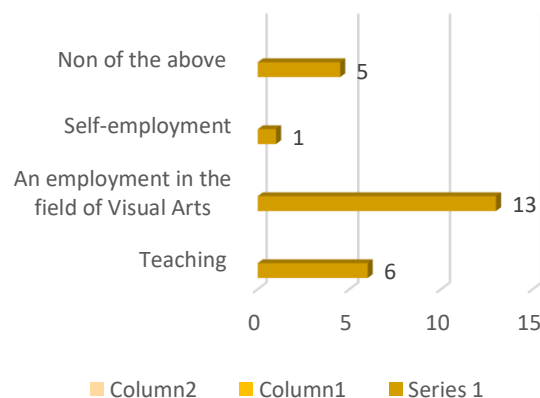


Chart 18. Students' preference of their future employment

The item given above was given to investigate the students' preference for their future employment. 52% selected employment in the field of visual arts while 24% opted for teaching. 10% selected none of the above options whereas 4% chose self-employment.

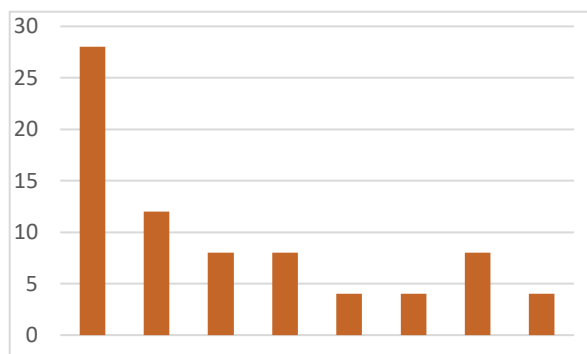


Chart 19. Students' attitudes toward learning the English language compared to the subjects they learn in the university

28% of the students mentioned that learning English was very essential to them while 12% of them stated that learning English was very important in their lives. Moreover, 8% of the students mentioned that they preferred if their degree course was taught in English medium whereas the same percentage of the students stated that learning English was a timely action and they felt better in learning English parallel to their other subjects. 4% of the students mentioned that English was important in knowing information around the world and also for updating. 4% of the students mentioned that English was useful not only in obtaining a job but also in day to day life. 8% of the students stated that learning English was useful when living in a society, doing a job and also in interpersonal communication. 4% of the students mentioned that the English language helped them to remain in the field (probably aesthetics). 4% of the students stated that English was a difficult subject for them whereas the same percentage mentioned that there was no use in learning English during their study course. Four (4) answers mentioned in the questionnaires were not clear.

Online questionnaire for teachers of ESL

An online questionnaire was also used to collect data from the teachers who teach English as an L2. The teachers represent few universities where they teach in the Faculty of Arts, Medicine, Science and Nursing. 10 teachers answered the questionnaires sent to them via email.



Figure 1. The faculties where they engaged in teaching English as a second language

Source: <https://wordart.com/>

Table 1. Experience of Teaching as an ESL teacher

Years of experience in teaching	Relevant teacher
Less than 5 years	A, G, I
5-10 years	J
10 -15 years	E, F
More than 15 years	B, C, D

Teacher H has not answered the above question.

Table 2. Teacher's preference for the faculty to be engaged in teaching

Faculty	Relevant Teacher
Arts	A, G, I
Medicine	B, C, D, E, F,
Science	C, E, J
Any faculty	H

They mentioned the reasons for selecting a particular faculty and they were coded into 04 categories in terms of their preference for the faculty i.e.

1. Positive attitude towards only the Arts faculty
2. Positive attitude towards only the Science and Medical faculty
3. Positive attitude towards both or all the faculties considered

Teacher A - 1

I would choose teaching at the Creative Arts because their subjects are related to social sciences so while teaching the English language, I also can teach critical thinking.

Teacher B - 2

Their IQ is higher than that of arts students. They can absorb what is taught faster than arts students. They are motivated because they have a long way to go in their career and a good knowledge of English is going to take them far.

Teacher C - 2

It is a quite interesting and enjoyable experience. It is not challenging.

Teacher D - 2

The students know the importance of English as it is their medium of instruction. Their motivation level is more compared to arts students.

Teacher E - 2

Students are very good at all the 4 skills. They are very enthusiastic, competitive and participate in all the activities. They enjoy what they do. A teacher has to play the role of facilitator.

Teacher F - 2

More challenging and the students are motivated to learn.

Teacher G - 1

Both science and arts faculties offer intensive courses which are ideally ESP/EAP and run for a short time whereas Arts Faculty has ongoing language classes which are based primarily on **linguistics aspects**¹. ESL teachers teaching in arts would therefore get numerous opportunities to integrate various methods and strategies in **pedagogy**². They can also be flexible in changing the method of teaching accordingly. On the contrary, in pre-designed science and medical courses, this is not possible.

¹ Teacher may be implying grammatical aspects

² Teacher May be implying andragogy

³ Teacher may imply thinking in an original or creative way.

Teacher H - 3

I prefer teaching in any faculty.

Teacher I - 1

At the Faculty of Arts, I would be able to use the knowledge that I have gained and it is easy to take examples from my experience as it is something that I can relate to.

Teacher J - 2

Students are keen and more enthusiastic. They think **out of the box**³ and use 'English' more in their studies.

Table 3. Whether the teacher has observed any difference between the students of the faculty of arts and the faculty of science and medicine

Response	Relevant Teacher	%
Yes	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J,	100
No	N / A	0

Teachers' observations for their response given above were also recorded in the questionnaires and the observations were coded into three (3) categories as given below.

1. Teacher positively commented only on Science and Medical Faculty.
2. Teacher negatively commented only on Arts Faculty.
3. Teacher negatively commented only on Arts Faculty but positively commented on the Science and Medical Faculty.

Teacher A - 1

Their knowledge of the language is higher than the students who come to do humanities. Their necessity for learning English is higher, hence the motivation. Since they know the language and **content boredom are seldom**⁴, so as teachers we witness more motivation.

Teacher B - 3

Arts Faculty students do not aim high. They are satisfied with a degree. Getting basic

⁴ Teacher may imply that since students know the language well the lessons become boring to them.

knowledge is sufficient for them. They can get employed with their degree and nearly 90% want to be teachers but for the medical students, they need to do a lot of references in English. **They need to go abroad for their higher studies**⁵. They need to speak to foreigners.

Teacher C - 1

Learning English is not a challenging task for Medical / Science students. Learning is not completely dependent on the teacher. They can do independent learning once they are guided by the teachers. The use of technology is found to be more advanced.

Teacher D - 1

They have an interest and motivation to learn the language. Their language proficiency level is more compared to arts students

Teacher E - 1

They have more exposure to the language. Their medium of instruction is English so they are naturally motivated to learn English. They realize the value of English and the vital role it plays in their career. Most of the students consider English **as a means to climb the social ladder**⁶.

Teacher F - 1

Medical students speak English in class. Medical students are always willing to do a presentation and oral work. They pay attention and absorb quietly what is taught.

Teacher G - 3

Students of medicine are keen on learning the language and are dedicated. Students in Arts Faculty are less motivated compared to medical students.

Teacher H - 1

Medical faculty students are more motivated.

Teacher I - 3

1. The students of the Arts Faculty are not committed.
2. We have to spoon-feed them (Arts Faculty)
3. Students are afraid to make mistakes (Arts Faculty)
4. Students of the Science Faculty, are very forward, they take everything (language) very seriously.

Teacher J - 1

Above mentioned reasons. The majority of science undergraduates in the University are from good schools with English exposure.

The reasons for such differences that have been observed by teachers and the reasons were also coded into 3 categories and are:

1. Positive comments on Medical and Science students
2. Negative attitudes towards Arts students
3. Negative attitudes towards arts students and positive comments towards science students

Teacher A - 1

Language fluency and exposure to English varies from faculty to faculty even before entering the university.

Teacher B - 3

Most of them are employed and they are satisfied with their basic knowledge of English, but medical students want to go up the ladder.⁷

Teacher C - 1

Both Medical and Science students realize the importance of English in their careers. **The level of English of the Medical/Science students is higher than that of the humanities.**⁸

⁵ Some doctors go abroad not all of them.

⁶ There are many who have gone high up in the social ladder without knowing English

⁷ This statement is purely an idea of a teacher who responded and does not reflect researcher's opinion.

⁸ This statement is purely an idea of a teacher who responded and does not reflect researcher's opinion.

Teacher D - 1

More urban students enter medical faculty compared to humanities. Their exposure to the English language is more during their school education⁹.

Teacher E - 2

In the Faculty of Humanities, **99% of them**¹⁰ want to be teachers in their village schools. Thus, they do not pay attention to learning English. Most of the students are from different socio-economic backgrounds where they do not much exposure to the four skills in the language and have not done any English language learning during their A/L period (2 years). The majority of the students do not even have a basic knowledge of English. They think that they can never master the language despite their efforts.

Teacher F - 1

Their study habits¹¹

Their motivation – high

Teacher G - 3

Students' exposure to the language – Arts Faculty comprises of students from all the corners of the island and most of them do not have the opportunity to speak/listen to English in their environment whereas medical students are already familiar with the language and therefore they do not face problems in facing the lessons.

Future and career – medical students seem to possess the understanding that language is essential for their career and encouraged by the faculty as well from the first year to use the language for communication as well as

academic purposes. That realization and encouragement are not seen in the Arts Faculty.

Teacher H - 1

They take it more seriously.

Teacher I - 3

Arts students are of the view that English is hard to learn. They do not have self-confidence to move forward—they are reluctant to speak in English; whereas **science students speak in English**¹² even if they are not too fluent in using the language. They produce the language. They are not afraid of making mistakes. They try to relate what they learn in their subject matters well.

Teacher J - 1

Science, mathematics and language learning skills have certain similarities as the left side of the brain¹³ is involved in learning those. **Most of the students in the Arts Faculty are from schools in remote areas**¹⁴ where there is a dearth of English teachers. The observations of the teachers about the characteristics of the arts students vs. medical / science students were also recorded by the participants in the questionnaires. Coding has also been done for the observations under 3 categories. They are:

1. Teachers bear negative attitudes towards arts students and positive attitudes towards science students.
2. Teachers show the reasons for the present condition of the students.
3. The teacher has mixed attitudes towards arts students and positive attitudes towards science and medical students.

⁹ This statement is purely an idea of a teacher who responded and does not reflect researcher's opinion.

¹⁰ This statement is purely an idea of a teacher who responded and does not reflect researcher's opinion

¹¹ Study habits are various actions practiced by students regularly and habitually in order to accomplish the task of learning.

¹² This generalization does not reflect researcher's opinion.

¹³ This phenomenon is not scientifically proven

¹⁴ This may not be true and does not reflect researcher's opinion.

Table 4. Teacher A - 1

Arts Students	Science / Medical students
Demotivated	Motivated
Uni-directional communication	Communication happens both ways
Monotonous	Enthusiastic thus requires extra work
Easily gets bored	Critical thinking happens
Expect to be spoon-fed	

Table 5. Teacher B - 1

Arts Students	Science / Medical students
Satisfied with their basic knowledge of English	Motivated to learn more and more
All students don't get involved in the task given	Actively get involved in difficult tasks given to them
They depend on their group leader to do the tasks given to them	All take the responsibility given to them seriously

Table 6. Teacher C - 1

Arts Students	Science / Medical students
Not independent	Fairly independent
IT skills limited	Higher IT skills
Application of technology limited	Higher usage of technology
Exam-oriented	Not limited to examination only
Communication in English is minimal	Find opportunities to converse in English wherever possible

Table 7. Teacher D - 2

Arts students	Science / Medical students
More rural students	More urban students
Lesser or no exposure to the English language while schooling	More exposure to the English language
Due to their lack of language proficiency, their motivation to learn is less	Motivated to learn and improve their proficiency level
English is not the medium of instruction	English is the medium of instruction for their university studies

Table 8. Teacher E - 3

Arts students	Science / Medical students
Lack of exposure	ample exposure
Nervousness/lack of confidence	Even the weakest ones try very hard to improve/very competitive
Not needed in their future career	Know the significance it has in their future career
Their critical thinking is at a high level (in Sinhala / Tamil)	Critical and independent thinking skills are very high / use language very efficiently to express their views
They have good independent thinking skills	Have very good presentation skills

Table 9. Teacher F - 1

Arts students	Science / Medical students
Low motivation	high motivation
Study in Sinhala	Study in English medium
Lectures are in Sinhala	Lectures are in English
English is only for passing an exam	English is needed for their career development
They think they don't need English	

Table 10. Teacher G - 1

Arts students	Science / Medical students
Less motivated	Motivated
Generally, lack critical thinking	Engage in critical thinking and express opinions confidently
Show reluctance toward impromptu activities	Handle impromptu presentations, debates and role-play well

Teacher H

This particular teacher has not answered this question.

Table 11. Teacher I - 1

Arts students	Science / Medical students
Lack of self-confidence	Try to use English confidently even though they are not fluent
Lack of critical thinking	Try to switch between English and Sinhala
Afraid to make mistakes	Try to use their subject knowledge to produce the language
Try to translate every word they hear and understand	Try to write complex sentences
Anxiety	Uninhibited
Lack of enthusiasm	Never run out of questions

Table 12. Teacher J - 1

Arts students	Science / Medical students
A majority – less confident	Motivation / critical/independent thinking skills are very high
Not interested in reading in English	Make use of language for academic work
Depend on the few modules given in class	Read a lot in English
Hardly practices all 4 skills out of class	Speak English

Comments made by teachers in terms of the differences between the above two groups of the students that have not mentioned elsewhere were also mentioned in the questionnaire and they have been coded into four categories as follows.

1. No comments
2. Positive attitudes towards Science and Medical students and negative attitudes towards Arts students
3. Negative attitudes towards Arts students
4. The teacher has pointed out reasons for such situations

Teacher A - 1

The teacher named A has not answered this particular question.

Teacher B - 2

1. In general, I enjoy teaching medical students.
2. Arts students are not motivated because they do not have good job opportunities.
3. They have to compete with international school students when they face interviews.

When they are not selected, they get frustrated.

Teacher C - 3

1. Generally, the students of humanities do not aim high about career prospects. Therefore, they do not take learning English seriously. They just want to pass the levels needed to obtain their degrees and be satisfied with them.

Teacher D - 1

Has not answered this particular question.

Teacher E - 4

1. Family background / socio-economic differences
2. Differences in school/faculties to learn English
3. Teaching English in Sinhala / Tamil. So that they have never been exposed to speech.

Teacher F - 4

1. Arts students know that they need to learn and like to learn English but their environment is not supportive of learning English.

Teacher G - 1

The teacher named G has not answered this particular question.

Teacher H - 1

The teacher named H has not answered this particular question.

Teacher I - 2

1. Students of the faculty of science are careful about their pronunciation, accent and tone of voice as well.
2. They read much and try to watch movies and listen to music.
3. From mistakes that they make, they learn with self-confidence, constant practice motivation take them a long way and we should encourage arts students to do the same.

Teacher J - 4

1. If the medium of education is English, any student would try learning and using English.

2. From the first year, if they could attend lectures in English and their mother tongue, gradually, the students would be able to switch to English medium without trouble.

Limitations

As the study was conducted with the undergraduates attached to the faculty of creative arts, it may not project an accurate impression of all settings which could be generalized. The results might vary if it was implemented with another set of undergraduates at different universities.

Discussion

Questionnaire given for students

According to the data analysis, the medium of instruction of the main degree of the undergraduates concerned here is Sinhala (L1). The second item in the questionnaire focused on whether students studied English as a compulsory or optional subject within the university. Having 84% of the students studying English within the university, it is evident that the majority of the student sample studied English as a subject. Furthermore, 84% of students understood the importance of learning English though their medium of instruction is Sinhala. The students in the research context thought that they were unable to make any comment regarding the usefulness of the time spent on studying English compared to the time spent on any other subject, as we observed 64 % of the students' sample opted for cannot say option. Whereas, 100% of the students' sample totally or simply acknowledged that learning English was useful in their future employment

By observing the data in the 05th item, it could be seen that 84% of the student sample were interested in or motivated towards learning English. The next 03 items in the questionnaire investigated the students' perception of the role of English in their future employment; particularly their views about the usefulness of English in receiving a promotion in their future employment. 40% of the students' sample said that they could not say whether the English language would be useful in receiving a promotion in their future employment. 80% of the sample either agreed or strongly agreed that English is important in their future employment because of the social status it receives. Furthermore,

96% of the students think that the English language gives beneficiary in their future employment.

52% of the students have been practising memorizing technique while another 52% of the students mention that they discuss with their friends when they were in their Advanced level classes (similar to high school) and in the university. 68% of the students use short notes while studying and when they were in their Advanced level classes (similar to high school) and in the university.

48 % of the students said that they are unable to make any comment about the students in the Faculty of Bioscience and Medicine spending most of their time on educational targets while another 48% either agreed or strongly agreed with the fact that the students in the Faculty of Bioscience and Medicine spend most of their time on educational targets. 40% of the sample say that they cannot say the human relationship of their peers in biology and medicine is very low while 36% either agreed or strongly agreed that they were. 64% of the student sample think they cannot say their peers spend most of their time in laboratories while 32% had said that they were.

48% of the students said that they had a unique way of studying or memorising their subjects while 52% of the students said they do not have a unique way.

68% of the students' sample acknowledged that learning English was important though the scope of employment is very limited.

52% of the students like an employment-related to visual and performing arts while teaching becomes the second popular employment category amongst them. 44% students find English as an essential component in their lives. 8% of the students prefer to have their degree courses running in English medium

Online Questionnaire for Teachers of English as a Second Language

According to the data provided, the teachers represented local universities in the country. The majority of the teachers (80%) teach in medical faculties while serving in other faculties also. 70% of the teachers serve Arts Faculty while 50% of them serve equally the Faculties

of Management and Science. As far as the number of ESL teaching experience is concerned, three teachers have more than 15 years of experience—three teachers have less than 5 years of experience. Two teachers' have experience between 10 -15 years; one has between 5-10 years of teaching experience. One teacher has not answered this question.

60% of the teachers preferred to teach in either medical or bio-science faculties in the universities while only three preferred to work in the arts faculty. These teachers were also questioned about the reasons for selecting such faculties as their preference. The high level of motivation and enthusiasm of the students in the faculties of medicine and science compared to their batch mates in the Faculty of Arts have been the reasons to select such faculties. The teachers have also observed that teaching English to the students in the faculties of medicine and science is challenging and interesting.

The ESL teachers have a better understanding of the differences between the student groups. They observe that the students of medicine and bioscience are more motivated: their knowledge and exposure to language is higher than the students who come from the Faculty of Arts. According to them, the students of medicine and bioscience are very committed and active in the language classroom. They are always willing to do their presentations and speech related activities. In contrast, the teachers have observed the students in the Faculty of Arts are less motivated and expect everything to be prepared and provided by their teachers.

Teachers have also observed the reasons for such differences in these two groups of students. The attitudes of the arts students towards learning the language and the background of the students have been the key issues for the teachers. The students have not been exposed to the English language during their secondary education. The students of medicine and bioscience have understood that English is essential for their career—an opposing situation exists among arts students.

Coding has been done under three categories on the characteristics of the arts students, medical and science students. Teachers identify the differences between the students given above in different ways. One of the key factors

concerned in the study was the motivation of the students. In comparison, the students in the Arts Faculties have limited IT skills, low critical and independent thinking. Teachers have also made their comments of which that have not been mentioned above in terms of the differences between the above two groups of students. There were four teachers who have answered that particular question and only a few teachers have attempted to answer the question.

Conclusions

By observing the data, it is understood that the student sample seems to understand the value and importance of learning English even though the medium of the degree is Sinhala (L1). Even though they seem to understand the importance of learning English, it is observed that the majority of them do not acknowledge that the time spent studying English is worth compared to the time spent on any other subject.

Furthermore, the motivation in learning English of these students is at its highest seen in this context and the majority are under the view that English receives a great deal of social status in society. Moreover, the students are unable to make comments over English knowledge being helpful in their future employment though they understand that English is valuable in their employment.

The student sample does not bear any specific attitudes towards the students attached to the Faculties of Bioscience and Medicine and their perception seems to be very passive towards them. Rewriting the lessons learned in the classroom is the generally practised way of the students in terms of helping in their studies. Employment related to visual and performing arts has been the most popular employment category in the sample.

It is seen that the teachers who observed students belong to the Faculty of Medicine and Science are motivated than their counterparts in the Faculty of Arts. They lack self-confidence and are afraid of making mistakes in class. Arts students want to study English only to pass

examinations and compared to medical and bioscience students, arts students lack critical thinking. It has also been observed that for arts students, a necessity to learn English has not been created in their study stream. Nevertheless, for medical and bioscience students, the medium of instruction in their degree course is English and the references should be done in the English language.

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