English Language Policy and Planning in Sri Lanka: A Critical Review

Chapter · November 2015

CITATION
1

READS
7,575

2 authors:

Dilini Chamali Walisundara
University of Sri Jayewardenepura
8 PUBLICATIONS **2** CITATIONS
SEE PROFILE

Shyamani Hettiarachchi
University of Kelaniya
42 PUBLICATIONS **50** CITATIONS
SEE PROFILE

English Language Policy and Planning in Sri Lanka: A Critical Overview

By

Dilini Chamali Walisundara, Shyamani Hettiarachchi

Introduction

Language can be essentially defined as the single most powerful form of communication among different groups of individuals in the world. It mostly functions as a unifying force among different ethnic and religious groups but has also led to contentions/ conflicts in many parts of the world where wars have been waged and new boundaries been created based on linguistic diversity. On a similar note, Crystal (1997) as cited in Coperahewa (2009) reiterates that 'different linguistic groups wish to see their language identities and interests maintained and may actively campaign for recognition' (p.69). Thus, a strong focus on the rights and liberties of the different linguistic communities is warranted within a political, social and economical setting at present where political identities of many nations are built on ethnic and linguistic identities. Therefore, bilingualism, trilingualism, multilingualism and multi-ethnicism are rapidly becoming the norm if not the necessity in the formation of language policy and practice. Sri Lanka too, like many of its South Asian neighbours, is faced with a number of issues related to language policy and is attempting to find ways to negotiate these new demands in language policy.

In this context, the role of English in Sri Lanka has been a rather contentious issue resulting in a number of ideological definitions relating to its status in colonial and postcolonial Sri Lankan societies. While English enjoyed a privileged status during the colonial era, things changed with independence in 1948. The subsequent governments responded to more populist demands and 'dethroned' (Gunesekera 2005, p.15) English

with the expectation of promoting vernacular languages. The height of this attempt was the Sinhala only policy of 1956, which led to divisions among the majority race, Sinhalese, and other minority language users. Subsequent policy changes have focused more on issues pertaining to two important vernacular languages in the country, i.e. Tamil and Sinhala. The noteworthy policy change in post-independent Sri Lanka in relation to English was a recognition of English as a link language by the 13th amendment to the 1978 constitution in 1987. The term link language has been defined in the local context to be a situation that would lead to better communication between the different ethnic groups in the country. However, in the broader context, it could also be representative of a more open economic system leading to the link between Sri Lanka and the world. In this context, this paper hopes to address the following:

1. An identification of the specific English language policy and planning decisions that have been proposed and implemented subsequent to 1978.

2. To analyse some of the key indicators of English language policy implementation. This includes the student pass rate at public exams, allocation of teachers, disability access to learning English etc.

Language Policy and Planning: A Theoretical Overview

Many assume that Language policy involves the political participation in the formation of it as well as in the implementation. However, Spolsky (2004) chooses to identify three main components in terms of the language policy of a speech community.

1. Its language practices – the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire.
2. Its language beliefs or ideology – the beliefs about language and language use

3. Any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management.

According to the first two components, language policy does not involve the establishment of it being made explicit or established by authority (p. 08). It involves the choice made available to the language user, irrespective of the absence or presence of an established system to ensure the right to do so. The third, on the other hand, deals with the intervention of the government or other interested parties that is expected to make opportunities available for the learner to learn and use the language. Coperahewa (2009) identifies language policy as that what is 'commonly developed and applied at the national level' (p.73). Spolsky (as cited in Coperahewa, 2003) asserts that language policy refers to all the language practices, beliefs and management decisions of a community or polity (p.09).

Language policies are in most instances politically determined and language planning becomes an inexplicable part of it (Coperahewa 2009, p.73). Therefore, identifying the various aspects of planning is essential to better comprehend the implementation and impact of policy.

Language planning has been defined by Rubin (as quoted in Raheem and Ratwatte, 2001) as 'the pursuit of solutions to language problems through decisions about alternative goals, means and outcomes to these problems.' Similarly, Coperahewa (2009) citing Fishman (1977), Jernudd and Das Gupta (1971), explains that 'language planning is a 'decision making' process seeking to solve 'language problems, typically at the national level.' The argument brought forth by both these views is the strong political presence in the process, which supports Raheem and Ratwatte's (2001) view that 'the nation or government is the sole agent making the choice, and that it chooses

from available alternatives ranked according to their value or usefulness in achieving specified goals' (p. 25). However, lately, many researchers have begun to question the presence of political power in policy and planning and its implications particularly in relation to the issue of minority language rights. Given the scope of this paper, this issue will not be discussed here.

Language planning could be broadly defined as 'a body of ideas, laws, and regulations (language policy), change rules, beliefs, and practices intended to achieve a planned change (or to stop changing from happening) in the language use in one or more communities' (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997 as cited in Coperahewa, 2009).

Language planning today mainly focuses on four major aspects, namely status planning, corpus planning, acquisition planning and finally prestige planning. The earliest reference to status and corpus planning was made by Heinz Kloss in 1969 while acquisition planning was introduced by Cooper in 1989 (cited in Hornberger, 2006). Hornberger (2006) refers to three of these major aspects in language planning in the following manner:

'We may think of status planning as those efforts directed toward the allocation of functions of language/literacies in a given speech community, corpus planning as those efforts related to the adequacy of the form or structure of languages/ literacies; and acquisition planning as efforts to influence the allocation of users or the distribution of languages/literacies, by means of creating or improving opportunity or incentive to learn them or both' (p. 28).

Similarly, Coperahewa (2009), Cooper (1989) and Haarmann (1990) elaborate on the different definitions of status, corpus and acquisition planning with the inclusion of a new aspect, prestige planning. Accordingly, status planning is said to '. . . deal with

the initial choice of language including attitudes toward alternative languages and the political implications of various choices'. Comparatively, corpus planning refers to '. . . the internal structure of the language and involves activities such as coining new terms, reforming spelling and standardising a language'. Acquisition planning looks in ' . . . to efforts to enable individuals or groups to learn a language, either as first, as a second or as a foreign language.' Finally, prestige planning is about '. . . creating a favourable psychological background that is crucial for the long-term success of language planning activities.' In brief, Balduaf (2006) argues that status planning is about society while corpus planning is about language and acquisition planning or language – in – education is about learning and finally prestige planning is about the image (as cited in Coperahewa, 2009).

Language – in – education or acquisition planning is commonly known as language education policy (Spolsky, 2006; (Baldauf, 2006)). Referring to Language Education Policy (LEP), Shohamy (2006), argues, that it is . . . 'a mechanism used to de facto language practices in educational institutions especially in a centralised education system (p.76). However, this may seem rather different in a postcolonial situation where language education policy, particularly relating to colonial languages seems comparatively different. As in the case stated by Phillipson (1992), where he argues that 'ELT (English Language Teaching) is mostly funded and oriented by the State, in the Centre and the Periphery (p. 68). In such a situation, there is strong government involvement as well as participation in the introduction as well as the implementation of such a policy. Elaborating further on the issue of LEP, Shohamy (2006), argues that 'LEP refers to the carrying out of LP (Language Policy) decisions in the specific contexts of schools, universities in relation to home languages (previously, referred to as 'mother tongue') and to foreign and second languages (p.76). Therefore, LEP can be defined as

situations where opportunities and decisions regarding the teaching and learning of languages are made available.

There have been numerous theoretical bases in the development of language policy and planning with the earliest being that of Haugen (1959) who argued that language policy dealt with simplistic concerns like orthography, grammar and structure (as cited in Hornberger 2006). Subsequent attempts like those formed at international conferences resulted in publications like *Language Problems of Developing Nations* (Fishman, Ferguson, and Das Gupta, 1968) as well as *Can Language be Planned* (Rubin and Jernudd, 1971). A more recent attempt in this regard would be the integrative framework cited in Hornberger, 1996, 2006.

Approaches Types	**Policy Planning (on form) Goals**	**Cultivation planning (on function) Goals**
Status planning (about uses of language)	Officialization Nationalization Standardization of status Proscription	Revival Maintenance Spread Interlingual communication International, Intranational
Acquisition planning (about uses of language)	Group Education/school Literary Religion Mass media Work ---------- **Selection** Language's formal role in society *Extra-linguistic aims*	Reacquisition Maintenance Shift Foreign languages/second language/literacy ---------- **Implementation** Language's functional role in society *Extra-linguistic aims*

Corpus planning (about language)	Standardization of corpus Standardization of auxiliary code Graphization ---------- **Codification** Language's form *Linguistic aims*	Modernization (new functions) Lexical Stylistic Renovation (new forms, old functions) Purification Reform Stylistic simplification Terminology unification ---------- **Elaboration** Language's functions *Semi-linguistic aims*

Table 1.1: Language Planning Goals: An Integrative Framework
(Hornberger, 2006:29)

According to the framework, education/ school and literary that come under acquisition planning, focus on the policy planning approach where as foreign language, second language and literacy come under cultivation planning approach. Therefore, the functions and the formation of the education system in a country including the process of learning and teaching a second or foreign language should be assessed and analysed in order to comprehend the issues or concerns relating to Language Education Policy.

Describing further, in the process of planning and policy, one can also identify the complex process that involves a variety of agents and decisions at different levels (Raheem and Ratwatte, 2001). This is demonstrated in figure 1.1. Here Ricento and Hornberger (as quoted in Raheem and Ratwatte 2001), explain that

> 'at the outer layers of the onion are the broad language policy objectives articulated in legislation or high court rulings at the national level which may then be operationalized in regulations and guidelines; these guidelines are then interpreted and implemented in institutional settings (e.g. schools, businesses,

government offices); in each of these contexts individuals from diverse backgrounds, experiences and communities interact. At each layer, characteristic patterns of discourse, reflecting goals, and values, institutional or personal identities (sic).

Figure 1.1: The Dynamics of Language Planning
(Cited in Raheem & Ratwatte (2001) based on Ricento and Hornberger, (1996)

Unlike in the previous framework, this gives a very clear view of the different layers of policy formulation and implementation. The most notable feature of this being the central role played by the school and by extension the teacher in implementing,

language policy is being placed at the centre. In this light, Raheem and Ratwatte (2001) observe that 'they unambiguously place the ELT professional at the heart of the whole process.' Therefore, an analysis of teaching and learning methods, teacher training, medium of instruction, language tests and testing mechanism as well as the role of the classroom (Auerbach 2000) are important in comprehending the implementation of Language Education Policies. Elaborating Auerbach (1995)(cited in Raheem and Ratwatte 2001), argues that 'the day – to – day decisions that practitioners make inside the room both shape and are shaped by the social order outside the classroom' (p.05). She further explains on other factors that will affect teaching, namely, the classroom setting, curriculum development, instructional content, teaching material and language choice (Raheem and Ratwatte 2001, p. 27). Therefore, one cannot underestimate the significant role played by language teachers, in this particular situation (Raheem and Ratwatte, 2001)

Development of English in Sri Lanka

The history of English in Sri Lanka is intertwined with the politics of language status, policy, privilege and power. It has been, and continues to be, the language of higher education, commerce and technology, science and private sector employment. It is a language that is both desired and feared, in what Goonetilleke (1983) calls a 'love-hate relationship'. Desired, as it promotes social mobility and feared, as it has the power to exclude from the upper echelons of society.

The fall of the last Sinhalese Kingdom in 1815 witnessed the colonization of the entire island by the British. Introduced at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the British, English became the language of administration, clearly establishing its place as an 'official' language. The situation in Ceylon in relation to the teaching and learning of

English was rather poor. It has been recorded that *Swabasha*[1] schools served best, in terms of promoting Christianity and minimal attempts were made to promote the teaching of English (Sumathipala, 1968, p.04). Sumathipala (1968), elaborates a more active and liberal role taken by the American Missionaries, in educating the local community in the Northern Province of the country in the English language, so much so that there was significant teaching of the language in the province (p.04). However, by the 1830s, 'not more than 800 children attended schools and classes where English was taught (Sumathipala, 1968, p.04).

This was cemented by the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission of 1833, in its recommendation of English as both a medium of instruction within administration and education (G.C. Mendis, 1956). English also became the language of the courts of law. Knowledge and proficiency in English became the prerequisite to achieve employment in administration. The Colebrooke report affirmed that 'A competent knowledge of the English language should however be required in the principal native functionaries throughout the country' (Mendis, 1956, p.70). This extends to the appointment of native headsman who were required to be literate in English following a directive in 1828 (Coperahewa, 2009).

The Colebrooke-Cameron Commission Report is thus the first official decree related to language policy: language status planning and language acquisition planning. The Commission championed the dissemination of English for the empowerment of Sri Lankan citizens to arguably the detriment and marginalization of the vernacular or indigenous local languages. The Commission's report appears unconvinced by the merits of the education system in government schools of the time in the vernacular,

[1] The policy that promoted the use of only Sinhala as the official language in the country.

focusing solely on reading and writing (Mendis, 1956). The report, in turn, advocates the founding of English-medium schools. This reflects the colonial perspective at the time of improving and 'emancipating' the colonized through language and religion (G.C. Mendis, 1956).

The Colebrooke – Cameron Commission is also believed to one of the earliest involvement of the colonial government in terms of education policy in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon). The commission recommended that vernacular education be replaced with English medium education in selected schools in Sri Lanka. In the words of Colebrooke (cited in Sumathipala, 1968, p.05), 'To aid the disposition already evinced by the natives to cultivate European attainments, some support from the government will still be required,' stating the importance of government intervention in education in order to ensure the promotion of English language users in the country that would contribute to 'the acquirement of a competent class of candidates for general employment in the Public Service, who would unite local information with general knowledge, and would eventually be capable of holding responsible situation upon reduced salaries (cited in Sumathipala 1968, p. 08).'However, the real situation with regard to English language teaching and learning was appalling and in the words in J.J.R. Bridge (February, 1912),

> At the end of the 7 to 10 years of English education with a narrow curriculum and thoroughly examination centred, only 20% who leave school pass the Junior Local. The other 80% has only a smattering of English, often useless even for a mere clerical job.
>
> (Sumathipala, 1948, p.44)

As such until Independence in 1948, English functioned as the official language in the country with the development of the two vernacular languages (Sinhala & Tamil)

being pushed to the periphery. The table given below is a clear indication of the state of language literacy in the later 19th and early 20th century.

Year	Literacy in Any Language			Literacy in English
	Males	Females	Total	
1871	23.1	2.0	25.1	---------
1881	29.8	3.1	32.9	---------
1891	36.1	5.3	41.4	----------
1901	42.0	8.5	50.5	3.0
1911	43.3	11.7	55.0	3.3

Table 1.2: Literacy in Ceylon (Taken from Sumathipala (1968) p.48)

According to the table, there is no evidence of English language literacy in the early years of British colonialism. However, according to the statistics that are available, English language literacy in the first decade of the 20th century is less than 4%. Clearly after almost 100 years of colonial rule which began in 1815, Ceylon could only achieve a very low level of proficiency in English, especially after over 80 years of implementation of the Colebrooke- Cameron commission recommendation relating to English medium education.

1948 brought independence to Sri Lanka from British rule and since then, the country has witnessed the introduction of numerous policy decisions in terms of language. A summary of these policies have been presented by Gunesekera (2005) and is given below.

Date	Event
1948 Dominion Status	Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) gains independence from Great Britain. English remains the only official language of independent Ceylon
1956 Official Languages Act	Sinhala becomes the only official language of Sri Lanka. English is dethroned.
1956 &1958	Language riots to protest against the Sinhala Only administration
1971 Youth Resurrection	Rebellion by non-English speaking youth
1972 Constitution	Sri Lanka is declared a Republic. Sinhala remains the only official language, with Tamil as a national language.
1978 Constitution	A new constitution is adopted by the government of Sri Lanka. The official language of Sri Lanka is Sinhala. Sinhala and Tamil are declared national languages.
July, 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord	Sinhala, Tamil and English are declared official language of Sri Lanka.
November 1987 13th Amendment to the Constitution	English is the link language, Sinhala and Tamil are the official languages of Sri Lanka.
1997 Education Reforms	English is introduced in Grade 1 in schools. English medium instruction from Grade 5 permitted in schools with the means to do so. General English Introduced as a new G.C.E. Advanced Level subject.

Table 1.3: Milestones of English Language in Sri Lanka (Taking from Gunasekera (2005), p.15)

Subsequent to independence in 1948, English still remained as the official language of Sri Lanka. However, after close to 150 years of British colonial rule, the literacy in the English language remained quite low. Doric de Souza commenting on this situation, stated,

> . . . on the eve of the Dominion Status, only 6% of the population was reported in the census as literate in English, although the test for this literacy was almost elementary
>
> (de Souza (1979) reproduced in Fernando, Gunasekera & Parakrama, 2010, p. 31)

de Souza's views on English language proficiency is resonant with the information that was made available at the Department of Census and Statistics (1952) and its given below.

Ability to speak English only	0.2%
Ability to speak English and Sinhala	2.9%
Ability to speak English and Tamil	1.9%
Ability to Speak English, Sinhala and Tamil	2.4%
Total	7.4%

Table 1.4: Language Proficiency in English -1946 (Cited in Coparehewa - 2009)

The socio-political underpinnings of English have been discussed by many when referring to the issue of language policy and planning in Sri Lanka. English was until independence believed to be the privilege of a minority of the community who mostly consisted of elites and those who were closely affiliated with the church. English medium education was the norm with limited access to indigenous forms of education for the masses which consisted of Sinhala and Tamil monolinguals. This witnessed a change with independence in1948 and the emergence of vernacular forms of education as well as its presence in more government places, communication, education, entertainment and social activities. Furthermore, it was the English language that raised these people to their positions of power, and it was the English language that.... ensured

that they will remain in these positions. (Kandiah, 1984 p.124 -125) as quoted in Raheem and Devendra (2006).

The years post independent in Sri Lanka were probably the most tumultuous in terms of language policy. These policies have led to enormous dissent between the majority and the minority ethnic, linguistic communities so much so that by the late seventies a policy intervention seemed inevitable. This will be further elaborated later in this chapter.

The 1970s witnessed a critical period in the political history of Sri Lanka. While there were changes in policies towards a socialist orientation with a strong focus on 'home spun' solutions to many of the country's problems, as well as limitations in trade and other relations with many countries, despite the government's preference for a policy of non-alignment. Furthermore, there was a policy of nationalisation which resulted in the taking over of many of the economic assets that were run by large multinational companies. This was also a time of civil unrest in the country, where an insurgency that was headed by many educated unemployed youth from the South of the country. In terms of language policy too, this period witnessed the extension of the some of the post-independence policies on language where Sinhala was given prominence over other languages like Tamil and English. However, several attempts have been made during this time to develop English in the country. The de Lanerolle Report compiled in1973 and titled, 'A Place in the Sun', was a report of the Committee of Inquiry into the teaching of English in schools in Sri Lank which contained a number of useful suggestions. These suggestions included the commencement of teaching English at Grade 06 with a preliminary year at Grade 5, the establishment of regional units to teach English, the modification of the 'structural' method of teaching and the

establishment of an English Language Centre for study and research. Unfortunately, although the report was submitted to the government 'it was not published' (Govt. Publications Bureau, April, 1982 p.162).

English as a Link Language

Sri Lanka's political sphere witnessed another important change in 1977 with the election of the new government that initiated a number of reforms. The most significant of these saw a change in government policies where the focus was towards 'global rather than indigenous realities' (Raheem and Ratwatte, 2004 p.28). Many new developments in different areas of the economy, agriculture, irrigation and other programmes were introduced with the involvement and participation of foreign agencies and investors. Furthermore, with the liberalising of trade, investment opportunities were now open to foreign investors. The opening up of Free Trade Zones, and private sector employment and the involvement in the tourist industry demanded an increase in the use of English. A change in policy had its direct impact on language policy where more opportunities were made available for locals as well as overseas investors while encouraging the growth of the private sector which resulted in more private sector employment. As a result, a 'popular outcry for English arose and it was not as a 'library language' but as a language for everyday communication in a variety of social and job-oriented situations.' (Cumarathunga, 1986). Furthermore, provisions were made available by the 1978 constitution to recognise English as a link language while Sinhala and Tamil were established as national languages, with the expectation being that English would function as a force that could unify the two main ethnic groups in the country. This provision of recognising English as a link language was made available in the 1978 Constitution by the 13th Amendment which was brought in to

effect in 1987. There have been instances where the role of English as a unifying force among different communities has been acknowledged many times before as quoted by K.M. de Silva (1993).

> While English education had become a badge of social and cultural superiority, and had elevated the English education to the position of a privileged minority "the national establishment", the English language served a politically useful role as an important unifying factor in the country. (pp.276-77)

Responding to a more contemporary issue, Cumarathunga (1986), is of the view that the communal riots in 1983 has also renewed the demand for English as a link language to better enable the communication between the Sinhala and Tamil communities while Canagarajah addresses the specific local and international circumstances where English functions as a link language. According to Canagarajah (1999),

> The International hegemony of English still looms over Colombo government's ministries of education, commerce, and communication. It serves as a link language between these institutions and the civilian population, so the Education Ministry, for instance is forced to use English, rather than Sinhala, when corresponding with Tamil parents, teachers and education officers. The Tamil community also needs English as a bridge to the symbolic and material rewards that are tied to the international education and professional centres. (p.71).

Raheem and Devendra (2006) notes of similar situations in relation to the role of English among the Sinhala community.

> ..... English functioned at the micro level of social life in the community. At the international level Sri Lanka as a member of the global community needed an

> international language for communication, for the use of Sinhala on the global scale was limited. Furthermore, Sri Lanka was essentially a trading country, at the national level too, certain branches of state administration (commerce and trade) had necessarily to function in English. (p 191).

The problem with the position of the English language was not limited to trade, commerce, education and administration, there were ideological concerns that deserve attention. A strong affiliation that the language has to the British colonial history of this country and its subsequent impact on the social fabric of the country has led to the emergence of a resistant ideology towards the language. Locals with strong affiliations to the English language earned social prestige and power while dethroning the masses of the country of similar privileges. There was deep resentment among those who spoke the native languages that 'a potent and particular Sri Lankan metaphor arose for the English Language' (Raheem and Devendra, 2006, p.190) The term '*Kaduwa*' which when translated to Sinhala means sword is referred to English, expressing its 'hostility and bitterness and used as a metaphor for English (p.190) and the English Language Teaching Units in the local universities are called '*Kammala*', which in Sinhala translates to the ' blacksmith's house'; a place where you go to sharpen your '*Kaduwa'* or sword. Kandiah (1984) explains the metaphor as it

> Crystallizes the socio-political-psychological attitudes of the ... man who has no chance of beating the English dominated system... The sword, he knows, if grasped firmly in his own hands will endow him with the power ... to live with dignity in terms of equality with other men; in someone else's hands, it remains the instrument of his oppression, the means of his subjugation (Kandiah 1984, p. 139).

Language Education Policy: 1978 to the Present

By 1978, the primary focus in terms of language policy was for the promotion of the two vernacular languages, i.e. Sinhala and Tamil which had led to a lack of interest in policy related to the development of English. However, by 1987, with the escalation of conflict between the Sri Lankan Government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), there was a necessity for policy interventions. As such, by the 13th Amendment to the 1978 constitution in November of 1987, English was identified as a link language. Subsequently, there were a number of government policy statements related to education as stated by de Silva and Gunewardene (1986), and among the eight policy statements that had been laid out the last focused on the development of the English language and is stated as follows:

> To assure that English and other international languages are taught to an adequate level of proficiency in out- schools so that the country could have every opportunity of taking the fullest advantage of the advancement among the nations in science, technology and arts. (p.01)

In addition, there were a number of legislative acts that were passed in line with some of the early policy statements as well as commission reports to look into the possibility of developing English. The changes covered a variety of areas pertaining to the teaching and learning of English. There were a number of problems that were identified by the late 70s and the early 80s that demanded urgent attention. . In keeping with the objectives of the 1977 government policy statement, The Education Reforms Committee (ERC) of 1979 formulated a report titled 'Towards Relevance in Education' which was published in 1982 that looked into the all aspects of education in Sri Lanka. Chapter XVI of the report deals with 'The Role of English' and there are a number of

useful recommendations that have been made in relation to the development of English in country. While the report endorses the recommendations made by the de Lanerolle Report; A Place in the Sun, including a realistic approach to the teaching of English Literature and the extended use of the mother tongue in teaching the second language (ERC, P.162), The ERC further recommended the following:

1. The differentiation of teaching programme for different ability groups in English.

2. The appointment of a Director of Education (English) who will be in charge of the TESL programmes for the nation and also act as advisor to the Regional Boards with regard to their own procedures for the improvement of English.

The ERC made a set of additional recommendations that English be taught in school from Grade 06 onwards and in the event that there is a 'minimal' English environment, teaching can begin from Grade 05 with the support of the Regional Boards of Education who will be conducting introductory courses. The Regional Boards of Education were also given the authority to start teaching English at lower levels, according to the resources available, so as not to interfere with the policy of providing the students with the best possible grounding in Grade 06 (p163). One of the most key recommendations of the ERC which is mentioned in Chapter XVII, which focuses on English for admission to institutions of higher education. It is recommended here, that those aspiring to get admission to the university must be required to show proof of their having reached a satisfactory standard of attainment in English for which purpose there should be a general paper in English language as part of the G.C.E. AL Examination. While the Commission did anticipate, a resistance to this recommendation, they suggested that in the event, that it was decided to be implemented, students who are

currently in Grade 8 will be those who will be affected first giving the others five years to prepare for the examination. It further adds that since there were students who secured admission to National Universities from highly specialised fields like Medicine and Engineering, securing this entry qualification should not be difficult, provided that the facilities are made available for the schools in rural Sri Lanka. The strongest recommendation of this committee was that teaching English in schools commence from Grade 5 and that English teaching in primary grades be suspended. The committee report contains a number of points in support of this recommendation, both pedagogical and other. However, the Education Proposals for Reforms, submitted by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Youth Affairs & Employment of 1981, recommended that English be taught from Grade 3 upwards with the initial concentration of resources from Grade 6 upwards. In addition to recommendations made for the creation of the English Unit in the Ministry of Education to coordinate all work relating to the teaching of English in schools, preparing text books and other teaching material, curriculum development work, pre-service and in-service teacher training and evaluation (English Unit, NIE, 2001)

1980s witnessed many other policy decisions in terms of recruitment of teachers and the establishment of a number of institutes for the development of English. Primarily, amongst them is the decision to provide free text books to pupils studying from Grade 1 -10 in all schools, (de Silva and Gunawardene 1986, p.19) to establish the National Institute of Education (NIE) which will be responsible for developing curricula and to extend the pre-service training from three weeks to three years (2 years within an institution and a one year of practical training. In addition, the Higher Institute of English Education (HIEE) was established in 1985 which concentrated on teacher training and TESL courses for teachers at primary and secondary levels. Although, the

HIEE lasted for a very short period of 5 years, it introduced a large number of programmes in the area of teacher training. Many of its staff members were sent overseas for training and postgraduate courses to reputed universities in the UK. The HIEE conducted a number of English teacher training programmes like the Diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language, a staff course for Professional In-service English Teacher Training Programme (Prinsett), Certificate courses in Linguistics for English language educators, in addition to the short term courses for Maldivian English teachers. Given the shortages of English language teachers in the country, District English Language Centres (DELICS) were organised around country, where 19 such centres were established in 18 districts, where training was done with the help of Peace Corps and American Field Service (AFS) volunteers. A large number of English teachers were trained under this programme.

By the early 1980s Sri Lanka had re-established some of its links with a number of foreign agencies. Their involvement was mostly in curriculum development, material design and teacher training. The Asia Foundation which had ceased all its activities in the 1970s reopened its office in Sri Lanka in 1980 (Gunawardena, 2009). Many of these foreign agencies worked very closely with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education in order to develop English language teaching and learning in Sri Lanka. The Asia Foundation provided four consultants to the University Grants Commission in 1982 to develop the English language in the nine universities in the country where they designed an intensive course for incoming students as well as 'English for Special Purposes course for different fields of study like science, medicine and law (Gunawardene, 2009). In 1980, Key English Language Teaching Programme (KELT) was initiated to train English language teachers to be better in English speech and was organised in collaboration with the British Council. The selection of teachers

for this programme was based a selection test. Many of the programmes under the HIEE were with foreign collaborations such UNESCO, British Council, RELC, The Fulbright Foundation, Peace Corps, and AFS (Cumarathunga, 1986).

Much of the material that was developed in the 80s, such as English for Me was done with the assistance of foreign consultants and was designed with the assistance of UNESCO and Norway while English Everyday was done under Gerald Mosback, a British Council consultant who worked with a large number of local teachers and designed a text books for Grades 7 to 11. A text book titled 'An Integrated Course in English for A-Level was developed for Grades 12 -13 with the assistance of the Fulbright Foundation (Cumarathunga, 2012). There was also a need to increase the students who were following English literature as a subject for the Advanced Level examination which was around 500 applicants in the early and mid-80s.

The 90s also brought in a number of new policy decisions. Contrary to policies in the 80s, the 90s witnessed the commencement of teaching English in primary schools as early as from Grade 1 where English will be taught for communication purposes in activity classes. There will also be two levels of assessment at the G.C.E. OL for English as well as to make English a compulsory subject to be taught at the G.C.E. AL (English Unit, NIE 2001). The Presidential Task Force on General Education - Sri Lanka published a report titled ' *General Education Reforms*' which was published in 1997 and is cited by the English Unit of the NIE, in its policy document published in 2001 which states the following policy decisions.

1. From 1999, English is used in Grade 1 and 2 for oral communication.
2. Formal teaching of English with the use of necessary texts and guidebooks to begin in Grade 3 and develop from there onwards. Additional material in the form of supplementary books and audiocassettes will be used.

3. English will be a core subject for Ordinary level examination (Grade 10) (sic)
4. An assessment of the capacity of the current English language teachers in the secondary system to teach the General English course.
5. General English introduced for Advanced level from September, 1999.(Grade 13) (sic)
6. An assessment made of the capabilities of the teachers now teaching English at secondary level to teach General English.

Implementing, policy particularly relating to English language was rather slow, compared to that of early 2000, where a number of new projects for the development of English was introduced. In 2000, under the Primary English Language Project (PELP) initiated as a collaborative project between the NIE and the British Council, text books for Grade 3, 4 & 5 were published. This project also provided a number of local material developers and writers with the necessary training (Cumarathunga, 2012) and in the words of Fernando (2001), 'training local staff was high on the agenda of the funding agency,..... its ultimate goal, however, was to break the reliance on outside help for such activities by leaving behind sufficient sustainable capacity in-country at the end of the project' (p. 97). The design of other text books for secondary schools was now done solely by local resource persons under the supervision of a local consultant. Furthermore, a General English text book was also designed with the collaboration of academics from three national universities; the Universities of Colombo and Kelaniya and the Open University of Sri Lanka and the National Institute of Education (NIE). By this time, the ESL material development for secondary and higher grades was solely done by local material developers and consultants.

The National Educational Commission Report of 2003, paid special attention to the promotion of English education, given the success of some of the projects that were

implemented in the late 1990s. The Report clearly identifies two factors that had contributed to this change in attitude and promotion.

1. English has emerged as a critical factor in graduate employment, particularly in the context of a shrinking public sector and an expanding private sector.

2. English is currently the main language of information and communication technology and is a gateway to a vast exciting store house of knowledge to students.

(National Education Commission Report, 2003 p. 176)

By 2003, Sri Lanka was prepared to introduce a bilingual system of education. Therefore, many policy reforms were introduced to enhance English medium education in junior secondary and higher classes. The main objective behind the bilingual policy was to 'provide an enabling environment to ensure that all students, irrespective of socio-economic and/or regional disparities, have the opportunity to acquire the level of English proficiency adequate for higher education and career advancement' (p. 178). Find below some of the important recommendations the Report proposed.

1. The introduction of the teaching of Science and Technology, Mathematics, Information Technology, Environmental Studies and Social Studies in the English medium in all schools and not only to those who have opted to do so.

2. Schools with no qualified teachers in the English medium subjects are to be provided with teachers from the annual output of National Colleges of Education, the National Institute of Education (NIE) and the Universities.

3. Curriculum and materials should be developed in English, and Science, Mathematics and IT materials used in schools in the UK, India, and USA can be adapted where relevant.

4. English will continue to be taught as a compulsory subject in the curriculum.

(P. 180)

In addition, it was proposed that English language continues as a compulsory subject at the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) – G.C.E. OL and that the bilingual policy be extended to Grades 10 and 11.

The NEC report further recommended that General English be given the status of an AL subject with new syllabi, course materials and time-table allocations (p.180). A special provision was made for the use of media such as the TV, videos and computers for teaching English.

Another significant change in policy was the introduction of the Presidential Initiative of 'English as a Life Skill Programme' in 2008. The programme has been launched under three phases. The programme recognised Sri Lankan English as the informal spoken variety of English in the country, while International Standard English was accepted as the formal or written form of the language (Fernando, 2013, p 1). In addition, this programme also ensured the training of 22,500 teachers; 60% of the English teacher population in the country to teach Spoken/ Communication English. This is part of the plan to test spoken and listening skills at the G.C.E. OL from 2014, the first ever project of this magnitude in Sri Lanka. The year 2009, witnessed the training of 8o Master Trainers at the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) and later an additional 40 was also trained under this programme. These Master trainers were

involved in designing material for teaching spoken English and the government also focused on a media campaign to 'dispel the fear of Sri Lankan English from the Sri Lankan mind-set' (p. 2).

This period also witnessed a wider approach to the development of English, such as the design of programmes to develop the speaking in English of school principals and deputy principals with the aim of empowering these school administrators. These programmes are in addition to numerous activities that have been designed to make English accessible for a majority of Sri Lankans thereby dismantling some of the early ideologies of English being accessible only to an elitist minority.

Language Education Policy Implementation: An Analysis

While consecutive governments in Sri Lanka has since 1977, made numerous policy decisions at national and grass-root levels to develop English in the country, a statistical analysis of some of the key variables is useful in order to comprehend current as well as future perspectives in terms of policy planning. The researcher has used the following information for this purpose; the pass rates of school student candidates' at two national public examinations: the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) or G.C.E. OL, General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) or G.C.E. AL, student registration for English medium subjects at the G.C.E. OL and G.C.E. AL examination, teacher allocation for English medium teaching as well as the distribution of English language teachers in Sri Lanka.

Performance at GCE OL Examination

The Government Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level), hereafter referred to as G.C.E. OL is the first national examination that offers English as a subject; the first

national level assessment of English language proficiency in the local school system. The test, however is not without its shortcomings. It assesses only reading and writing skills and the structure of the paper is rather predictable focusing on very limited language skills. Although a pass in English is not required for the continuation of their secondary education, the implications of these results are important for present as well as future policy planners and implementers in order to comprehend the disparity between policy planning and implementation. Furthermore, there are instances where this qualification is taken into consideration in certain government and private sector employment. The data is presented in two sets; the first, is from 1994 to 1998 and the second, is from 2002 to 2010 following a change in the syllabus. The data from years 1999 to 2001 could not be used due to a technical difficulty encountered by the researchers.

Year	Total Number of Registered Candidates for English	No of Passes in English	Percentage of Passes in English	No of Failures in English	Percentage of Failures in English
1994	324405	139923	43.13%	184485	56.87%
1995	305339	94927	31.09%	210412	68.91%
1996	340004	76912	22.62%	263092	77.38%
1997	347347	72325	20.82%	275022	79.18%
1998	345311	87628	25.38%	257673	74.62%
2002	330885	78876	23.84%	252009	76.16%
2003	334296	99762	29.84%	234534	70.16%
2004	402349	189551	47.11	212798	52.89
2005	330083	115462	34.98%	214621	65.02%
2006	326164	116376	35.68%	209788	64.32%

2007	350514	139328	39.75%	211186	60.25%
2008	281136	86226	30.67%	194910	69.33%
2009	360514	134667	37.35%	225847	62.65%
2010	341278	141316	41.41%	199962	58.59%

Source: Department of Examinations, Statistical Handbook (1994 -2010)

Table 1.5: G.C.E. OL Results (1994 – 2010)

The results clearly reflect an alarming rate of failures, particularly given the investment that has been made by the government and non-government involvement in developing English language teaching in the country. What is interesting to note is that in the first decade starting from 1994 to 2003 the information indicates a considerable increase in terms of the rate of failures from 56.87% in 1998 to a failure rate of 70.16% in 2003. Even after twenty five years, since Sri Lanka has opened its doors to a more open economic system in 1978, Sri Lanka still seems to struggle with the issue of improving the standards of English in the country. Continuing further on the analysis, there seem to be a significant reduction in the failure rate in 2004 which is at 52.89 which seems to be a lowest in almost a decade. The pass rate of the students seems to fluctuate in the years that follow with the highest recorded in 2008 which is at 69.33. However, these rates seem to have reduced to 58.59% by 2010. While the performance of the students varies over the years, one conclusion seemed inevitable; the performance for English among school candidates is considerably poor. Technically, all the students who sit for the GCE OL examination should have been learning English for more than 7 years of their life in schools where they are taught English for 5 days of the week within 40 to 45 minute class periods. Despite all these attempts, why is it that the pass rate for the English language remains to be so low? Numerous reasons some of

which were raised quite some time ago still seem valid. For example, Kandiah (1984) had observed that '. . . classrooms are overcrowded: several classes in several different subjects are sometimes conducted within the space of a single cramped hall. . . . in addition, many schools in the remote areas have no teachers to implement the programme (Reprinted in Fernando, Gunasekera & Parakrama 2010, p.47). Three decades on, the problems still remain the same. There is still a lack of qualified teachers despite the large projects that have been introduced by consecutive governments and other parties, the use of inappropriate teaching methods is another problem and disparities in the distribution of teachers in schools is believed to be another concern: anecdotally, there are schools in rural Sri Lanka without any qualified teacher to teach English in their schools while most urban schools have excess teachers. Therefore, many of the urban children have support within the school as well as other forms of learning opportunities, like individual or group tutoring which gives them the opportunity to learn and use the language compared to that of students from the rural schools.

In summary, a look at a recent evaluation report published by the Research & Development Branch of the National Evaluation & Testing Service on the performance of candidates at the G.C.E. OL examination for 2010 deserves attention. The report analyses student responses to the different test activities in the test paper. There are two test papers; paper I & II. The test activities cover variety of language functions and skills. A breakdown of the two test papers is given in the table below.

Test Item	**Language focus/ skill**	**Allocation of Marks**	**Student Performance**
1	Vocabulary	05	Over 50%
2	Reading	05	Over 50%
3	Writing	05	31% (Responded)

4	Reading	05	50%
5	Language Functions & Grammar	05	50%
6	Writing	05	17% (Responded)
7	Reading	05	Over 40%
8	Writing	05	15% (Responded)

*Source: G.C.E. OL Examination 2010: Evaluation Report, Research & Development Branch, National Evaluation & Testing Service, Sri Lanka.

Table 1.6: Test Activities, Allocation of Marks and Student Response to English Language (Paper I)

* Information in table 1.6 was taken directly from the report and column 4 was added by the authors based on the information available in the report.

According to Table 1.6, equal marks have been allocated to all the test activities which include vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing. In terms of the allocation of marks for each of these sections include 5 marks for grammar and vocabulary with 15 marks each allocated for reading and writing. While there is a considerably better response for the vocabulary, grammar and writing sections, there seems to be a rather poor response to the writing tasks. According to the report, the writing tasks included 50 word paragraphs where students were expected to write a descriptive paragraph, an informative note and a paragraph on a given topic. Of the total number of candidates who had sat for the paper, only 30% had responded to the first test activity which included a brief description using the information given. The other two writing activities which included writing paragraphs, only 17% and 15% of the total candidates had responded to this question. The report clearly indicates a poor response in terms of writing test activities.

A further analysis of the second part of the test paper reveals more information about student information which is given in Table 1.7.

Test Item	Language focus/ skill	Allocation of Marks	Student Performance
09	Vocabulary	05	Over 50%
10	Grammar	05	27%
11	Grammar	05	Less than 30%
12	Reading	05	Less than 40%
13	Reading	07	Less than 30%
14	Writing	10	14%
15	Reading	10	50%
16	Writing	15	9%

*Source: G.C.E. OL Examination 2010: Evaluation Report, Research & Development Branch, National Evaluation & Testing Service, Sri Lanka.

Table 1.7: Test Activities, Allocation of Marks and Student Response to English Language (Paper II)

* Information in Table 1.7 was taken directly from the report and column 4 was added by the authors based on the information available in the report.

According to Table 1.7, the test activities have focused on testing vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing with the distribution of marks to be 5 for vocabulary, 10 for grammar, 20 for reading and 25 for writing. In terms of student responses, there seem to be higher response for vocabulary which is over 50% as was the case with Paper I. Grammar activities have had moderate responses of over 30% with similar responses for the reading activities which is at around 40 percent. However, the most significant observation is the response for the writing test activities which is at 13 & 9% respectively.

These responses to test activities reveal the core problem with English language teaching in the country; the poor performance in a key skill; writing. While there is no

data in relation to testing speaking at the national level, there is however, a constant reference to the lack of proficiency in speaking skills, i.e. communication skills in English. Therefore, the task of our policy makers seems challenging. Particular, given the objectives of the national curriculum for the English Language. The subject objectives according to the report are given below.

1. To create the need to learn English as a Second Language in a Multilingual society.(sic)
2. To create opportunities for the Sri Lankan child to achieve the competencies in a link language.
3. To create facilities to learn a language which can be used to build ethnic harmony.
4. To enable the students to learn an international language (sic) which could be made use of in their later life for employment.
5. To empower the learner to communicate confidently, fluently and effectively in the English language (sic)

Performance at GCE AL Examination

One of the strongest recommendations of the Educational Reforms Committee (ERC) in 1986 was the introduction of a General English Paper for the General Certificate of Education – Advanced Level Examination hereafter referred to as G.C.E. AL. The G.C.E. AL is the only qualifying examination available to enter any of the national universities in Sri Lanka. While there was trepidation in the introduction of this paper, given the shortage of qualified teachers to teach the course, the test was introduced in 2001. The breakdown of the test gradings for the General English paper is A: Very good pass, B: Good pass, C: Pass, S: Weak Pass. F: Fail.

Year	Total Number of Registered Candidates for English	No of Passes in English	Percentage of Passes in English	No of Failures in English	Percentage of Failures in English
*2001	127058	52210	41.09%	74848	58.91%
*2002	180185	43214	23.98%	136971	76.02%
*2003	187275	45160	24.11%	142115	75.89%
*2004	173608	47283	27.24%	126325	72.76%
2005	157363	37703	23.96%	119660	76.04%
2006	156673	37826	24.14%	118847	75.86%
2007	155657	46351	29.78%	109306	70.22%
2008	165419	46769	28.27%	118650	71.73%
2009	162572	45829	28.19%	116743	71.81%
2010	179537	53409	29.75%	126128	70.25%

Source: Department of Examinations, Statistical Handbook (1999 – 2010)

Table 1.8: Performance at G.C.E. AL 2001 to 2010

According to the data available information relating to years 2001 to 2004 covers all candidates and the rest of the years from 2005 to 2010 cover only information relating to school candidates. While there is a relatively lower rate of

failures in the initial year when the test was introduced in 2001 where the failure rate was at 58.91%, in the subsequent years that followed, the failure rate has remained above 70%. Of course, with the insistence by the Ministry of Higher Education, it has been made compulsory that all students sit for this subject but the marks that they obtain for the General English paper is not taken into account when applying for university admission. This is probably the reason for the increase in school candidates who sit for this subject.

A number of reasons have been identified for the lack of interest as well as the low performance of students at the G.C.E. AL examination. Primary among them is the non-availability of qualified teachers to teach the subject. Furthermore, there is a focus on the other main subjects that would ensure admission to the national university (de Silva, et al, 2013). A similar study titled 'Evaluation of G.C.E. Advanced Level English Programme published in 2003 had made similar observations. Among its recommendations the ones made in relation to teaching and learning in most noteworthy. According to the report, it is recommended that teachers play a less dominant role while adapting more adult learning strategies in teaching and learning. It also recommends the development of listening skills, urges teacher not to be too dependent on the prescribed text book and to focus on designing activities independently to suit learner needs. Finally it also recommends that teachers convey the value the importance of the subject (Wijeratne, Cumarathunga & Perera, 2003 p.3)

These recommendations seemed valid even today; therefore policy implementers should focus on the development of learning –teaching methods.

A further comparison of the results in the first year of test administration, the candidates performance at the year in which the test was introduced in comparison with 2010, ten years after the introduction of General English to the secondary system gives rise to a number of concerns relating to the impact of language education policy implementation.

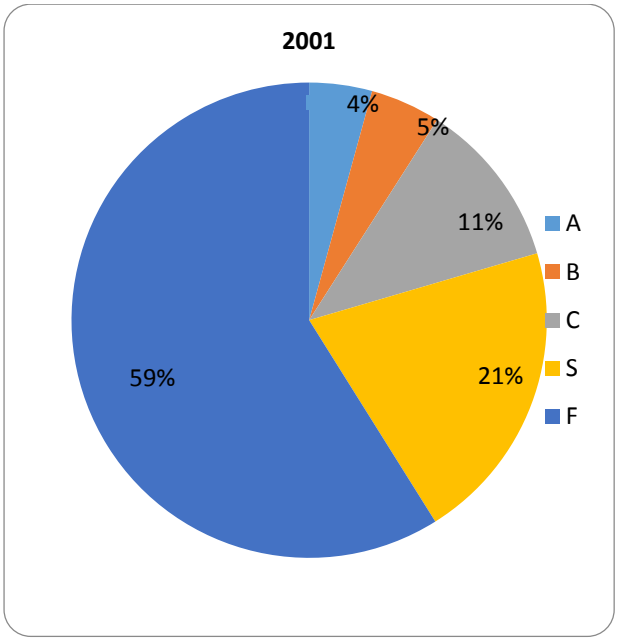


Figure 1.2: Performance at
General English G.C.E. AL -2001

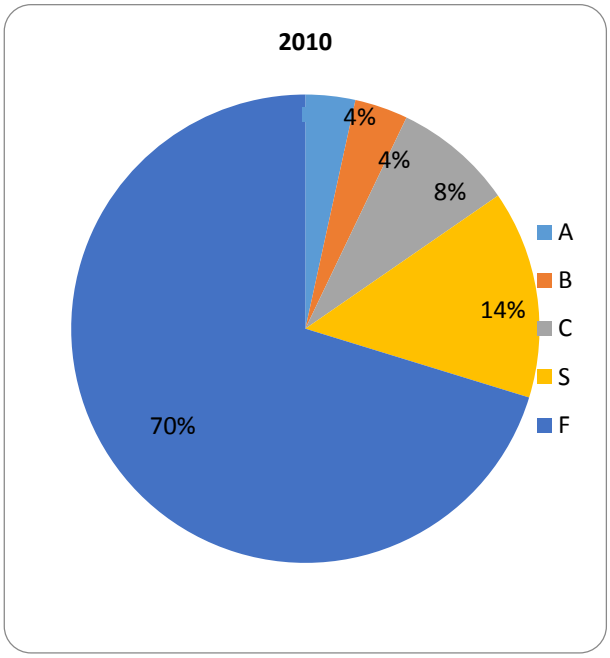
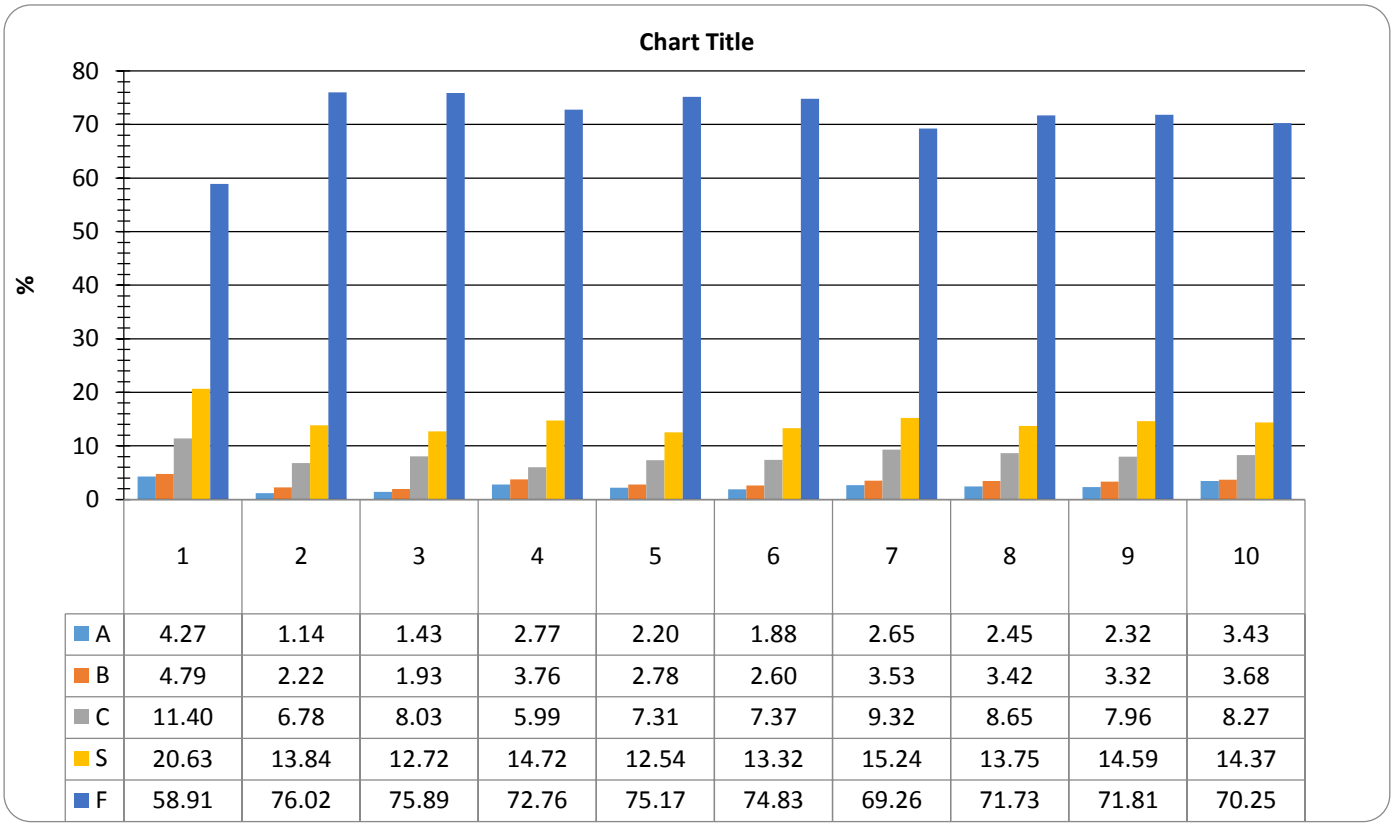


Figure 1.3: Performance at
General English G.C.E. AL- 2010

In both instances where the statistics have been obtained ten years apart, it seems that the pass rate at the highest level of A or B passes remain unchanged at 4% with a 1% increase in the level B passes while there is a decrease in the pass rate at lower levels and the most significant observation being the stark increase in the number of failures in 2010 which as at a staggering 70% compared to that of 59% in 2001. All these statistics reiterate the argument made by Kandiah in 1984 that 'the vast majority of the success achieved in English at the examination are concentrated in a comparatively few schools in the more cosmopolitan and urban areas of the country'

(reproduced in Fernando, Gunesekera & Parakrama 2010 p.46). Therefore, there is a need to go into grass –root level policy implementation and monitoring to be done and the researcher is aware that such attempts are currently being made at the policy level. A further research of this capacity should be carried out in order to comprehend the impact of policy implementation.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A	4.27	1.14	1.43	2.77	2.20	1.88	2.65	2.45	2.32	3.43
B	4.79	2.22	1.93	3.76	2.78	2.60	3.53	3.42	3.32	3.68
C	11.40	6.78	8.03	5.99	7.31	7.37	9.32	8.65	7.96	8.27
S	20.63	13.84	12.72	14.72	12.54	13.32	15.24	13.75	14.59	14.37
F	58.91	76.02	75.89	72.76	75.17	74.83	69.26	71.73	71.81	70.25

Source: Department of Examinations: Statistical Handbook (1999 -2010)

Figure 1.4: Candidate Results G.C.E. AL 2001 -2010

According to the Figure 1.4 given above, we see a significant decline in the pass rate and a gradual increase in the failure rate. For example, the percentage obtaining higher grades in the past ten years have remained at less than 10% collectively (A combination of the percentage obtained for grades A & B). Similarly, the percentage pass rate for a C grade has been less than 10% with the exception of 11.40% in 2001. Finally the percentage of students who obtained a fail grade is, on most occasions with the exception of 2001 & 2007 over 70%.

In the perspective of these results and its implications seem to indicate that there is greater need to evaluate the teaching methods as well as teacher training in overcoming some of these problems. Despite, the efforts made, there needs to a concentration on more alternative forms of teaching and learning. However, while these pedagogical issues deserve attention, consensus on ideological issues such as the general attitude towards the English language as well as a greater awareness among the teaching learning community on the role and functions of English as an international language.

In the introduction of English medium teaching in a number of selected subjects in the secondary level, thus leading to bilingual educational policy took root in Sri Lanka in 2003. The table given below demonstrates the number of bilingual schools in 2004, subsequently to the introduction of the policy with that of 2012, a more recent year.

Provinces	2004				2012			
	Sinhala/English	Tamil/English	Sin:/Tamil/Eng:	Total	Sinhala/English	Tamil/English	Sin:/Tamil/Eng:	Total
Western	68	11	10	89	119	12	13	144
Central	39	7	11	57	49	17	12	78
Southern	33	1	1	35	61	2		63
Northern		26		26		61		61
Eastern	2	18		20	10	42		52
North Western	36	5	1	42	68	6	1	75
North Central	14			14	16			16
Uva	19	2	1	22	36	5	1	42
Sabaragamuwa	23	5	1	29	44	7	2	53
Total	234	75	25	334	403	152	29	584

Source: Data Management Branch: Ministry of Education

Table 1.9: Provincial Representation of English Medium Schools in Sri Lanka (2004 & 2012)

According to Table 1.9, there is a significant increase in the schools with bilingual education in all provinces of the country. The most noteworthy, is that the number of schools in all the provinces has doubled since 2004, with the exception of the North Central Province, where the number remains unchanged. The increase is such that it represents the ethnic composition of the provinces. For example, in the areas where there is a predominant representation of a Sinhala speaking community, Sinhala/ English bilingual schools have been increased. Similarly, areas where there is a predominant Tamil speaking community consisting of Tamil and Muslim ethnicities witness an increase in bilingual schools. Trilingual schools are found to be of a considerable number in the cosmopolitan provinces like the Western and Central provinces of Sri Lanka. There is an absence of trilingual schools in provinces that are ethnically and linguistically polarised like the Southern and Northern provinces of Sri Lanka. A most noteworthy observation is the absence of a trilingual school in the Eastern Province which consists of three districts representative of the three ethnic communities, the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslims.

Province	Sinhala			English			Tamil			No. of Schools (Sinhala, & Tamil)	No. of Schools (Sinhala, English & Tamil)	Total		
	No. of Schools	No. of Students	No. of Teachers	No. of Schools*	No. of Students**	No. of Teachers	No. of Schools	No. of Students	No. of Teachers			No. of Schools	No. of Students	No. of Teachers
Western	1072	839579	37805	131	19814	3965	106	78947	759	15	13	1337	938340	42529
Central	881	340062	21954	66	8876	9231	527	177279	450	11	12	1497	526217	31635
Southern	998	489426	28105	63	6733	713	38	14655	492	4		1103	510814	29310
Northern	20	2499	185	61	2714	14425	863	243507	218			944	248720	14828
Eastern	251	75973	4535	52	3090	15938	759	306938	288	1		1063	386001	20761
North Western	983	398953	24213	74	9680	3277	149	70261	522	6	1	1213	478894	28012
North Central	673	236228	13503	16	2141	1438	86	27490	192	1		776	265859	15133
Uva	620	222900	16109	41	3988	2680	195	51471	269	1	1	858	278359	19058
Sabaragamuwa	870	315160	19487	51	6322	2294	191	49460	286		2	1114	370942	22067
Total	6368	2920780	165896	555	63358	53961	2914	1020008	3476	39	29	9905	4004146	223333

Source:: Sri Lanka Education Information 2013: Data Management Branch, Ministry of Education,
* Schools in group are those in Sinhala & English medium schools and Tamil & English medium schools (Bilingual schools)
** Primary education of these students was in Sinhala or Tamil medium

Table 1.10: Distribution of Teachers According Province and Medium of Instruction

According to the above Table 1.10 which shows the distribution of students and teachers according to the medium of instruction in different provinces in Sri Lanka is indicative of the problem in relation to English language proficiency in the country. According to the table, the vernacular schools, both Sinhala and Tamil are based on the ethnic linguistic composition of the provinces. However, the largest number of bilingual English medium schools are found in the Western Province, the most cosmopolitan Province in the country. As such, the largest number of schools, the student population as well as the teacher population is found in the Western Province. Furthermore, the absence of trilingual schools in the Northern, Southern and the Eastern Province is indeed noteworthy as was observed before in the analysis.

However, given the current emphasis on bilingual education, it is worthwhile to investigate the performance of school candidates in subjects offered in the English medium. The following table gives a breakdown of the performance of school candidates from 2008 to 2011.

Subject	2008			2009			2010			2011		
	No sat	Pass %	Fail %	No Sat	Pass %	Fail %	No sat	Pass %	Fail %	No Sat	Pass %	Fail %
Mathematics	8693	94.82	5.18	9725	93.73	6.27	9777	95.67	4.33	9810	94.15	5.85
Science	8704	90.95	9.05	9484	90.49	9.51	9500	92.83	7.17	9807	91.78	8.22
Business& Accounting	359	96.10	3.90	693	94.66	5.34	732	95.36	4.64	1370	94.38	5.62

Geography	688	95.20	4.80	815	90.67	9.33	690	97.68	2.32	642	97.66	2.34
Citizen Edu. & Gov/ Civic Gov	386	94.30	5.70	325	95.38	4.62	299	91.30	8.70	440	96.14	3.86
Western Music	1392	97.41	2.59	1389	95.54	4.46	139	92.81	7.19	66	95.45	4.55
Entreprenuership Education	114	92.11	7.89	47	91.49	8.51	1480	97.97	2.03	1523	98.56	1.44
Information & Communication	4703	97.24	2.76	5552	94.49	5.51	6392	94.32	5.68	5590	93.27	6.73
Health & Physical Education	1701	99.71	0.29	2022	99.55	0.45	1984	99.40	0.60	2755	99.67	0.33

Source: National Symposium on Reviewing of the Performance of School Candidate (GCE OL Examination 2011) Research & Development Branch, National Evaluation & Testing Services, Department of Examinations, Sri Lanka.

Table 1.11: Performance of School Candidates by English Medium Subject

According to Table 1.11, unlike in the case of student performance on English language at the G.C.E. OL examination, there seem to be better performance by the students in English medium subjects. However, it must be noted here, that the number of candidates who have sat for the English medium subjects is less than 10,000 and there by represents approximately a percentage between 2 -3% of the total number of candidates who sat for the English language paper, thus representing a minority of the entire student population who sit for the exam annually. The fact that English medium education is a choice and not mandatory could also be a reason for the better performance of the students, particularly since the learner feels more responsible to follow certain courses in a medium of their choice.

Access to English for children with disabilities within inclusive educational settings

The paradigm shift from segregated instruction to 'inclusive education' for children with special educational needs worldwide reflects the move towards achieving Education for All (EFA) by 2015 (UNESCO, 2010). In this context, we would like to briefly highlight the challenge to mainstream teachers of English (and by extension, policy makers) and the barriers faced by children with disabilities when accessing English in Sri Lanka.

Within the context of inclusive education, the hitherto 'general' mainstream teacher of English needs 'special' or particular pedagogical knowledge and competence to support children with disabilities within their learning environment. Barriers to establishing inclusive education in resource-limited countries such as Sri Lanka have included the low teacher-pupil ratio, poor physical access to buildings, limited specific training in inclusive pedagogical methodologies, preconceived prejudicial attitudes among parents of mainstream school children and teachers as well as the perceived negative effect of inclusion on the academic success of mainstream students (Cornelius and Balakrishnan, 2012; Eleweke and Rodda, 2002; Das, Gichuru and Singh, 2013; Furuta, 2009; Furuta, 2006; Modern, Joergensen and Daniels, 2010). Teacher attitudes have been highlighted as a crucial factor determining the success of inclusive educational policies (Hammend and Ingalls, 2003; Sideridis and Chandler, 1996; Van Reusen, Shoho and Barker, 2001). This is highlighted in the following vignettew, based on an on-going research study.

Vignette 1

Surani is 14 years old. She attends a mixed school with a Special Education Unit attached to the mainstream school. She is 3 years older than her peers in the class. Surani is tall for her age and is placed at a desk at the front of the class. As the teacher moves forward to teach or walks around the class, she is facing her back to Surani. I was told that I could see Surani for an assessment of her speech and language skills during the English lesson as the teacher does not include Surani in her class as 'there is no point'.

Conclusion

Many postcolonial nations like Sri Lanka are today grappling with a number of unresolved issues relating to language policy. In the context of Sri Lanka, there is clear evidence of attempts being made by consecutive governments to address these issues with greater impact. Therefore, it can be observed that policies have been formulated and implemented with this intention in mind. Since, independence, the efforts made by government and other stakeholders towards the development of English is indeed praiseworthy. However, more remains to be aspired to. The disparities in the performance between those of the rural vs the urban still continues to be at large. While there is evidence of the involvement of the government and other institutions in the development of English language proficiency in the country, the problems still remains at large. The argument brought forth in the World Bank publication in identifying some of challenges to development in Sri Lanka states that

'General skills are critically important for the labour market of a middle income country, but also especially scarce in Sri Lanka. Highest among these scare general skills are English Language and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills.

(Towers of Learning: Performance, Peril and Promise of Higher Education in Sri Lanka: E2)

The problem then is the development of the language is still limited to an urban minority who might no longer be elitist but based on demographic advantages have more opportunity to learn and use the language as opposed to the rural majority for whom English still remain a distant foreign language with no ideological affiliations expect as a means of providing better employment. While the attempts made to promote English as link language is widely acknowledged, the measurable output does not essentially indicate a clear development in terms of English language users. Therefore, the task at hand for many of our policy planners as well as implementers is the challenge to ensure that a majority of English language users meet the communication demands of the different spheres where English is commonly used.

*A special thank you to Prof. Hema Ramanathan for making this opportunity available to us and to Dr. Sandagomi Coperahewa, Mr. Noel Jayamaha, Ms. Lakshmi Cumaranathunga, and Ms. Paru Nagasundaram for providing us with their time and resources. Thank you, to Mr. N.M Anura jayasinghe, Ms.P.A.C.P. Prathapa Arachchi and Ms. W.H. Iresha Charangani for their help with the statistical analysis.

References

Athurpana, Harsha and Millot, Benoit and Team (2009). *The Towers of Learning: Performance, Peril, and Promise of Higher Education in Sri Lanka*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: The World Bank Colombo Office.

Auerbach, E. (2000). When Pedagogy Meets Politics: Challenging English Only in Adult Education. In R. Duenas Gonzalez and I. Melis (eds), *Language Ideologies: Critical Perspectives on the Official English Movement*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 177 – 204.

Auerbach, E.R. (1995). The Politics of the ESL Classroom: Issues of Power in Pedagogical Choices. In J.W. Tollefson (Ed) *Power and Inequality in Language Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baldauf, R.B., Jr. (1990). Language Planning: Corpus Planning. In R.B. Kaplan et al. (Eds). Annual Review of Applied Linguistics (Vol. 10, pp 3 -12) New York: Cambridge University Press.

Canagarajah, A.S. (1999). *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Collure, Raja (2008). Bilingualism of the Public Service, in B. Skanthakumar (Ed.), *Language Rights in Sri Lanka: Enforcing Tamil as an Official Language*. Colombo: Law and Society Trust. (pp. 37 -42).

Cooper, R. L. (1989). *Language Planning and Social Change*. Cambridge University Press.

Coperahewa, C. (2009). The Language Planning Situation in Sri Lanka, in *Current Issues in Language Planning* 10 (01). London: Routledge. (pp. 69 -150).

Cornelius, D. J. K. and Balakrishnan, J. (2012). Inclusive Education for Students with Intellectual Disability. *Disability, CBR and Inclusive Development (DCID), 23,* 81-93.

Crystal, D. (1997). *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language*. Cambridge University Press.

Cumaranathunga, Lakshmie (2012). Swings of the Pendulum, in Hemamala Ratwatte (Ed.). *Vistas* (Volume 7/8). Nawala, Sri Lanka: Open University Press of Sri Lanka.

_____ (1986). *Communicating a Message: Teacher Training for the New Primary English Curriculum in Sri Lanka*, in Verner Bickley (Ed.). *Future Directions in English Language Teacher Education: Asia and Pacific Perspectives*. Hong Kong: Institute of Language in Education.

_____(1986). *English Education in Sri Lanka: New Dimensions*, in Nagoya Gakuin Daigaku & Gaikokugp Kyoiku Kiya (Eds.). Education in Asia.

Das, A. K., Gichuru, M. and Singh, A. (2013). Implementing inclusive education in Delhi, India: regular school teachers' preferences for professional development delivery modes, *Professional Development in Education,* DOI: 10.1080/19415257.2012.747979.

de Lanerolle Commission Report. (1973). *A Place in the Sun: Report of the committee of inquiry into the teaching of English in the schools of Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Government Printing Press.

Department of Examinations Sri Lanka. (1999). *Statistical Handbook*. Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Department of Examinations Sri Lanka. (2002). *Statistical Handbook 1999 - 2001*. Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Department of Examinations Sri Lanka. (2005). *Statistical Handbook 2002 - 2004*. Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Department of Examinations Sri Lanka. (2011). *Statistical Handbook 2005 - 2007*. Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Department of Examinations Sri Lanka. (2011). *Statistical Handbook 2008 - 2010*. Colombo, Sri Lanka.

De Silva, K.M. (1993). Language Problems: The Problems of Language Policy, in K.M. de Silva (Ed.), *Sri Lanka: Problems of Governance*. Konark: Delhi. (pp. 275 – 305)

de Souza, D. (1979). Targets and Standards. Socio-Economic and other Factors Affecting the Teaching of English in Sri Lanka. Colombo: Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, 3: 36-43.

De Silva, W.A. & Gunawardene, Chandra (1986). *The Planning of Long-Term Educational Futures in Sri Lanka- Educational Policies and Change After 1977*. Maharagama, Sri Lanka: National Institute of Sri Lanka.

De Silva, N.R. et al. (2013). Feasibility of Introducing General English as a University Entry Requirement for Medicine: Results of a National Survey. Retried 21st April 2014 from http://www.sljol.info/index.php/SLJASS/article/view/6205

De Votta, N. (2004). Ethnolinguistic Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka. In Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (Eds*.), Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia.* (pp. 105-139). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Dharmadasa, K.N.O. (Ed.), (1992).Language Policy in a Multi-Ethnic Society: The Case of Sri Lanka, in K. N.O. Dharmadasa (Ed.), *National Language Policy in Sri Lanka*. Kandy, Sri Lanka: International Centre for Ethnic Studies. (pp. 01 – 15).

Eleweke, J. and Rodda, M. (2002).The challenge of enhancing inclusive education in developing countries. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 6,* 113-126.

Fernando, C. (1977). English and Sinhala bilingualism in Sri Lanka. *Language in Society, 6*(2), 341-360.

Fernando, C. (1996). The post-imperial status of English in Sri Lanka 1940-1990: From first to second language. In Fishman, J. A., Conrad, A. W. and Rubal-Lopez, A. (Eds.). *Post-imperial English: Status change in former British and American colonies, 1940-1990.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Co. 485-511.

Fernando, S. (2013). *Launching Phase III of the Presidential Initiative 'English as a Life Skill'*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Presidential Task Force on English and IT.

Fernando, S., Gunesekera, M. and Parakrama, A. (Eds.) (2010). *English in Sri Lanka: Ceylon English, Lankan English. Sri Lankan English.* Sri Lanka English Language Teachers' Association. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Aitken Spence Printing.

Fernando, S. (2001). *Producing Textbooks to Tight Deadlines*, in David Hayes (Ed.). *Teaching English: Possibilities and Opportunities*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: The British Council.

Furuta, H. (2009). Responding to educational needs of children with disabilities: care and education in special pre-schools in the North-Western Province of Sri Lanka. *Japanese Journal of Special Education, 46*(6), 457-471.

Furuta, H. (2006). Present status of education of children with disabilities in Sri Lanka:Implications for increasing access to education*. Japanese Journal of Special Education, 43*(6), 555-565.

G.C.E (O.L.) Examination -2010 Evaluation Report (31 – English Language). (2012). Research & Development Branch, National Evaluation & Testing Services, Department of Examinations, Sri Lanka.

Goonetilleke, D. C. R. A. (1983). Language planning in Sri Lanka. *Navasilu 5,* 13-18.

GOSL (Government of Sri Lanka (Ceylon)). (1959b). Parliamentary Debates – House of Representatives. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Government Press.

GOSL (Government of Sri Lanka).(1997).*General education reforms.* Sri Lanka: The Presidential Task Force on Education.

Gunasekera, Manique. (2005). *The Postcolonial Identity of Sri Lankan English*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Vijitha Yapa Publications.

Gunawardene, Michelle. (2009). *An Enduring Friendship: The Asia Foundation Celebrates Five Decades in Sri Lanka*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Ace Printing & Packages (Pvt) Ltd. .

Haarmann, H. (1990). Language Planning in the Light of a General Theory of Language: A Methodological Framework. *International Journal of Sociology of Language*. 86, 103 – 126.

Hammond, H. and Ingalls, L. (2003). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion: Survey results from elementary school teachers in three south-western rural school districts. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, *22* (2), 24-30.

Haugen, E. (1959). Planning for a Standard Language in Norway. *Anthropological Linguistics*, I (3), 8 -21.

Hornberger, Nancy. H. (2006). Framework and Models in Language Policy and Planning, in Thomas Ricento (Ed.). Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method. Victoria: Blackwell Publishers.

Iqbal, M.C.M. (Ed.) (2001). *LST Review: Language Rights* 11 (162). Colombo, Sri Lanka: Law and Society Trust. (pp. 01 -05).

Kachru, B. B. (1986). The Alchemy of English: Thespread, functions and models of non-native Englishes. Oxford: Pergamon press.

Kandiah, T. (1984). Kaduva: Power and the English language weapon in Sri Lanka. In Percy Colin-Thome and Ashley Halpe (Eds.), Honouring E.F.C. Ludowyk: Felicitation essays (pp. 117-154). Dehiwela, Sri Lanka: Tisara Prakasakayo.

Mendis, G. C. (Ed.). (1956).*The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers: Documents on British colonial policy in Ceylon 1796: 1833* (Vol. I). London: Oxford University Press.

Ministry of Education Sri Lanka. (2013). *Sri Lanka Education Information 2012*. Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Ministry of Education (2012). Sri Lanka Education Information-2012. Retrieved October 16, 2013 from http://www.moe.gov.lk/web/images/stories/statistic/sl_edu_info_2012.pdf

Modern, J., Joerensen, C. and Daniels, F. (2010). DFID, disability and education. London: Results UK.

National Policy Framework on General Education. (2003). National Education Commission. Colombo: Sri Lanka

National Institute of Education, English Unit. (2001). *Policy Related to Teaching English as a Second Language in Schools*. Maharagama, Sri Lanka.

National Symposium in Reviewing of the Performance of School Candidate (G.C.E. O.L. Examination 2011). (2012). Research & Develoment Branch, National Evaluation & Testing Service, Department of Examinations, Sri Lanka.

Passe, H. A. (1943). The English Language in Ceylon. Unpublished Dissertation. University of London.

Passe, H. A. (1955). The Use and Abuse of English: Common Errors in Ceylon English. Madras: Geoffrey Cumberlege, OUP.

Pearman, E. L., Huang, A. M., Barnhart, M. W. and Mellblom, C. (1992). Educating all students in school: Attitudes and beliefs about inclusion. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation*, 27, 176-182.

Phllipson, Robert. (1992). *Linguistic Imperialism*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Raheem, R & Devendra, Dinali (200) Changing Times, Changing Attitudes: The History of English Education in Sri Lanka, in Yeon Hee Choi (Ed.), *English Education in Asia: History & Politics*. Asia TEFL Publication.

Raheem, R. and Ratwatte, H. V. (2004). Visible Strategies, Invisible Results: Language Policy and Planning in Sri Lanka. In Mansoor, S., Meraj, S. and Tahir, A. (Eds.). *Language Policy, Planning and Practice – A South Asian Perspective.* Karachi: Oxford University Press.

Ricento, Thomas (2006). *Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method*. Victoria: Blackwell Publishers.

Sameem, A.M. (2001). Barriers to the Implementation of Language Rights, in Iqbal, M.C.M. (Ed.) (2001). *LST Review: Language Rights* 11 (162). Colombo, Sri Lanka: Law and Society Trust. (pp. 05 -19).

Selvakkumaran, N. (2008). Reality Check and Recommendations on Language Rights, in B. Skanthakumar (Ed.), *Language Rights in Sri Lanka: Enforcing Tamil as an Official Language*. Colombo: Law and Society Trust. (pp. 5 -34).

Shohamy, E. (2006). *Language Policy: Hidden Agenda and New Approaches*. Oxon: Routledge.

Sideridis, G. D. and Chandler, J. P. (1996). Comparison of attitudes of teachers of physical and musical education towards inclusion of children with disabilities. *Psychological Reports*, 78 (3), 768-771.

Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sumathipala, K.H. M. (1968). *History of Education in Ceylon 1796 – 1965*. Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Thisara Printers.

Thamilmaran, V.T. (2001). The Legal Framework for the Protection of Language Rights, in Iqbal, M.C.M. (Ed.) (2001). *LST Review: Language Rights* 11 (162). Colombo, Sri Lanka: Law and Society Trust. (pp. 01 -05). (pp. 01 -05) (pp. 01 -05) (pp. 01 -05)

UNESCO (2010). Education for All Movement. Retrieved October 3, 2013 from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all.

Van Reusen, A. K., Shoho, A. R. and Barker, K. S. (2001). High school teacher attitudes towards inclusion. *The High School Journal*, 84 (2), 7-17.

Wijeratne, K, Cumarathunga, L & I. Perera (2003). Evaluation of GCE Advanced Level General English Porgramme. National Education Commission. Colombo: Sri Lanka. Retrieved April 21 2014 from http://www.nec.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=86%3Aevaluation-of-gce-advanced-level-general-english-porgramme&catid=20%3Ageneral-education&Itemid=52&lang=en

Wijesinha, R. (2003). Bringing back the bathwater: New initiatives in English policy in Sri Lanka. In C. Mair (Ed.), The politics of English as a world language (pp. 367-374). Amsterdam: Rodopi.

_____ (Date & Author Unidentified) *Teaching of English – Present Position and Future Strategies*

_____ (1982) (Author Unidentified) *Towards Relevance in Education: A Report of the Educational Reference Committee 1979*. Sri Lanka: Govt. Publications Bureau, April 82.