

THE PROPENSITY OF STUDENTS TO USE ENGLISH IN THEIR STUDIES: A STUDY BASED ON THE UNDERGRADUATES IN FACULTY OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AND ARABIC LANGUAGE AT SOUTH EASTERN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT: *English language plays a major role in higher education. This study was conducted among the students studying in the third year at the Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language at the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka. The objective of this research was finding about how to use the English Language in their studies and how to address its shortcomings. The data was collect from online survey and analyze the data using frequency analysis method. When this study reviewed those responses, this study found out those students whose mother tongue Tamil natives were proficient in English, but their English-speaking skills needed to be further improved. It is revealed that there is a certain deficient atmosphere in improving the English language in the faculty. Students have a variety of practical options when it comes to solving those problems. Conducting all academic activities in the English medium etc. It seems that the implementation of those proposals will benefit not only the students whose mother tongue is Tamil but also the students who are studying in other mediums. It will also determine the quality of the degree that they are going to receive as a whole.*

Key Words: English, Language, South Eastern University, Undergraduate

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is our main key way of communication. There are thousands of languages in the world. English is known as the international language currently. It is the language that is used in many countries. English may not be the most spoken language in the world, but it is the official language of 53 countries and is spoken by around 400 million people across the globe (Vanisha, 2021). Sinhala, Tamil and English are the languages spoken in Sri Lanka which has a multicultural society. Although Sinhala and Tamil are the official languages in Sri Lanka, (Ministry of Official Language and Social Integration, 2013) English is the standard language for international affairs and administration. As the third most widely spoken language in the world, English is widely spoken and taught in over 118 countries and is commonly used around the world as a trade language or diplomatic language. It is the language of science, aviation, computers, diplomacy, and tourism. Last but not the least; it is the language of international communication, the media, and the internet. Also locally, English language plays an important role, that is, from applying for a job in the job market to being engaged in the job, it is important for the young generation to master the English language in taking Sri Lanka internationally.

Nowadays, English language has become the medium of communication in various fields such as economics, finance, banking, science, technology, culture, and international relations in the world. In addition, it is widely accepted that achieving fluency in English language is an instrumental success in life (Gomleksi, 2010). As a result, the majority of students studying at

the southeastern university of Sri Lanka in the eastern province use the Tamil language for communication. However, they have to use sources in other languages when engaging in work. The research is focused on third-year students studying Tamil as their language of communication at the faculty of Islamic studies and Arabic languages at the south eastern university of Sri Lanka, with the aim of identifying their academic activities and their tendency to use English. The scope of this study is to identify the tendency to use English language study sources in their studies, how to use English language study resources, English language handling skills, and problems encountered in using the English language in English learning activities.

No matter where we go in the world, we need a way to communicate, so we are gifted by nature, the ability to speak. She needs a language to talk to someone. Although thousands of languages are spoken in the world, English is the dominant language life (Gomleksi, 2010). Even if we go to another country or to an area in Sri Lanka where another language is spoken, even if we cannot speak that language, we can exchange our ideas by using the common language, English. In the past in Sri Lanka, only a minority of people used the English language and we saw that if they needed to do some work using the English language; they would get help from that group to complete their work. But nowadays there is a completely different atmosphere, so it is imperative that all of us, as the young generation who are going to take charge of the future, know the English language.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

English is an international language, which may have been understood by a limited number of people in the past, but today it has become a must language for all, mainly because all the functions, services, and technology are interrelated. Therefore, this research was conducted to study the extent to which the third-year students of the Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic at the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka use English in their studies and how to address its shortcomings.

OBJECTIVE

The two objectives that are aimed to be fulfilled through this research as follows:

- To identify the propensity of students to use English in their studies.
- To identify the barriers to learning and using English in their studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is critical to be fluent in English because it is one of the most widely used languages in the world, with a global audience of over 2 billion people. (Gomleksi, 2010) Many types of research have been published nationally and internationally about the value of the English language.

The impact of English language on the lifestyle and behaviors of tertiary level students in Bangladesh: Case Study Jahangirnagar University was the topic of Didar Hossain's (2022) research. According to the inquiry, from primary level to tertiary level, English is taught as a required subject in schools, colleges, and universities in Bangladesh. There is no exception for the students at Bangladesh's Jahangirnagar University. The students in this instance believe that learning English will help them succeed in their future lives as well as make

communication easier. Some pupils believe it is a means of demonstrating intelligence. Out of all of them, the current researcher is interested in learning more about how the English language has an impact on Bangladeshi tertiary students' way of life. Additionally, it aims to demonstrate how the English language functions as a machine or a tool of dominance and power. In this study, the origins of the English language in Bangladesh and the Indian subcontinent are briefly discussed. It also refers to the work carried out by several researchers in the same field. Then, it offers a summary or an analysis of a few questions to help determine how well the pupils are using English. It determines how the kids use the English language. At last, it offers some recommendations and solution to get out of the influence of the English language.

Novaldy Fajar Perdana (2021) conducted the research at the Institute of Technology Sepuluh Nopember Surabaya to investigate the value of English for electrical engineering students. In this study, the researcher explains that English is a language that high school students should understand because, in this day of globalization, communicating with people is always possible and is not even constrained by distance. Students encounter a variety of people from around the world after graduation, either in person or digitally. Students must be able to communicate in an international language, in this case English, in order to do this. The researcher explains that effective communication can certainly improve students' connections to others. The advantages of learning English for adolescents in high school include the potential to make friends with students from other countries, the chance to work for a worldwide company, and many more.

The research was conducted by Khushvaktova Nargiza Uktamqizi & Shegay Alla Vladimirovna (2020) in Chirchik State Pedagogical Institute of Uzbekistan on *Methodologies of Teaching English at University: Principles of Game Methods*. The objective of research is to examine how game components are used in university English classes. Consideration is given to the requirements and conditions for the creation of the game as a teaching tool. It was examined how gaming approaches for teaching a foreign language are now categorized, as well as strategies for inspiring students to use various methods. The key guidelines that establish the game's function as a teaching strategy in higher education are put forth.

Nur Yigitogulu Aptoula (2021) conducted the research to investigate the academic literacy practices of graduate students enrolled in programs for the preparation of English language teachers in English-medium universities in Turkey. The academic literacy practices of graduate students studying a second language (L2) at English-medium universities in Turkey are examined in this exploratory research study. Turkish graduate students in English language education programs at seven English-medium universities were asked to take part in a survey about their academic literacy skills in both Turkish and English over the course of one academic year. A percentage of the participants were also requested to take part in semi-structured interviews. Graduate students claimed that writing in their first language was nearly impossible when learning in English (i.e. Turkish). However, in particular genres, including academic articles and conference abstracts, they were asked to utilize English and Turkish concurrently. Based on the findings, the study emphasizes the value of encouraging academic bilingualism in graduate programs in English-medium universities, in addition to full bilingualism.

Developing A Problem-Based Learning/ PBL Model for Improve Students' English Speaking Problem Solving Ability and Self Confidence at Economic Department of University was the research focus by Oktadela & Amri (2021) at Islamic University of Riau in Indonesia. This study's foundation was the basic research done in the university's economic department while studying English. The researcher learns from these preliminary investigations about the analyses' effectiveness and the usefulness of the researcher's products in building and putting the PBL Model into practice at the Economic Department of the Islamic University of Riau. The ADDIE Model was used in the research's R&D design. According to research findings, there is a strong correlation between problem-solving skills, self-assurance, and students who have a favorable opinion of the PBL model in English. These results are consistent with educational policy, which aims to consistently raise the bar, particularly for students majoring in economics.

These topics on education were covered in a wide range of contexts. However, this study looks at how the Faculty of Islamic Studies and the Arabic Language of the South eastern University of Sri Lanka use English, as well as the challenges they have when doing so and how to overcome them. Despite the fact that there have been other studies of this kind on the English language, this one focuses on how often these faculty students utilize the language for academic purposes. Even though there are six faculties at this university, only four of them are teach in English, and even though English is one of the subjects teach in this faculty, not all academic activities are teach in English. The faculty's students will, without a doubt, serve as a valuable resource for future generations if we examine their level of English proficiency, address it, and help them become proficient undergraduates.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research is an experiment conducted using detailed analytical strategies. The Primary data collection was done based on information provided by 272 students by third-year undergraduate students of the faculty of Islamic studies and Arabic languages of the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka. The students obtained a pass by submitting an online questionnaire which was directed to them in English, Sinhala, and Tamil. The next step was to examine and analyze the data description. The data obtained were analyzed using frequency analysis method and the problem-solving vessels were used as a secondary source for books on Islamic studies and the Arabic language curriculum guide.

3. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

English language is playing a major role in our daily transactions be it national or at international levels. English language has become part and parcel of our life because of its international nature. Good proficiency in English language means good opportunities for an individual (Aejaz, 2022). Therefore, the study was conducted with the views of 272 students of the faculty of Islamic studies and the Arabic language of the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka.

A. THE GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS

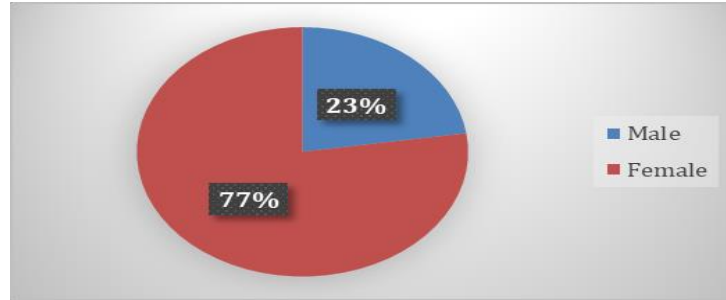


Figure 1. Source: Research 2022

When doing any analysis we will be looking into the background of its participants. It will affect the analysis directly as well indirectly. When referring the above figure we identified that most of the participants are females. Accordingly we found out that most of the students studies in this faculty are female and male-female ratio is also mostly same.

B. THE DEPARTMENTS OF PARTICIPANTS ARE STUDIES

There are two departments in the Faculty of Islamic Studies and the Arabic Language. Of these, 59% were students of the Department of Islamic Studies and 41% were students of the Department of the Arabic Language.

Q1: DEPARTMENT OF STUDY

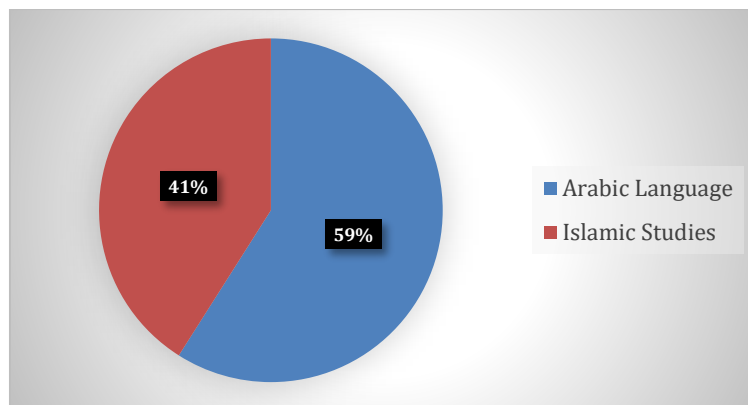


Figure 2 .Source: Research 2022

A. THE AREAS IN WHICH THEY USED ENGLISH

When students were asked about the areas in which they could handle English, they realized that 80.9% of them were literate, 77.9% were able to write English, 88.8% were able to speak English and 64.7% could be fluent. Although students are very good at reading and speaking, they are less able to write and listen. We can also see that students have difficulty writing a sentence grammatically correctly. Then work from the bottom of the list eliminating issues that aren't worth the fight.

Q2: THE AREAS TRY TO USE ENGLISH

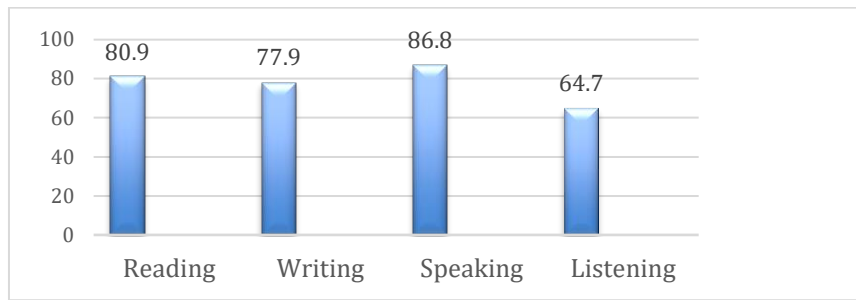


Chart 1. Source: Research 2022

A. THE WAYS USED BY THEM TO DEVELOP THEIR ENGLISH KNOWLEDGE.

Among the participants 83.8% of the responses said that watching video is the best way to improve their English knowledge. According to the study 70.6% of participants are develop their English knowledge by reading books, 57.4% are from attending lectures and 22.1% are from listening English radio news. Here the focus is on improving one's knowledge through watching videos rather than attending lectures. As the majority of them improve their English skills by watching videos, they should not be limited to giving tutors and explanations while participating in the lectures, but also using technical tools to make the lecture more interesting by using strategies such as videos, presentations etc. It turns out that children can then quickly grasp the English.

Q3: THE ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP STUDENTS ENGLISH KNOWLEDGE

Table 01. Source: Research 2022

Answer	No of Students	Total Students	Percentage
Reading books	192	272	70.6 %
Watching videos	228	272	83.8 %
Self-collected notes	104	272	38.2%
Attending lectures	156	272	57.4%
Reading English Magazines	88	272	32.4 %
Listening to English Radio News	60	272	22.1 %

A. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION DEPICTS THAT TO WHAT EXTENT THEY USE ENGLISH FOR OTHER SUBJECTS THAN ENGLISH

According to the study 7.4% of respondents use moderate English in other subjects and a small percentage 48.5% use a lot. It should also be noted that 14.7% said that they use very little English for other subjects. Here 48.5% use English for other subjects but the rest do not use English as they have enough notes in Tamil and it seems that they do not care about English as they prefer to use it for their study.

Q5: TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU USE ENGLISH FOR OTHER SUBJECTS OTHER THAN ENGLISH?

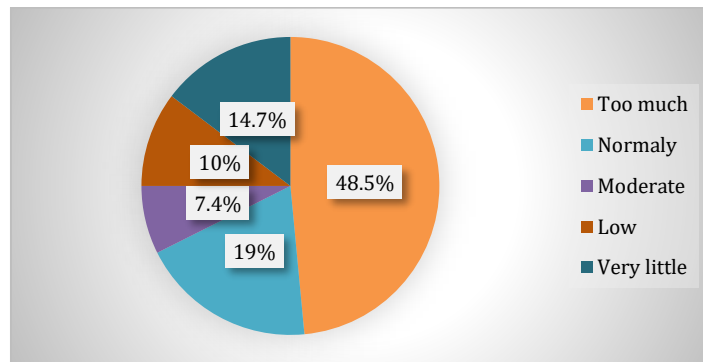


Figure 3. Source: Research 2022

A. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION REVEALS THE REASONS FOR NOT USING ENGLISH FOR SUBJECTS OTHER THAN ENGLISH

Q6: SO, WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR NOT USING ENGLISH FOR SUBJECTS OTHER THAN ENGLISH?

Table 02. Source: Research 2022

Answer	No of Students	Total Students	Percentage
English is required but it does not have the necessary facilities.	128	272	47.1
Lack of interest in studying English	24	272	8.8%
Lack of suitable books in the library	16	272	5.9%
Reluctance to read English	24	272	8.8%
The belief that they should keep the information needed for educational activities in their mother tongue	56	272	20.6%
Ignorance of the English Language	60	272	22.1%
Reading English is wrong.	12	272	4.4%
Since studying English will develop English culture	4	272	1.5%
Lack of triggers for studying English	92	272	33.8%
Lack of environment to develop English	140	272	51.5%

When we asked the reasons for not using English in academic activities, 51.5% stated the lack of environment to develop the English, another 47.1% stated that English is required but does not have the necessary facilities. There are two points to note: 22.1% do not use English due to ignorance of the English language and another 8.8% do not use English due to reluctance to use English. Another 33.8% said that they do not use English for their studies due to a lack of triggers for studying English. The majority, knowing that learning English is essential, have indifferently stated that it does not have the necessary environment and facilities. This may be due to the fact that most of the academic activities in the faculty are

conducted in Tamil medium and the students think that it is not necessary to pay attention to English.

A. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION SHOWS WHETHER THERE ARE ENOUGH RESOURCES TO LEARN ENGLISH

When we asked about this, the majority's opinion was that the books and other sources available in the University Library are adequate. A minority of 29.4% said that it was insufficient. Students may find that they do not want to use English books if they do not use them despite having adequate resources.

Q7: ARE THE BOOKS, ONLINE LEARNING MATERIALS, AND OTHER RESOURCES IN OUR UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SUFFICIENT FOR YOU TO STUDY ENGLISH

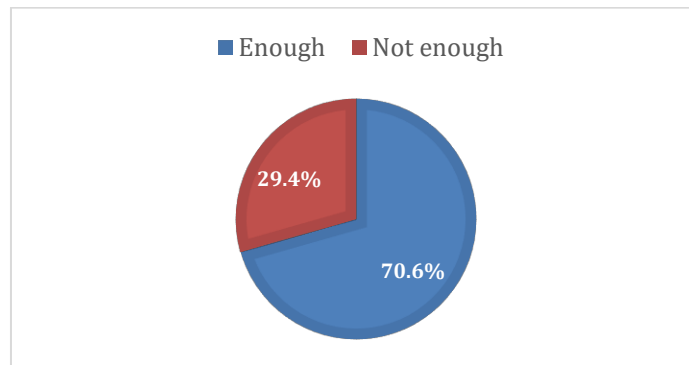


Figure 4. Source: Research 2022

A. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION REVEALS THE THINGS REQUIRED FOR LEARNING ENGLISH

There was a certain amount who said that the resources were not enough. Their idea of them was to improve the e-book size. Like most books in the world, today are published through technology, a lot of information is exchanged through book technology. It would be more useful for students to have books on them in the university library as well.

Q8: IF THEY ARE NOT ENOUGH, WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR LEARNING ENGLISH?

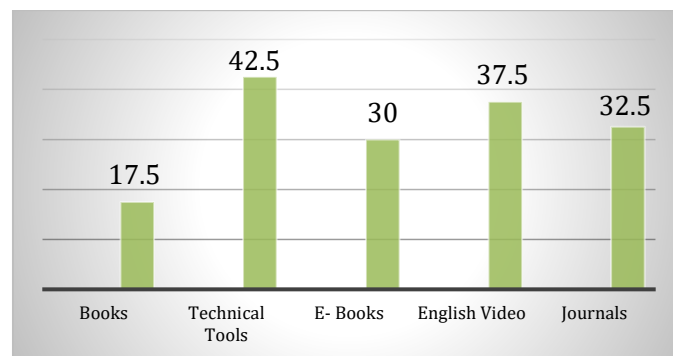


Chart 02. Source: Research 2022

A. REASONS FOR THE RELUCTANCE TO SPEAK ENGLISH

When asked why most people do not speak English, 73.5% said it was because of fear of speaking English wrongly, and another 61.8% had a lack of environment, 47.1% lack of practice and 51.5% said because their fellow students might be mistaken. Although many students have stated that they know how to speak English, students who prefer to use English because of the communication of the majority and the use of Tamil also do not speak for fear of being misunderstood or alienated from others seems to exist. If the law makes it compulsory for everyone to speak English when communicating with speakers, children will spontaneously become accustomed to speaking English and it will become more common.

Q9: REASONS WHY THEY ARE RELUCTANT TO SPEAK ENGLISH

Table 03. Source: Research 2022

Answer	No of Students	Total Students	Percentage
Fear of speaking wrongly	200	272	73.5 %
Lack of environment	168	272	61.8 %
Lack of training	128	272	47.1 %
Because fellow students will be mistaken	140	272	51.5 %
Because mother tongue is superior	4	272	1.5 %
Because English is a foreign language	4	272	1.5 %

A. THE LEVEL OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AFTER COMING TO UNIVERSITY

When asked about their English proficiency after coming to university, 22.1% of them said that they have improved very well, while 45.6% said that they have improved and 22.1% have improved moderately. It should be noted that even after coming to university 7.4% of them were weak in English knowledge. The truth about the development in English language proficiency after coming to university is that children's knowledge has improved to a certain extent. When they enter the university, their English knowledge should be developed as an undergraduate. Accordingly, the students' opinion should be that it has grown by one hundred percent. According to the data we have received, it does not seem to have happened. Then it seems that more effort should be put in by the students and the locals to develop the English skills of the children.

Q10: ENGLISH LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE FOUND IN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AFTER COMING TO UNIVERSITY (WITHIN 3 YEARS)

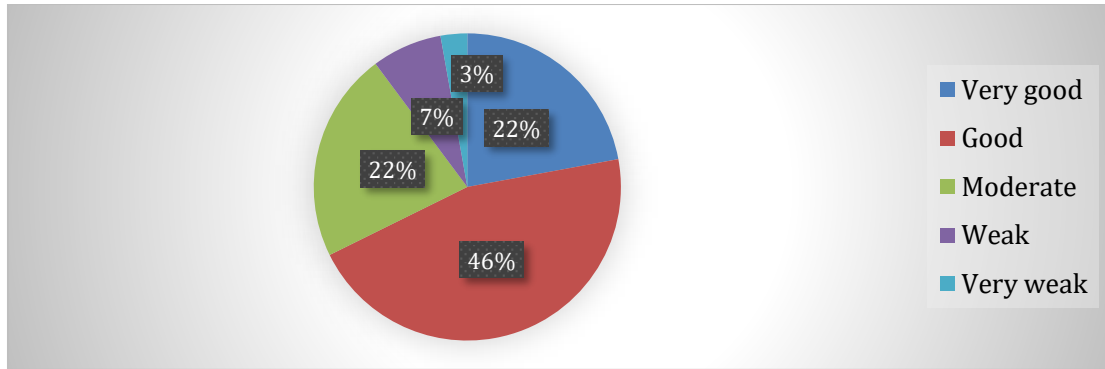


Figure 5. Source: Research 2022

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH IN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

When asked why they use English for academic purposes, 61.8% said they would engage in a good job in the future, while 51.5% said they would acquire knowledge of English for higher studies. Others have stated that they study English only for the reason that it is a subject. When we researched why English is used in educational activities, we found out that 69.1% of them needed English to engage in a good job in the future. 61.8% of them used English to gain more knowledge as well as 50% and 51.5% of them used English because it is a compulsory subject in school and for higher education. Accordingly, we can identify that most of them use English to get a better job and to gain more knowledge while a few of them used English to find notes.

Q11: WHY IS ENGLISH USED IN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES?

Table 04. Source: Research 2022

Answer	No of Students	Total Students	Percentage
Because English is a lesson to be learned as a subject	136	272	50 %
To gain more knowledge	168	272	61.8 %
To find notes	64	272	23.5 %
Engage in a good job in the future	188	272	69.1 %
For higher education	140	272	51.5 %

A. THE GROWTH OF ENGLISH FURTHER AS A SUBJECT IN THE DEGREE

As English is a compulsory subject in their degree when asking whether it should be improved, 97% said that it should be further improved and a minority i.e., 3% said that it is not necessary to improve. According to the research, we found out that the majority of them liked to improve their English while the minority said that it is not necessary to improve. Accordingly, we can see that they liked to improve their English because it is a compulsory subject.

Q12: DO YOU THINK ENGLISH SHOULD GROW FURTHER AS IT IS A SUBJECT IN YOUR DEGREE?

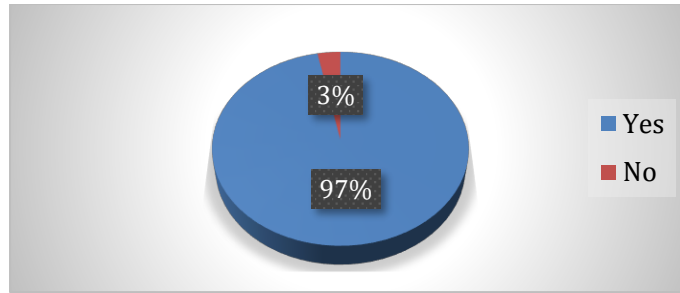


Figure 6 . Source: Research 2022

A. METHODS TO IMPROVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS OF STUDENTS

When using the English language for their academic study, 76.5% of the respondents said to organize schemes to improve their English. Also, 73.5% said first they should remove the fear of students in English, and 66.2% of respondents were to create an environment to improve English and form associations among students to improve and thereby improve their English. When we research the ways to improve English, the majority was saying that the fear of English should be removed within the students, as well as should organize schemes to improve English and an environment should be created for English reading. A minority of them said that lecturers should be well fluent in English.

Q13: IF YOU WANT TO USE ENGLISH FOR EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES, WHAT SHOULD YOU DO TO IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS / WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Table 05. Source: Research 2022

Answer	No of Students	Total Students	Percentage
Organizing schemes to improve the English language	208	272	76.5 %
Formation of English Language Committee among students to develop English language.	176	272	64.7 %
First, remove the fear of students in the English language	200	272	73.5 %
Teaching English to suit the business world	128	272	47.1 %
Organizing the best lecturers to study English	120	272	44.1 %
Creating an environment for English reading	180	272	66.2 %

A. OPINIONS ABOUT CONDUCTING EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE FACULTY IN THE ENGLISH MEDIUM

When we asked about handling all academic activities in English medium, half, i.e., 50%, of the majority liked it and 16.2% had a normal idea. Another 5.9% said they did not want to be made in English. When we researched whether English should be used for all the activities of the faculty, we saw that many of them liked to use English for all the activities of the faculty, while only a very few disliked using English for all the activities of the faculty.

Q14: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT CONDUCTING ALL THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE FACULTY IN THE ENGLISH MEDIUM?

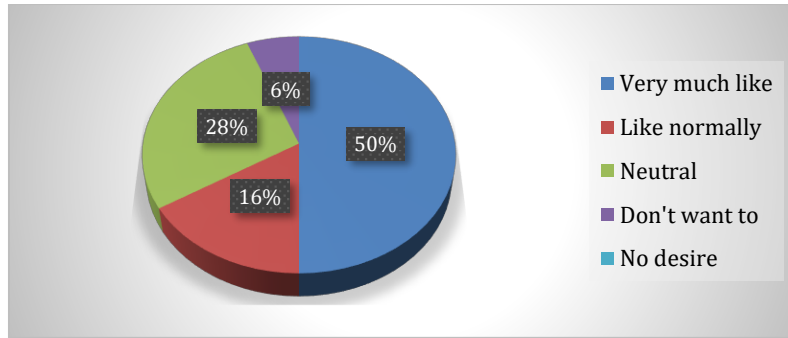


Figure 7 .Source: Research 2022

A. THE LEVEL OF ENGLISH KNOWLEDGE BEFORE AND AFTER COMING TO UNIVERSITY

When asked about their English proficiency after coming to university, the majority 45.6% percentage have improved neutrally. Next, we researched whether the English knowledge has improved after entering the university. Many of them gave a neutral idea about it; the reason for this may be because English is not much used for the activities in the faculty.

Q: 15 KNOWLEDGE OF GAINED AFTER COMING TO UNIVERSITY RATHER THAN ENGLISH KNOWLEDGE BEFORE COMING TO UNIVERSITY

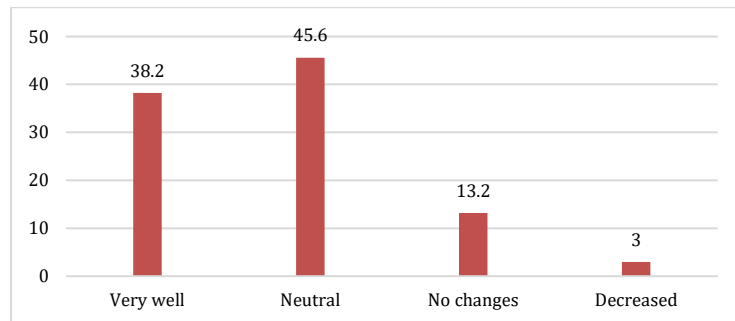


Chart 03.Source: Research 2022

4. RECOMMENDATION

The first step in improving English is to eliminate the fear of students using the English language. Accordingly, the following activities are recommended:

- Conducting all academic activities in the English medium.
- Teaching English to suit the job market.
- Organizing schemes to improve the English language
- Formation of English Language Committees among students to develop English language.

5. CONCLUSION

When students of the Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language at the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka look at their academic pursuits and the tendency to use the English language, it appears that the majority have mastered English and that the vast majority of them have developed some knowledge before coming to university. Students can improve their English knowledge by watching videos related to English and attending lectures. There were an average number of people who use the English language for subjects other than

English for their academic work. They said that they did not use English for their studies due to the lack of a suitable environment in the faculty for learning English. At the same time, it is noteworthy that half of the students have expressed their willingness to make all academic activities in the faculty an English medium. Students who wish to improve their use of English are also offered action plans to improve it. When we asked why they use English, they say that they want to get a good job in the future and for their higher education. As a whole, if we overcome the barriers to learning and using English, it is possible to make students fluent in English.

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