CHAPTER 4
Students' Perceptions

4.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the undergraduates' perceptions of the current English language teaching programme in the universities in Sri Lanka. In order to obtain students' perceptions of the programme, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to the student sample. The questionnaire was divided into three main areas to obtain data relating to: (a) syllabus/lesson material content, (b) language teaching process and (c) testing. The objectives behind the questions were to procure data on students' motivation and needs to learn English, and their attitudes towards the current English language programme. In addition, this study sought their opinions about English medium instruction at the undergraduate level. In the first part of this chapter, we describe the methods that have been used to procure and analyse data: this includes a description of the sample, tools used, the procedure adopted and the analysis. In the second part, we discuss the students' perceptions of the aforementioned areas under the rubrics of student motivation, needs and attitudes.

4.2. Method of the Study

4.2.1. Sample

Six groups of students were selected from three universities: from the University of Colombo the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Management and Finance\(^1\); from the University of Jaffna, Faculty of Arts and Management Studies; and from the Sabaragamuwa University, Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages\(^2\) and the

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\(^1\) For easy reference, as stated elsewhere, all the Faculties in the sample that have Management related subjects will be called as Faculties of Management in this study.

\(^2\) All the Faculties in the sample that have subjects related to Social Sciences will be called as Faculties of Arts for easy reference.
Faculty of Management. Forty students from each Faculty have been selected, which comprised 240 students in total. They were in the second year of their degree programme. The student sample consisted of 167 females and 73 males.

Table: 4.1. Gender representation of the student sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Colombo</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabaragamuwa University</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Jaffna</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td><strong>167</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the students in the sample were in the age group of 21-23/25.

The second year students, who have completed their first semester in the second year, have been selected for the study for the following reasons:

- As the undergraduates complete the first year, they enter the second year with expectations vis-à-vis English language learning to achieve in the second year. Since the selected sample of students have completed the first semester of the second year as well, it is assumed that they are capable of judging the programme in terms of its level of systematic coherence, continuity, ability to meet student expectations, etc.

- They have been in the university system for nearly two years and have one or two more years to leave the university. Therefore, they are alert of the realistic situation they will have to face in the outside society once they leave the university. Hence they are in a position to judge the existing English language teaching programme in terms of fulfilling students' and societal expectations.
Sample of undergraduates by mother tongue

There were 131 Sinhala speaking students and 109 Tamil speaking students in the sample.

Figure 4.1: Undergraduate sample by mother tongue

Three Faculties, i.e. Arts and Management in the University of Colombo and the Faculty of Arts in the Sabaragamuwa University have both Sinhala speaking and Tamil speaking undergraduates with a Sinhala majority of more than 75%. The student sample of the Faculty of Management of the Sabaragamuwa University consisted of 100% Sinhala students. The student sample of the University of Jaffna consisted of only Tamil students in both the Faculties.

4.2.2 Tools

A detailed questionnaire was designed in order to obtain data from students pertinent to the English language in various aspects of undergraduate English language teaching-learning programme. The questionnaire aimed at obtaining a profile of student perception on the following:
• Motivation to learn English
• Attitudes towards
  English language & the culture in the content
  Existing content/materials
  Existing English language teaching methods
  English as the medium of instruction
  Existing evaluation process
• Needs for
  Learning English
  Improvement in the content/materials
  Improvement in the teaching methods
  Improvement in evaluation

The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended questions and close questions. Based on the student responses, some broad categories have been developed.

4.3. Procedure

The questionnaire was administered in the English language classrooms in the three universities. Before administering the questionnaire, students were briefed for 5 - 10 minutes on the purpose of the study. It was emphasized that this study would help in bringing about changes for the upliftment of the undergraduate English language programme, which would primarily depend on students' comments on the current programme. The students were encouraged to be free in their expression, may it be suggestions or pointing drawbacks. In this regard, they were told that their responses would be treated confidentially. The questionnaire was in Sinhala, Tamil and English and they were asked to answer in the language (Sinhala/Tamil/English) they were most comfortable with.

First the questionnaire was administered to the undergraduates in the Faculty of Management, University of Colombo. Those who opted to participate were taken
from all the levels\(^1\) in order to have a representation of students with different English language proficiencies. As the undergraduates of the Faculty of Arts had not completed their first semester by the time we were in Sri Lanka, the questionnaire was administered to them later by a colleague. The procedure of the selection of the student sample was the same as above, including students from all the proficiency levels. Permission to administer the questionnaire was obtained from the Coordinator of the English Language Teaching Unit. In the Sabaragamuwa University, the permission was obtained from both the Head and the Dean of the Department of Social Sciences and Languages and the Dean, Faculty of Management Studies. In the case of the University of Jaffna, we were unable to be present personally due to the prevalent civil war in the country. Therefore, with the support of the Faculty members of the University of Jaffna, data was collected by administering the questionnaire to the undergraduates of both the Arts and Management Faculties.

4.4. Results

The responses of the undergraduates have been tabulated and analyzed in terms of various themes pertaining to the focus of the study using the Statistical Programme for Social Science (SPSS). The undergraduates' attitudes towards English language course in the universities in terms of its content, teaching methods and evaluation strategies have been analysed to find out the effectiveness of the programme, evaluating undergraduates' levels of motivation and needs to learn English, and their attitudes towards English and the ELT programme, taking the role and the status of English in Sri Lanka as the backdrop.

4.4.1. Student motivation

Hundred percent of the undergraduate sample from the six groups of the three universities showed their preference to learn English. Despite the different and contrastive contextual situations and cultures of the universities, there was no

\(^1\) According to the proficiency level of the undergraduates at the placement test, they have been grouped into various levels. This has been discussed in Chapter 1.
difference in liking to learn English among the undergraduate population. Herein, some answers such as "like to learn English very much," "like it most" depicted their overwhelming desire to learn English.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) divided motivational orientation into four different types: instrumental, integrative, resentment and manipulative. Instrumental category refers to the responses that are attributed to benefits one can gain by virtue of learning English; integrative type has the need to belong to a particular group, culture, etc; according to Rahman (2005), resentment may mean when the need is compelling yet without willingness if the learner has to learn it; manipulative attributes to the motivation type one has because of the power one can impose on others to get things done by means of English. This has been discussed in detail in the Review of Literature section.

In order to find out the kind of motivation students have to learn English, they were asked to state the reasons for their liking to learn English. The results have been graphed below (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Students' motivational orientation to learn English
The frequency or distribution of responses on motivational orientation across Faculties is significantly different from a chance level distribution. In other words, the distribution shows a significant trend. Chi-square value is significant at \( .01 \) level \( (\chi^2 = 69.503, \ df = 20, \ p = .0001) \). The Chi-square value is counted on the number of responses and not on percentages. Herein, the students from the Faculties of Arts of the University of Colombo and Sabaragamuwa University showed higher level of instrumental motivation than those of the Faculties of Management. Taken together, Students of the Arts Faculties were higher than those of Management in this regard in the three universities.

**Reasons given by the students for instrumental motivation to learn English**

Out of 240 students in the sample, 223 (93%) students showed Instrumental motivation to learn English. The table 4.2 lists out the reasons for students to have instrumental motivation to learn English.

**Table 4.2: Reasons for students' instrumental motivation to learn English**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Student percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career orientation</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International standing</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential utility</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and interest</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator for higher education</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige and personality value</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 4.2 shows that the highest percentage of students (30%) wants to learn English with a career orientation as the motive. And 26.5% of students want to learn English because of its international standing. Considering its potential utility, 24% want to learn English.
**Instrumental motivation**

The highest student percentages showed instrumental motivational orientation to learn English: therein, the students of the Faculties of Arts showed higher percentages in comparison to those of the Faculties of Management (80% - Arts, Sabaragamuwa University; 75% - Arts, University of Colombo). In the Faculty of Management, University of Jaffna 7.5% more students showed instrumental motivation to learn English than those of the Faculty of Arts. The next highest percentage was for "instrumental and resentment" motivational types together: forty five percent (45%) of the students of the Faculty of Management in the Sabaragamuwa University and 25% of the students in the Faculty of Management in the University of Colombo. The students of the Faculty of Arts in the University of Colombo too displayed some inclination with 10% opting for this motivation type.

**Integrative motivation**

The percentage of respondents who liked to learn English for integrative purposes was less than instrumental purposes. The highest percentages of integrative motivation came from the University of Jaffna with 17.5% of the student sample of the Faculty of Management and 10% of the Faculty of Arts wanting to learn English for integrative purposes. Most of the responses showed that the motivation was to have interpersonal relations and some of the responses included "I want to communicate with others in my country", "I want to talk with other ethnic groups", etc.

Only 2.5% respondents from both Arts and Management Faculties of the University of Colombo showed integrative motivation to learn English. No informant from the Sabaragamuwa University showed this type of motivation.

And no respondent has showed manipulative motivational orientation to learn English.
Students’ motivation to learn English for different purposes

For career orientation

Table 4.3: Students’ instrumental motivation with career orientation

The students of the Faculties of Management showed a higher preference of career orientation when compared to the students of the Arts Faculties. This was prominent in all the three universities.
Students’ motivation to learn English because of its international standing

The graph below (Figure 4.4) shows the distribution of preferences to learn English because of its international standing.

Figure 4.4: Motivation to learn English because of its international standing

The informants of the two Faculties of the University of Jaffna showed the highest percentages of instrumental motivation to learn English because of its international standing: students of the Faculty of Arts – 27% and those of the Faculty of Management – 23%. And the four Faculties of the other two universities have markedly lower percentages of students in this regard.
4.4.2. Students’ needs and preferences

Students’ preference for skills they want to improve

Students were asked to select the skills they liked to improve most and were given four choices: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. The results are given in the graph below (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Skills students desired to improve most

All the groups had 62.5% or more respondents preferring to improve speaking skill most. The highest percentage i.e. 75% came from the students of the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo. The next preference of the students of the three universities was for improving more than one skill. Listening, Reading and Writing seemed to be the least desired skills they wanted to improve.

The frequency or distribution of responses on the desire to learn a particular skill across faculties is not significantly different from a chance level distribution. In other words, the distribution does not show a significant trend. ($\chi^2 = 13.792$,
df = 20, p = .841. The Chi-square value is counted on the number of responses and not on percentages).

Reasons for preferring speaking skill

The study sought to find out the reasons for students’ preference to improve a particular skill/s. The reasons have been listed below for their liking to learn the speaking skill in order of preference (A detailed table of this appears in the Appendix E).

1. Interpersonal relationships
2. Societal requirement
3. Personality & Self confidence
4. Weakness requires improvement
5. Education & knowledge
6. All skills are interrelated & help to be competent
7. Interest
8. Comprehension, pronunciation & vocabulary improvement

Students’ preference to learn the speaking skill most for the first three reasons given above showed differences among universities. The majority of the informants of the University of Jaffna opted for the first reason. The informants of the other two universities preferred to learn the speaking skill considering it as a societal requirement and as a means to develop personality and self-confidence.
Speaking skill for interpersonal relationships

The following graph (Figure 4.6) shows the desire among the undergraduates to develop speaking most for interpersonal relations.

Figure 4.6: Students’ desire to improve speaking skill for interpersonal relations

The respondents of the University of Jaffna showed more preference to improve speech for interpersonal relations (the Faculty of Management 26.25% and the Faculty of Arts 23.75%), whereas the respondents of the other two universities seemed to have comparatively less preference for learning the speaking skill for interpersonal relations (below 20%).

Speaking skill as a societal requirement

The following graph (Figure 4.7) shows the desire among the undergraduates to develop speech most as a societal requirement.
There was a difference between the percentages of respondents between the University of Jaffna and other two universities in relation to the preference to improve the speaking skill, considering it as a social requirement. A less percentage (13%) of respondents of the University of Jaffna (the two Faculties together) was found than those of the other two universities that had more than 40% respondents in each.

4.4.3. Student Attitudes

This study sought to find out the attitudes of undergraduates towards the English language course in terms of its content, teaching methods and testing practices, and medium of instruction: The informants were asked a number of questions covering each aspect. In addition, this research searched for finding out the students' attitudes towards the culture the English language represents in the English language classroom: this was accomplished via obtaining their opinions regarding English literature. In addition, the kind of content through which they liked to learn English was also examined. Also, students were asked to give their suggestions for improvement.
Attitudes to content of the syllabus/lesson materials

The questions under this part were designed to find out the attitudes of students towards the content of the lesson materials that were in use and the kind of content students liked to learn in the English language classroom. Therefore, they were asked to give their views regarding the components in the lesson materials in use. In addition, they were asked to voice their opinions on English literature.

Students' attitudes to various components in lesson materials

Students were asked to name the component they preferred most and the component they disliked most out of the components they have already studied. In addition, they were asked what they would prefer adding to the existing lesson materials if they were given a chance. The responses are given below.

*The component/s undergraduates preferred most*

The components students like most are given in the table 4.3.

Table 4.3: The component/s students preferred most

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component least desired</th>
<th>University of Colombo</th>
<th>Sabaragamuwa University</th>
<th>University of Jaffna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Mgt</td>
<td>Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>7.5 3</td>
<td>37.5 15</td>
<td>57.5 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>2.5 1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>35 14</td>
<td>2.5 1</td>
<td>5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English literature</td>
<td>7.5 3</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Activities</td>
<td>10 4</td>
<td>2.5 1</td>
<td>17.5 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Activities</td>
<td>10 4</td>
<td>35 14</td>
<td>10 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Activities</td>
<td>2.5 1</td>
<td>5 2</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>5 2</td>
<td>2.5 1</td>
<td>5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>2.5 1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not responded</td>
<td>20 8</td>
<td>12.5 5</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 40</td>
<td>100 40</td>
<td>100 40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = number of students*
The most preferred component/s of the undergraduates seemed to vary from Faculty to Faculty. Nonetheless, there was a noticeable preference for grammar among the respondents of the groups (Table 4.3): the highest percentage i.e. 57.5% of respondents were from the Faculty of Arts, Sabaragamuwa University followed by 37.5% from the Management, University of Colombo. The respondents from the two groups of Management in the Sabaragamuwa University and the University of Jaffna also seemed to have some preference for the grammar they learnt which was depicted by 22.5% and 20% respectively as the second highest preference in both the Faculties.

It appeared that students from the Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna did not like the grammar parts they studied as no respondent has named it under preferred component category. A somewhat similar view seemed to prevail among the informants from the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo with only 7.5% preferring the grammar component they studied.

The next preference has been given to speech activities (that include presentations and group work) and writing activities. The Faculty of Management, University of Colombo had 35% of the respondents liking the speech component they learnt. All the other groups had at least 10% of respondents preferring speech activities. The least student percentage (2.5%) to speech activities came from the informants of the Faculty of Management, University of Jaffna. The writing activities were preferred mostly by the students of the Sabaragamuwa University in both the Faculties (Management 45% and Arts 17.5%).

The only group of students who liked reading comprehension was from the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo with 35% opting for it. All the others seemed to be not interested in the reading comprehension component they studied. (Herein some students of the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo have stated their preference for it because it was the most recently taught lesson). The learnt listening activities seemed to have not much preferred by any of the groups.
Some of the responses of the informants of the University of Jaffna could not be categorized [Sixty seven point five percent (67.5%) of students of the Faculty of Arts and 45% of the Faculty of Management, University of Jaffna have given irrelevant answers]. This was due to significant proportion of students referred to subjects instead of components. They went beyond and spoke about other subjects.

The frequency or the distribution of responses on the desire to learn a particular skill across Faculties is significantly different from a chance level distribution. In other words, the distribution shows a significant trend. Chi-square value is significant at .01 level ($\chi^2 = 238.594$, df = 45, $p = .0003$. The Chi-square value is counted on the number of responses and not on percentages.)

*Reasons given by students for preferring the learnt grammar component most*

The reasons the informants have given for their preference for the grammar component are given below:

1. It helps in writing, reading and speech
2. Learning grammar helps improve English knowledge
3. It is methodical, practical and easy to comprehend

*Reasons for students' preferences for the speech activities they studied*

The respondents preferred speech activities because they,

1. improve confidence and public speaking ability
2. help improve practical language knowledge
3. are interesting and taught well
4. improve logical thinking, presenting and free expression

(For a detailed version, see Appendix E)
The component/s students disliked most

In order to cross check students’ preferences for the content in lesson materials, they were asked to name the component/s they least desired out of the ones they have already learnt. The responses are tabulated below (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: The component/s students desired least

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component least desired</th>
<th>University of Colombo</th>
<th>Sabaragamuwa University</th>
<th>University of Jaffna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Mgt</td>
<td>Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Activities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Activities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Activities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not responded</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = number of students

The highest percentage of informants who stated that they disliked grammar most, were from the Faculty of Arts, Sabaragamuwa University: the percentage was 35%
followed by the informants of the Faculty Arts, University of Colombo and those of the Faculty of Management, Sabaragamuwa University with 22.5% each. This brings our attention to the previous question regarding their most desired component. Therein, it was the informants of the Faculty of Arts, Sabaragamuwa University, who showed the highest preference for the grammar component, which was 57.5%. This means that the majority of the students of the Faculty liked the taught grammar component while about one third did not.

And the next least desired component was reading comprehension with 17.5% in both the Faculties of Arts and Management of the University of Colombo. In the Sabaragamuwa University, 10% of the students of both the Faculties showed dislike to reading comprehension.

Also, the percentage of the respondents for speech activities as a least desired component was minimal: In the three Management Faculties it was below 5% and all the undergraduates of the Faculties of Arts in the three universities have not included speech activities in to their least desired list. Listening activities also came under this category with low percentages.

The frequency or distribution of responses on the desire to learn a particular skill across Faculties is significantly different from a chance level distribution. In other words, the distribution shows a significant trend. Chi-square value is significant at .01 level ($\chi^2 = 137.700$, df = 35, $p = .0004$. The Chi-square value is counted on the number of responses and not on percentages). For instance, higher number of students of the Faculties of Arts showed disliking for grammar than those of Management Faculties.

**Reasons for students’ least preference for grammar**

- Because of complexity
- Because lessons were boring and not methodical
- Because there was excessive grammar and retention is hard
Reasons for disliking the reading comprehension component

- Such lessons (the existing reading comprehension) were not practical and no contribution to English language improvement
- They were long, complex and unable to comprehend
- They were not challenging

The summary of the results of the above responses is given below (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Students' preferences for major components they studied (across universities)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Students who like the component</th>
<th>Students who dislike the component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Activities</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Activities</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Activities</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A detailed account of the reasons for disliking grammar and reading comprehension has been cross-tabulated and included in the Appendix E.

The components undergraduates would like to add to the lesson materials

In order to know the components students would like to learn more, a question was included in the questionnaire: given the chance, what they would like to add to the existing lesson materials. The responses are given in the table below (Table 4.6).
Table 4.6: The components students preferred to add in to the existing lesson materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Student percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speech Activities</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Activities</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Activities</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant answers</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not responded</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most preferred (23%) component to be added to the existing modules was speech activities. These included presentations, group work, etc. In addition, 16.3% of the informants showed their liking for more Literature (poems, short stories, etc).

Small percentages of respondents showed their preference for adding more grammar and writing activities: for grammar it was 5.4% and for writing activities, it was 4.6%. Only 1.6% respondents liked more listening activities added in to the lesson materials in use. Quite interestingly, no respondent liked reading comprehension component to be added. Thirty one point two percent (31.2%) of the respondents of all the groups have not responded to the question. The 10.8% of informants who have given irrelevant answers were from the University of Jaffna.

Attitudes towards English literature

This study sought to explore how undergraduates perceived literature in relation to their English language lessons. One of the intentions of asking for students’ views on English literature was to gauge the kind of content through which they liked to
learn English. In addition, this study sought to examine the attitudes of the undergraduates towards the English language and the culture it represented within the classroom premises through the content. A number of questions were posed before the students, which required their views on poems and novels in English.

a) Undergraduates' views on English poems

Students were asked whether they liked to learn English poems. The responses are given in the graph below (Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8: Students' perceptions of English poems

![Graph showing students' perceptions of English poems](image)

The majority of the students of the three universities liked to learn English poems in the English language classroom except for the respondents from the Faculty of Management, University of Jaffna. Seventy percent (70%) and above respondents showed preference in this regard while the respondents of the Faculty of Management, University of Jaffna seemed to have their responses equally divided between their preference and dislike to learn English poems in the English language.
classroom. When compared with the Faculties of Management, Faculties of Arts in each university have more respondents preferring to learn English poems.

The frequency or distribution of responses on the preference for English poems across Faculties is significantly different from a chance level distribution. In other words, the distribution shows a significant trend. Chi-square value is significant at .05 level ($\chi^2 = 18.935$, df = 10, $p = .041$). The Chi-square value is counted on the number of responses and not on percentages). Students of the Faculties of Arts liked to learn poems more than those of the Faculties of Management.

*Reasons given by students for preferring to learn English poems*

Students were asked to give reasons for their preferences. The reasons are listed below in order of their frequency:

1. For pleasure
2. English poems give deep meaning in fewer words
3. Helps improve English
4. For cross cultural experience
5. For creative influence
6. Because of the liking to English

(For a detailed version, see Appendix E)

*Reasons given by students for disliking to learn English poems*

Though the majority of the students in the sample preferred to learn English poems, some respondents showed their dislike to learn them. The reasons are listed below.

1. Comprehension difficulties
2. Uninteresting
3. Unimportant
4. Lack of training to read English poems

(For a detailed tabulation see Appendix E)
b) Undergraduates' views on English novels

Students were given two authors: local and foreign, to select one of their preference: Charles Dickens (English) and Martin Wickramasinghe (for Sinhala students)/Shanthan (for Tamil students) and the students were asked who they would like to read if the works of the local writers were in English. The responses appear in the graph below (Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9: Students' preferences for English novels written by local and foreign writers

The majority of the students at the Sabaragamuwa University and in the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo seemed to prefer English novels written by local writers. Only 37.5% of informants from the Faculty of Management, University of Colombo preferred the local writer's work while the majority liked the foreign writer's works.

The majority of the informants of the University of Jaffna seemed undecided about the writers and their works. Nevertheless, 35% and 30% respondents of the
Management and Arts Faculties respectively have displayed their preference to the works of the local writer.

The majority of the respondents (57.5%) of the Faculty of Management in the University of Colombo have stated that they preferred the foreign writer. And more than 35% of the respondents from both the Universities of Colombo and Sabaragamuwa seemed willing to read books by foreign authors. But in the University of Jaffna, the percentages of respondents are less for the foreign writer: and it was only 15% in both the Faculties.

Only less than 10% of the informants from the three groups, i.e. Arts 7.5% and Management 5% - University of Colombo and Arts 5% - Sabaragamuwa University, liked to read novels by both local and foreign authors. A noteworthy observation was that 15% of the informants of the Faculty of Arts in the University of Jaffna did not prefer to read either of the writers’ works.

The frequency or distribution of responses on the preference for English novels across Faculties is significantly different from a chance level distribution. In other words, the distribution shows a significant trend. Chi-square value is significant at .01 level ($\chi^2 = 123.197$, df = 20, $p = .0001$. The Chi-square value is counted on the number of responses and not on percentages).

*Reasons given by students for preferring to read English novels by the local writer*

The reasons given by the students for preferring the works of the local writer are given below across Faculties in order of frequency:

- Contextual familiarity
- Simple and easy comprehension
- Interest
Reasons given by students for preferring to read English novels by the English writer

- Interest to read a novel by an English writer
- Contextual and stylistic differences found in the foreign work act as a motivating factor
- It helps learn English literature and vocabulary
- Dislike to read a local text written in English

Reasons given by students for not preferring to read English novels by the English writer

- Contextual and stylistic differences act as a hindrance
- Unfamiliarity with the English writer

The informants who opted for both local and foreign writers' works stated that they liked to read both as a means to improve English.

Among those who liked none of the writers, some said it was because of the difficulties in reading English books while some stated it was because both the writers were unknown to them. Nearly 50% of the students of the University of Jaffna have not given any reason. The summary of student responses on reading English novels is given in the table 4.7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preference for English novels</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference for novels in English</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response and writers not known</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is noteworthy that only 2.5% of the undergraduates in the sample showed their dislike to read novels in English.
Attitudes of students towards the programme

Students were asked to view the programme in terms of current teaching-learning practices. Based on their responses, three categories have been developed: (a) Negative – answers that were unfavourable of the programme, (b) Positive – the supportive views and (c) Moderate – the responses that did not come under the aforementioned two extremes: they indicated that improvement was required. The table 4.8 shows the overall opinion of the undergraduates on the current teaching practices.

Table 4.8: Students’ attitudes towards the English language programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student perception on current English language programme</th>
<th>University of Colombo</th>
<th>Sabaragamuwa University</th>
<th>University of Jaffna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Mgt</td>
<td>Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not responded</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = Number of students

The majority of the students seemed to have negative attitudes towards the programme.

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The frequency or distribution of responses on the current ELT programme across Faculties is significantly different from a chance level distribution. In other words, the distribution shows a significant trend. Chi-square value is significant at .01 level ($\chi^2 = 78.964$, df = 15, $p = .0001$. The Chi-square value is counted on the number of responses and not on percentages).

a) The positive aspects of the programme as perceived by students

Three groups showed more positive attitude to the current English language teaching practices: The Faculties of Arts and Management of the University of Jaffna and the Faculty of Management of the University of Colombo fell into this category. In the University of Jaffna, the percentages of the respondents who perceived the existing English language teaching practices positively were 42.5% in the Faculty of Management and 35% in the Faculty of Arts. Also, in the University of Colombo 40% respondents from the Faculty of Management viewed the programme positively. The informants who had a positive attitude have observed the programme as 'fair', 'good' or 'excellent'. Nonetheless they have not elaborated their answers.

b) The negative aspects of the programme as perceived by students

The other three groups had more respondents with negative opinions regarding the existing ELT practices. These included Faculty of Arts of the University of Colombo, and the Faculties of Arts and Management of the Sabaragamuwa University: the highest came from the Faculty of Management, Sabaragamuwa University with 57.5% respondents bearing this attitude. This was followed by 52.5% informants of the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo. The respondents of the Faculty of Arts, Sabaragamuwa University were the next highest with 45%, who perceived the current teaching practices as negative. Also, 37.5% respondents in the Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna and 32.5% students of the Faculty of Management, University of Colombo held the same opinion.
Students have given the following reasons for their negative attitudes to the ELT practices:

- Inefficient, impractical and non-systematic
- Monotonous, student-unfriendly material and teaching
- Insufficient exposure to speech
- Examination oriented
- Insufficient time allocation

And 27.5% informants of the Faculty of Management, University of Colombo seemed to bear the opinion that the current ELT programme needs improvement. What has been named as 'Moderate' included student responses such as "It needs improvement," or "Ok, but it has to improve," "more time for teaching is required" etc which may not be taken as either totally positive or negative opinions.

the Faculty of Management of the University of Jaffna had the highest percentage of informants, i.e. 45% who have given irrelevant answers or who have not responded at all.

**Attitudes towards teachers' use of mother tongue to teach English**

This study sought to find out the undergraduates' views on their teachers' use of MT in the English language classroom. There were two questions in the questionnaire in respect to the use of MT in teaching English; to know the frequency of the teacher's use of MT and students' preference for it.
Frequency of the teachers' use of mother tongue

The frequency of the teachers' use of MT in teaching English as viewed by students is given in the graph below (Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10: Frequency of teacher's use of MT in teaching English

As the graph shows, the majority of the students of the University of Colombo and the Sabaragamuwa University responded that their teachers used MT rarely or sometimes in teaching English. The student percentages were, 95% of the Faculty of Management, Sabaragamuwa University and 80% of the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, 67.5% of the Faculty of Management, University of Colombo and 60% of the Arts, Sabaragamuwa University. However, only 40% respondents of the Faculty of Management, University of Jaffna stated that their teachers used MT either sometimes or rarely while in the Faculty of Arts, only 7.5% said the same.

Twenty five percent (25%) of the students of Arts, Sabaragamuwa University, 20% of Management and 10% of Arts of the University of Colombo stated that their teachers never used MT in teaching English.

In contrast, the majority of the undergraduates, i.e. 90% in the Faculty of Arts and 60% in the Faculty of Management of the University of Jaffna stated that their teachers use MT always or very often.
On the whole, there was a difference between the students' responses of the University of Jaffna and other two universities in terms of the teachers' use of MT in the English language classroom. While the majority of students of the University of Jaffna claimed that their teachers used it always or very often, the majority of the University of Colombo and the Sabaragamuwa University stated that their teachers used it rarely or sometimes.

The frequency or distribution of responses on the teachers' use of MT across Faculties is significantly different from a chance level distribution. In other words, the distribution shows a significant trend. Chi-square value is significant at .01 level ($\chi^2 = 139.906$, df = 15, $p = .0002$. The Chi-square value is counted on the number of responses and not on percentages).

**Students' preference for teachers' use of MT in teaching English**

How would undergraduates view the use of MT in their English language classroom? Do they find it supportive to learn English? Or as a hindrance to improve English? The following graph illustrates their responses (Figure 4.11).

**Figure 4.11: Students' preferences for teacher's use of MT in teaching English**

![Graph showing student preferences]

The majority of the students showed preference for MT in the English language classroom. Only the informants of the Faculty of Arts, Sabaragamuwa University
appeared to have their responses divided equally between their liking and dislike to the teachers' use of MT in teaching English. The highest preference for the use of MT was shown in the Faculty of Management, Sabaragamuwa University with 90% respondents opting for it. The next highest student percentage, i.e. 85%, was from the Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna followed by 77.5% from the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo. From the Faculties of Management, 75% informants belonging to the University of Jaffna and 65% to the University of Colombo also revealed their liking for the teachers' use of MT in teaching English.

The frequency or distribution of responses on the preference for the use of MT across Faculties is significantly different from a chance level distribution. In other words, the distribution shows a significant trend. Chi-square value is significant at .01 level ($\chi^2 = 27.259$, df = 10, $p = .002$. The Chi-square value is counted on the number of responses and not on percentages). For instance, the respondents of the Faculties of Arts show more preference for the use of MT in English language classroom than those of the Faculty of Management except in the Sabaragamuwa University.

The reasons students have given for their preferences are listed below in order of frequency:

1. For better comprehension and retention of what they learn
2. Because of lack of confidence to learn only in English
3. Because it is the MT
4. For a better rapport with the teacher

The reasons for not preferring the teachers' use of MT in the English language classroom are given below in order of frequency:

1. Use of English only will improve English
2. Use of MT will limit the exposure to English
3. Use of MT will interfere with comprehension in English
4. Because the degree course is in English
However, among those who liked the use of MT in the English language classroom, there seemed to be different opinions on when to use it. Some of them are listed below:

1. When teaching grammar lessons
2. For reading comprehension (including vocabulary)
3. For difficult lessons like theories
4. When teaching Literature

Undergraduates’ opinions regarding medium of instruction

Students were asked about their preferences for a language as the medium of instruction at the undergraduate level and the reasons for their preferences.

They were given three choices: Mother Tongue (Sinhala/Tamil), English and Both. The responses are given in the graph below (Figure 4.12).

**Figure 4.12: Students’ perceptions of the medium of instruction at the undergraduate level**
When the question of the desired medium of instruction at the undergraduate level was posed before the student sample, the overwhelming response was for English to be the medium. The respondents of the Faculties of Management showed higher percentages than those of the Faculties of Arts: ninety five percent (95%) students of the Faculties of Management in both the Universities of Colombo and Sabaragamuwa showed preference for English medium along with 75% of the Faculty of Management in the University of Jaffna. Though the percentages were lower than those of the Faculties of Management, students of the Faculties of Arts of the three universities too seemed to prefer English as the medium: this was depicted by 65% respondents of Sabaragamuwa University, 50% of University of Jaffna and 47.5% of the University of Colombo.

Another difference of opinion between the informants of the Faculties of Arts and Management in this regard was depicted in their next preference i.e. the liking to have MT instructions: in the three Faculties of Arts, University of Jaffna, 22.5%, Sabaragamuwa University 20% and University of Colombo, 17.5% of the respondents opted for MT as the medium. In the Faculties of Management in the University of Colombo and Sabaragamuwa University, none of the informants seemed to like to go back to MT instructions. A slight deviation from the above could be observed with the respondents of the Faculty of Management, University of Jaffna with 5% stating that they liked MT instruction.

The informants who wanted to have both media (MT and English) as the media of instruction were lowest in the Faculties of Management in all the three universities. Among the Faculties of Arts, the lowest percentage of respondents i.e. 15% who liked both media came from the Sabaragamuwa University that already has its lectures conducted in the medium of English. The other two Arts Faculties of Colombo and Jaffna Universities had 25% and 17.5% respondents opting for both.

The two Arts Faculties that do not have English medium instruction in the Universities of Colombo and Jaffna along with the Faculty of Management, University of Jaffna had informants who were undecided about the issue. This is
depicted by 10% of respondents from each aforementioned Faculty opting for "undecided."

The frequency or distribution of responses on the desired medium of instruction across Faculties is significantly different from a chance level distribution. In other words, the distribution shows a significant trend. Chi-square value is significant at .01 level ($\chi^2 = 53.477$, df = 15, $p = .0001$). The Chi-square value is counted on the number of responses and not on percentages. For instance, respondents of the Faculties of Management were higher for English medium than those of the Faculties of Arts.

**Reasons for students' preference for English as the medium of instruction**

The respondents who opted for English medium in their preference have given the following reasons:

1. English medium would help their degree recognized
2. More career opportunities for a degree in English medium
3. Enhancement for English language learning
4. Availability of other resources such as books and information from the Internet.
5. More access to knowledge through English medium
6. Interest

**Reasons for students' preference for both mother tongue and English as the media of instruction**

Students have given the following reasons for their preference to have both MT as well as English as the media of instruction:

- Combination of both will allow language balance
- As a compensation for the lack of English language proficiency
Reasons for students' preference for mother tongue as the medium

Listed below are the reasons for preferring mother tongue as the medium of instruction.

1. Lack of competence in English
2. More familiarity with the mother tongue
3. Importance of the mother tongue

Those who preferred MT instruction were mainly from the Faculties of Arts: from the University of Jaffna, 22.5%; Sabaragamuwa University, 20%; University of Colombo, 17.5%. Only 5% from the Faculty of Management, University of Jaffna opted for MT instruction. Those who opted for MT instructions stated that they liked it because of lack of competence in English while 4% informants said that more familiarity with MT as the reason for preferring MT instructions.

Attitudes towards current assessment practices

The undergraduates were asked to give their views about the current assessment practices of the English language programme. In the questionnaire, there were three questions regarding the evaluation practices in use: about the adequacy of them, desired changes in the procedure for evaluation and the reasons for wanting changes.
**Students’ opinions on the adequacy of the current testing and evaluation practices**

Students were asked whether the existing testing practices were adequate. The responses are tabulated below (Table 4.9).

Table 4.9: Students’ perceptions of the adequacy of the current assessment practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Response</th>
<th>University of Colombo</th>
<th>Sabaragamuwa University</th>
<th>University of Jaffna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Mgt</td>
<td>Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not responded</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = Number of students

The majority of the informants of four groups showed that the current procedure of testing was adequate: They included the informants of the two Faculties of the University of Jaffna- 90% of the Management and 75% of the Arts; 67.5% of the Faculty of Art, Sabaragamuwa University and 60% of the Faculty of Management, University of Colombo.

The two groups, which had more respondents with the view that the testing practices were not adequate, were the students from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Colombo and the Faculty of Management of the Sabaragamuwa University. Both the groups had 60% of respondents who held this view. The Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna had 12.5% students with the same opinion.

The frequency or distribution of responses on the adequacy of the evaluation practices across Faculties is significantly different from a chance level distribution. In other words, the distribution shows a significant trend. Chi-square value is
significant at .01 level ($\chi^2 = 57.890$, df = 10, p = .0002. The Chi-square value is counted on the number of responses and not on percentages).

**Desired changes in the current testing practices**

The students were asked to list out the changes that they would like to see in the way of testing their English language proficiency. The responses are tabulated below (Table 4.10).

**Table 4.10: Students’ perceptions regarding the desired changes in the assessment practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Mgt</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Mgt</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Mgt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More attention to testing speech</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More testing variety &amp; frequency</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should test all English language skills</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be practical &amp; relevant</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be compulsory &amp; challenging</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less hours should be allotted for testing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should change teaching first &amp; then testing</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No suggestion given</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = Number of students*
The concentration of students in the University of Colombo and the Sabaragamuwa University seemed to be around two requirements in the assessment system: more attention to testing speech and for the changes in teaching to make changes in testing. Most of the students from the University of Jaffna have not answered the question.

The frequency or distribution of responses on the adequacy of the evaluation practices across Faculties is significantly different from a chance level distribution. In other words, the distribution shows a significant trend. Chi-square value is significant at .01 level ($\chi^2 = 104.272$, df = 35, $p = .0004$). The Chi-square value is counted on the number of responses and not on percentages).

The reasons given by students for preferring changes in assessment practices

Students were asked to give reasons for the changes they wanted in the assessment practices. The responses emphasized that they wanted changes in the testing system for,

1. practical application of learnt knowledge
2. more exposure to English
3. better ELT system
4. facing challenges in careers
5. recognition for their degree
6. mechanisms for different ability groups
7. confidence building via better assessment
8. a testing system which is both language specific and main subject specific

(For more details, see Appendix E)
4.5. Discussion

This section discusses the findings under three main areas: students' motivation, their needs to learn English and their attitudes towards English language and the ELT programme. Analysis of this part shows that students have positive attitudes towards the English language and the culture it represents. The negative attitudes they have are towards the programme: mainly towards the teaching methods and the materials (content and activities) in use in the undergraduate English language classroom. Negative attitudes, "...whatever their roots, create psychological distance between the learner and the subject matter and are, therefore, of vital significance in the learning-teaching process" (Dubin & Olshtain, 1987, p.14).

4.5.1. Students' motivation to learn English

With hundred percent of the undergraduates in the sample wanting to learn English, it is worth analyzing the motivational orientations in this regard. The desire to learn English could be attributed to the role English plays in the Sri Lankan society. The education system incorporated English as a subject in school curriculum after 1956. Since then, it has been taught in the domain of education as the second language. The Sri Lankan Constitution began to consider English as the link language from 1987 with its thirteenth amendment. Despite such recognitions given in the Constitution and in the school education, which have been static1 till date, English in the society continues to go beyond such identifications in terms of its use in various domains. For example, in tertiary education, there are special courses or course components where English is taught as "English for Specific Purposes", "English for Academic Purposes", "English for Business Purposes" and "English for Careers", so on and so forth. Such courses have come into the existence in the ELT domain upon the needs and demands of the society. Students who are affected by such demands are invariably motivated to learn English for different reasons.

1 From 1956, English is taught in Sinhala/Tamil medium schools as a second language. From 1987, it is the link language in Sri Lanka as per the Constitution. Thereafter, there have been no changes made in terms of the recognition of English both in the Constitution and teaching in schools.
Types of motivation for learning English

The analysis of results reveals that undergraduates have different motivational orientations to learn English.

Instrumental motivation

The most prominent motivational orientation among undergraduates is instrumental. The analysis reveals that the desire of the undergraduates to learn English for benefits is associated with the status English enjoys and the important role it plays in the society. Vocational bent in the degree programme gives a focus to students in terms of their goals of a career. Through the study of core-subjects of such a programme, students are trained to take up a specific career at the end of it. As a result, students' career orientation is specified and developed over the course of time. Therefore, they are conscious of the demands of their prospective employments. English being a decisive factor in obtaining an employment and furthering professional development in Sri Lanka today, students are aware of the employment sector's requirement of English language proficiency. Thus, undergraduates, whose core subject areas cater to developing vocational skills show more enthusiasm to study English for career purposes. Conversely, when the degree programme lacks vocational bent, and caters to subject knowledge rather than domain-specific professional skills, students do not have the opportunity to develop a focus of a career through their degree programmes. This in turn affects their English language learning negatively, as they are uncertain about a potential career and the specific language requirements of it.

The subjects taught for the Bachelor of Commerce and Management Degrees are specific to the trade field (A list of subjects is included in the Appendix F). The students studying in the Commerce subject stream are certain that they will procure a career that is related to trade and commerce. In contrast, the Arts undergraduates have less specificity in terms of careers in their study domain, for the subjects they learn may not be always career oriented. Moreover, they are explicitly non-interrelated (A list of subjects is given in the Appendix F). A Bachelors Degree in Arts
can channel students to a variety of fields in the job market. For example, generally Arts graduates tend to procure positions as schoolteachers, clerks in various governmental departments, etc. Such diverse possibilities may make them feel uncertain about their career orientation and therefore uncertain about the reason to learn English.

Another argument one can pose in relation to this point. If what undergraduates are made to learn in the English language classroom is attuned with their main subject areas, it may reinforce their focus in the English language programme. In addition, if the core-subjects have a career bent in them, a higher inclination to learn English as a supportive force for the core-subjects and therefore for the future career can be expected. Students' enthusiasm to learn English is scattered over a variety of reasons may mean that neither the English language teaching programme nor the core-subjects are able to give students a clear focus in terms of their future prospects. This poses a question: Is there a clash between the 'need of the day' (societal needs of its graduate output) and what undergraduates are made to learn?

The context of the university can act as a catalyst for students to develop university-specific reasons to learn English. For instance, the noticeable difference of reasons given for the desire to learn English between the informants of the University of Jaffna and those of the other two universities may be the outcome of such an influence: Students in Jaffna showed more inclination to learn English because of the international standing the language enjoys. This could be attributed to the propensity that the people who live in the war-stricken areas have, to migrate to other countries. Some of the responses included, “I want to learn English to go to other countries,” “English is essential to talk with people in other countries,” etc. The preference to learn English because of its international standing was prevalent among the informants of the other two universities as well, though they have given the first priority to career purposes. Therefore, students are motivated to learn English as it is one of the decisive factors to go abroad. The mass exodus that began to take place first in Jaffna in the mid 1990s is still taking place all over the country. As a result, one can safely say that the mentality of the new generation has
been geared to this direction increasingly over the years, causing the problem of brain-drain in the Sri Lankan society.

The instrumental motivation to learn English for personality and prestige values have been subdued among the undergraduates by their focus to find employment and/or to go abroad. A career, which gives an individual status provided he/she knows “his/her English” while in a high position, would increase personality and prestige. Though some decades ago knowing 'kaduar', (meaning, the sword- the term used for English to represent its power, as discussed by Thiru Kandiah in 1984) was looked with awe, it is now looked upon as a utilitarian language. Priorities and therefore attitudes have changed over the course of time among the undergraduate population that they first need a 'good job' with the help of English. So, the importance of English in the society remains not only a strong indicator of the class symbol but also one of the decisive factors to get into a higher class through a career. This can be considered as the formation of a new class; a class with English and sound educational qualifications.

The preference to learn English because of its potential utility may support the above view. Responses such as “We cannot do anything without English”, “English is extremely important for the future” reveal student awareness of the utilitarian potential of English. Students seem to envisage a better space in future, which can only be achieved with the help of English. One can say that the situation is unfortunate with only a few students wanting to learn English for knowledge and interest. However, realistically speaking, it shows that students have a practical view of what is required for achieving their goals.

*Instrumental + Resentment motivation*

Compulsion along with the need to learn English can result in undergraduates developing combination of motivational orientations. One such is instrumental + resentment motivation type. To put it in students’ own words, “Because our degree programme is in English we *have to* [italics added] learn English and as a result we will get good jobs”, “We *have to* [italic added] learn English and then only we will be
able to get benefits”, etc. Respondents whose medium of instruction for the degree programme is English showed this combined motivational orientation. Therefore, one may conclude that apart from the need to get benefits, students are driven to learn English notwithstanding their willingness when there is a compulsion from the system.

**Integrative motivation**

Languages are the binding factors of interpersonal relations. Students’ responses eliciting integrative motivation to learn English show that there is a common understanding of English as a binding factor in interpersonal relations among the undergraduates. This is predominantly obvious in the responses of the students from the University of Jaffna. The reason may be gauged at by observing their individual responses such as “I want to communicate with other ethnic groups”, “I want to communicate with people in my country”, “English helps in speaking with people of other languages”, etc that depict the need to have interpersonal relations with the other groups in the society. This can be attributed to a Sri Lanka-specific reason: Sri Lankans suffered due to the ethnic conflict over twenty five years. Therein, language has been considered as the factor that created the misunderstanding amongst different ethnic groups in the country. From the students’ responses what we can observe is that their desire to learn English is not to belong to the community of the target language: It is to be able to find a space which is common to all. In such a situation, the motivational orientation is not completely integrative. It has some traces of instrumentality (because the desire to obtain the benefit of being able to converse with people whose mother tongue is different) in it. Moreover, such a propensity does not indicate a desire to shift from one group to another. It shows the desire to be in many groups that exist in a common space. As the sample consists of 21-23/25 age-group students, this could be seen as a positive trend in resolving crisis from the view point of the new generation who, through their life time, have been exposed to the conflict situation in the country in varying degrees.
Just as Agnihotri and Khanna state about the motivational orientations of people in India for learning English, people in Sri Lanka too “learn English for variety of reasons but all of them have an unmistakable instrumental colour: Some are integratively instrumental, some instrumentally instrumental some manipulatively instrumental and some instrumental despite resentment” (1997, p.83). Moreover, different types of motivational orientations show a high degree of overlap with each other that make us name them in clusters such as instrumental + integrative, instrumental + resentment, etc.

A study carried out in relation to motivation types to acquire English in the Sri Lankan context reveals the presence of a “hugely complex” integrative motivation type among adult learners of English (Samarakkody, 2001, p.47). However, our findings stand quite contrastive to that: They show the most prevalent motivation type among the undergraduates to learn English has, as Agnihotri and Khanna state, “an unmistakable instrumental colour.” (1997, p.83). Herein, a distinction between the two studies in relation to the Sri Lankan context may give an explanation for the distinction: Samarakkody’s survey involved adult learners who have already acquired employment whereas our study is on undergraduates who are aspiring to secure positions in the employment world. If the motivational orientations to learn English are arranged in a pyramid similar to the needs hierarchy described by Maslow (1943), the second layer of the ‘motivation pyramid’ may be the ‘complex integrative type’ as found in Samarakkody’s study while the bottom is predominantly instrumental as found in ours.

Khanna and Agnihotri modified Gardener and Lambert’s (1972) motivational orientations as per the Indian context. They categorized learners’ motivational reasons as ‘complementary motivation’ and ‘supplementary motivation’. The former refers to the motivation to learn English in order to get better jobs or receive higher education, while the latter refers to the motivation to learn English for additive purposes, i.e. to read literature, to see English movies or just to feel superior, etc (As cited by Rahman, 2005).
According to the distinction made in Gardner and Lambert (1972), all motivational orientation to gain benefits have been clubbed together into one category as instrumental motivation. Such a broad nomenclature would be quite indistinct as we perceive it, for other varieties with subtle differences also exist within the instrumental category. Therefore, it may further be expanded in order to accommodate multiplicity. We suggest that instrumental motivation may be divided as Materialistic Instrumental and Non-Materialistic Instrumental motivation types: the desire to learn English considering the materialistic benefits like getting a good job, gaining other social benefits, etc. may be named as Materialistic Instrumental motivation; correspondingly, the drive to learn English for gaining knowledge, entertainment, etc. may be called as Non-Materialistic Instrumental motivation.

4.5.2. Students’ needs

Students’ preference to learn the speaking skill

Students’ desire to learn the speaking skill most shows the purpose behind their need to learn English: that is, to speak in English. Therefore, speaking seemed to have gained primacy over other skills as per their views. Students’ preference for speaking seems to be in accordance with the observation made by Weeks; “we are born to talk...we may think of ourselves as having been programmed to talk....communication is generally considered to be the primary purpose of language” (1979 p.1). Such a preference reveals students’ perceptions of the society’s expectations from them: Speaking is the skill, which is needed and through which English language abilities are measured in the society.

Students, whose degree programmes are still in the mother tongue exhibit more intensified need to learn to speak in English than those whose degree programmes are in English: this may be due to the feeling of deprivation that has engulfed them. Especially, those who study in metropolitan universities may feel, despite being part of the metropolitan university that they are deprived of certain benefits that the others around them (i.e. who study in the English medium) enjoy by means of using English.
The preferences of undergraduates mainly for developing the speaking skill may be because avenues to learn speaking is lacking in the current programme. The tables below (Table 4.11 and 4.12) show the number of speech activities in the current ELT programmes in some universities.

Table 4.11: Number of speaking activities in the lesson materials – Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Number of speaking activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level I</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level II</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level III</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level IV</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level V</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Students are placed in levels on the basis of marks they obtain at the placement test conducted at the entry point to the university.

For the levels II and III, there are no speech activities in the lesson materials. And in level I, there are five speech activities. The course runs for one year. Considering the duration of the programme, a student who follows the programme at level I has only five speech activities whereas the students who are in level II and III do not have speech activities unless teacher decides to include them as supplementary activities.

Table 4.12: Number of speaking activities in the lesson materials – University of Jaffna

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Number of modules for speaking activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills development Course</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English for general purposes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English for specific purposes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here again, for some programmes that runs for a year, there are no speech activities available.
Student needs and contextual variations of universities

Students' needs to learn speaking seem to be university specific: the preference to learn the speaking skill by viewing it as a societal requirement is prevalent most among the undergraduates of both the University of Colombo and the Sabaragamuwa University. This could be attributed to their continuous interactions with the society outside (see university sub-culture) which is the commercialized business world. In comparison, the students of the University of Jaffna are confined to Jaffna Peninsula. As a result, they may not experience similar interactions. In addition, the need of the informants of the universities that are in metropolis to speak in English as a means of improving personality and confidence could also be attributed to their contacts with the competitive commercial world. Therefore, student needs and purposes for developing English speech seem to vary depending on the context where the university is located.

The main function of language is communication. The form of communication and the purpose behind it may vary depending on individual and group needs. Students' needs of having and maintaining interpersonal relations via English are prominent among the groups who have comparatively less contacts with the rest of the country. Students in the universities that are located in the war-stricken areas consider English as the mediator for interpersonal relations among different ethnic groups.

The emphasis given by the students to the speaking skill appear to suggest lack of importance of the other three skills. This could be attributed to,

1. students' unawareness of the importance of the other skills in mastering a language. The mastery of both receptive and productive skills are vital to achieve communicative competence.

2. the emphasis given to the other three skills in the current English language programme could be either an over-emphasis or under-emphasis. Over-emphasis may result in students losing interest while under-emphasis may
pave way to students having lack of awareness of the importance of the skills.

3. the lack of emphasis given to speaking in the current programme.

4. the uninteresting presentation of the other three skills in the undergraduate classroom. Such a situation may occur due to the lack of relevance and language diversity, in addition to ineffective teaching methods.

In regard to the points 2 and 3, one can see an over-emphasis of reading skills and under-emphasis of speech activities in the lesson materials that are in use in some universities. The table below (Table 4.13) shows the number of component covered in some of the universities.

Table 4.13: Number of activities for each skill in the lesson materials – Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill/Component</th>
<th>Level I</th>
<th>Level II</th>
<th>Level III</th>
<th>Level IV(^1)</th>
<th>Level V(^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1(^3)</td>
<td>1(^4)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9 + 2(^5)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is an over emphasis on the reading skill when compared with the emphasis given to the speaking skill in all the five levels. It is clear that there is an under emphasis for the speaking skill. In addition, other two skills, viz. listening and writing are also under-emphasized as compared to reading.

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1 Level 4 has two more modules on ‘Old Age’ and ‘War’ that are mainly on reading comprehension. Due to unavailability, they could not be analyzed.

2 Level V has one module with 5 reading components on writing. In addition, it has a module on technique on writing which could be considered as a reading module which has 8 reading exercises. Also it has on module on seminar skills with reading passages and 2 speech activities.

3 There is one module for listening which has 19 listening activities.

4 Level IV has one listening module (due to unavailability of it, it could not be analyzed).

5 Level IV has two more modules on reading comprehension (due to unavailability, they could not be analyzed) in addition to the 9 reading comprehension passages in the other modules.
Considering the fact that the programme aims at developing communicative competence in students while catering to teaching English for general purposes, one can observe an imbalance of the distribution of skills.

Table 4.14: Number of modules and units for each skill – Faculty of Management, University of Jaffna.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill/Component</th>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>Second Year</th>
<th>Third Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>4*1=4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>2*3=6</td>
<td>2*3=6</td>
<td>2*3=6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>4*3=12</td>
<td>4*3=12</td>
<td>4*3=12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4*3=12</td>
<td>4*4=16</td>
<td>4*4=14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table (4.14) shows the number of modules multiplied by the number of units and the total no. of units (hours)\(^1\).

As compared to reading and writing, the emphasis given to listening and speaking are less. Therefore, the less emphasis given to speech activities in the materials in use and the over-emphasis for reading and writing may account for the primacy the students have given to speech. In addition, the students may have given primacy to speaking in English as they are over conscious of the importance of speaking due to:

1. the notions they have of speaking – such as knowing to speak is knowing the language

2. the positive response and attitude to speakers of English that is prevalent in the society

The discussion on undergraduates’ needs and motivation to learn English reveals that their desire and needs to learn English is still trapped in the nomenclature identified by Fernando (1991). Also it falls within the classification of the needs of

\(^1\) Information provided by the Head, ELTC, University of Jaffna
G.C.E. (A/L) students as identified by Wijeratne (2008). However, what has changed over time and in generations are the intensity of the needs and the priority of needs in various domains: The intensity to learn speech has surpassed the needs to learn other skills; the need of English for career purposes has overtaken the need of it for others such as social and communication purposes.

4.5.3. Students’ attitudes

Attitudes towards content of the syllabus/lesson materials

Grammar component

The grammar component that is present in the lesson materials seemingly derives different opinions among undergraduates. It is however intriguing to see that while some undergraduates prefer grammar most, nearly equal proportion of undergraduate population prefers it the least. The lesson materials show that the presentation of grammar in them is predominantly explicit and requires deductive teaching. [See the excerpts (a), (b), and (c) given below.] The opposite views of the students on grammar suggest two points: one, as adult learners, they may prefer when they know what they are learning; two, some prefer absorbing grammar as part of the communicative process without having an explicit emphasis given to it. In other words, they may like the implicit and inductive way of absorbing the knowledge of grammar. Such differences in perception of grammar component may be because “Adults have already developed organized ways of focusing on, taking in and processing information…” (Brundage and Mackeracher, 1980). Therefore, some undergraduates may find the way grammar is taught in tune with their “organized” ways of focusing while some have opposite views.
1.3.1 VERBS

Your teacher will help you to recognize VERBS. Verbs describe actions or states. These actions or states exist in time. The time element of a verb is called TENSE. The main verb in a sentence appears in a specific tense. There are many tenses in English. Here is some information about:

The Present Simple Tense

We use the Present Simple Tense:

(a) To refer to habitual actions.
   e.g. Bandu works everyday. Kira goes to the temple every Poya.

(b) To indicate possession.
   e.g. Kira has an elder brother.

(c) To describe emotions.
   e.g. I love the sun.

Look at the table given below to see how this tense is used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/She/It</td>
<td>walks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/She</td>
<td>reads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>read</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Proficiency Course in English – Level I Module 1
Exercise 4

Do Exercise 1 (Grammar and Sentence Structure) of "The Crow and the Raven" in Unit 2: Fables and Folk Tales of Explorations.

Exercise 5

Some words do not have a plural form. Decide which amongst the following have no plural. Turn the others into the plural.

- sea
- sand
- advice
- steam
- pineapple
- sugar
- diesel
- water
- stuff
- stream
- salt
- bread
- food
- pen
- oil
- country
- rule
- blood
- magic
- book
- rule

Exercise 6

Can you give a reason why some of these nouns could not be made plural? Were there any words over which there was some uncertainty?

Try using these words in sentences. Are there any differences in meaning or style between them and the plural? You will find that the use of the singular or plural form of a word depends on the sense of the word.

We saw the use of the present continuous tense for describing an action that continues at the time of speaking. We can similarly use the past continuous tense for describing an action that was continuous at a point of time in the past.

I was running.
You were talking to her.

The past continuous tense consists of the past form of be (namely, was/were) and the main verb in the -ing form.

Exercise 1

Use the verbs given below and make sentences based on the pictures in this book with six of these verbs in the past continuous tense.

- know
- jump
- drink
- hide
- lead
- talk
- hold
- dance
- wait
- pull

Which among these would not be appropriate to be put in the continuous? The frog was jumping out of the pond would not, for instance, be sensible, because the action of jumping is generally completed almost as soon as it is begun: i.e. it is not usually a continuous action.

The perfect continuous tense is formed by the perfect of be, namely have/has been, together with the present participle. Note that, as with all the helping verbs you have seen so far, - do/does/did, am/are/was/were etc. - the helping verb changes in compound tenses of verbs (that is, when more than one verb is required), but the main verb does not change. So whatever form goes with the helping verb in the present tense is used in the past tense also (i.e. for continuous tenses the present participle, for perfect tenses the past participle). When there are two or more helping verbs, it is the first that changes, not others (i.e. for the perfect continuous tense you have the required form of have – that is, have or has or had - followed by been followed by the present participle).

You will notice, as you read, that the perfect continuous tense is used very rarely. Can you think of instances where it would be useful?

The Past Continuous Tense is more common.

As the above excerpts clearly demonstrate the grammar points, needless to say that teaching them as discrete points is inevitable. And the exercises that accompany them involve the application of learnt rules of grammar in the lesson (E.g. the second part of the Exercise 6 in the excerpt b). Therefore, teaching them deductively is the only option that is left to the teacher. Such a deductive delivery of grammar rules may appeal to some undergraduates while it might avert some others from the lesson. This accounts for the fact that learners have different learning styles and strategies and learners prefer when lessons are presented accordingly (Wallace, 1991). Some may like traditional methods while some may prefer innovative learning strategies. Considering some of the responses such as, “They (grammar) are excessive, complex and lessons are boring”, we counted the number of grammar items presented in some of the lesson materials in use.

Table 4.15: Number of grammar items in the lesson materials – Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Number of Grammar items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level I</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level II</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level III</td>
<td>1¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level IV</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level V</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table (4.15) shows that for some levels, grammar is heavily emphasized whereas for some others, it is not.

In the Faculty of Arts, Sabaragamuwa University, the prescribed “Handbook of English Grammar” has three parts within which 53 grammar items are covered².

¹ There is one module for punctuation which describes the functions of punctuation marks. But there are no exercises.
The respondents are reluctant to add grammar in to their lesson materials if they were given a chance. This may mean that the grammar that is already included in the materials is quantitatively sufficient (or excessive). What the students require is the qualitative improvement of its delivery in teaching.

The Communicative Approach to language teaching does not encourage presenting grammar explicitly. Neither does it profess teaching grammar deductively. Therefore, considering the student responses regarding grammar, the inclusion of it as a separate component in the lesson materials and thereby teaching it deductively should be examined against the theories of language teaching, which underpin the current lesson materials.

There is an important point to make in regard to the current lesson materials. They have seen modifications after their initial preparations. For instance, the syllabus of the English as a Second Language for the Faculty of Management, University of Jaffna claims the title of a “Revised Syllabus”. From the personal experience, we are aware that modifications have been carried out in the lesson materials in the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo. The lesson materials, which were prepared in the 1990s with “general principles” that “...have wider application to Arts students in other universities, as well as to students of other faculties...” (Fernando 1991:107) were grounded in the theoretical perspective explained by Fernando (1991 – See the Literature Review section). The emphasis that is given to the grammar component should be examined against the theoretical assumptions that underpin the modified lesson materials.

**Reading comprehension**

Reading comprehension was the centre of focus in undergraduate English language teaching in the 1980s (Wickramasuriya, 1981). It was hoped then that students would require academic reading skills developed in them to read and understand the reading materials in English pertinent to their core-subject areas. However, a paradigm shift in terms of the focus of the entire discourse of undergraduate
English language teaching was witnessed in later years. This is because the needs of undergraduates to learn English were perceived differently.

It is in the context of (these) deferred needs that the necessity to cater maximally to immediate needs becomes apparent. Though undergraduates can and do 'get by' without meeting immediate needs for English, their deferred needs, which are more specific and urgent, become almost impossible to meet if the earlier hurdle has not been got over (Fernando 1991, p.112)

[Herein, what Fernando refers to as immediate needs are students' academic needs. Deferred needs are the societal (employment) needs.]

The current undergraduate English language programme has taken the features of Communicative language teaching in terms of its underpinning theories. (All the other approaches that came into being and gained currency in the ELT domain later have communicative basis underlying them. This has been discussed in the Literature Review). Therefore, reading comprehension should be, in the ideal Communicative syllabus, only part of the whole. However, students' least preference for the existing reading comprehension lessons reveals that they are unwelcome in the language classroom. The reasons given were such that they were "long, complex and of no practical relevance". Also students find difficulties in coping with their limited knowledge of "poor vocabulary" with "boring" passages. Such remarks make lesson planners rethink about the purpose of having reading comprehension lessons in teaching. Quite interestingly, no respondent showed willingness to add reading comprehension in to the existing lesson materials. Considering the above, we can assume the following in relation to the reading comprehension lessons in the lesson materials in use:

1. Reading comprehension lessons have no practical relevance to the undergraduates.
2. They do not inspire interest in undergraduates considering their age, background, etc.

3. They are either too difficult or not challenging enough to motivate undergraduates.

4. There is excessive use of reading comprehension in materials.

5. The teaching methods that are used to teach reading comprehension lessons do not comply with the modern standard strategies of teaching them.

In relation to the point 4, we saw that reading skills are given more emphasis when compared to the other skills and components in the lesson materials in some universities (See Tables 4.13 and 4.14).

**Speech activities**

Undergraduates view speech activities as a component, which is able to develop many positive attributes in them. Some of such traits include confidence, public speaking ability, practical language knowledge, logical thinking, free expression, etc. Students' positive attitudes towards speech are affirmed by their preference to add speech activities in to the lesson materials, if they were given a chance. With the primacy they have given to speaking, it is obvious that what they mean by learning a language is learning how to speak in that language and vice versa. From the kind of positive traits they associate with the ability to speak in English, we can state that undergraduates' desire to learn English is concentrated in mastering speaking. How does this affect undergraduate ELT? What can we infer from such an influx of desire to learn speech? Some of these 'positive traits' have an emotive value while some others have a social value. For instance, confidence building, free expression, etc are related to students' emotions while public speaking ability, application of practical language knowledge, etc have societal facets. Thus, undergraduates seem to 'request' from the English language classroom that their confidence be built so

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1 The 4 steps of reading as recognized by Room to Read Organization as well as other UN organizations: 1. The teacher reads loudly, 2. The learner follows (joint reading), 3. The learner reads alone loudly and 4. The learner reads silently and answers questions.
that they can use language in the society as and when required. Speech, unlike other
skills involves face-to-face communication with an interlocutor. It requires not only
knowledge of language and of its use, but a practical application at the individual
level. Undergraduates, after having studied English as a subject for about 10 years
during their school career, enter the university with some knowledge of English.
This knowledge can vary depending on the kind of school and home background.
However, it is known that during the school career, English is taught as a subject
targeting the G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) examinations where students' English
language ability is tested via written mode. Students may have not been
given adequate opportunity to use the knowledge they possess of English language
and of its practical use for speech. As a result, there may have been no chances for
them to build their confidence by engaging in speech during their school career. It
seems to us, that undergraduates have seen glimpses of confidence in themselves
through the speech activities they took part in, in the undergraduate classroom.
Notwithstanding the speech activities are few, they want to empower themselves
with confidence by engaging in more speech activities. Their preference to add
more speech activities heralds the sign of their eagerness in this regard. Within the
territory of the language classroom, they may find a 'safe zone' to put their learnt
knowledge of English over the years, to practice on trial basis. So that confidence is
gradually built within the walls of the English language classroom for them to use
the language outside subsequently.

The need for more speech activities also shows what is lacking in the language
classroom. As the lesson materials in use reveal, speech activities are not given
prominence in the current programme. The less number of speech activities as
brought to light before, may act as a hindrance for students to engage in their much
"sought after" speaking. All in all, undergraduates have revealed their desire and
readiness to learn speech in their language classroom with greater frequency and
intensity than they have for the other three skills.
**Writing activities**

While speech has become dominant in the desired skill/s category in the undergraduate English language-learning scenario, writing activities have gained a less significant place. The undergraduates perceive the current writing activities as "complex and boring". Moreover, "There are too many of them," "They are not relevant", etc. Such responses throw light into the kind of writing activities that are in use, their frequency and the strategies that are used to teach them. This may have resulted in students giving one of the last priorities for writing activities to be included in the lesson materials. Lack of variety, over-use of writing activities and their too challenging nature for students’ proficiency levels could be the reasons for students to give the aforementioned reasons. Therefore, there is the need to reflect upon the writing activities in use in terms of variety, emphasis and nature. The number of writing activities available in the lesson materials in use in some universities shows that there is an over-emphasis for writing activities as compared to listening and speaking. At the same time, undergraduates prefer writing activities when there is a relationship with their core-subject areas. There is a positive influence of core-subject-related writing activities on students. Such insights therefore, bring out the need for reflection from the part of the teachers as lesson material developers on the kind of writing activities and the stress given to them in the current programme.

**Listening activities**

Low preference for listening activities amongst undergraduates may result from less importance given to them in the undergraduate language classroom. Some of the reasons the students have given are that the time allotted for listening is not sufficient and students feel "listening is of no much importance." This sheds light on the emphasis given for the component and the kind of listening activities in the current ELT programmes. This has been crosschecked in terms of what students like to add in modules: therein, they show their least preference for listening activities. The existing lesson materials show that listening activities have not been
given much space in them accounting for students’ unawareness of the importance of them (Tables 4.13 and 4.14). Without giving due emphasis for listening as a receptive skill in a language syllabus, it is our opinion that expecting students to master the productive skills would not be meaningful.

**Literature**

Students’ preference for literature to be added in to the lesson materials heralds a positive sign in teaching English language to undergraduates. The holistic view in a curriculum that encompasses humanistically-oriented philosophy of education stresses the making of the total person through the teaching-learning process (Dubin and Olshtain 1987, p.113). Considering the students’ liking for the component, literature could be used as a means to impart knowledge, values and morals as well as to teach language effectively to reach the goals of the programme. The various aspects of the use of literature in the language classroom are further discussed in the following section.

**Attitudes towards the culture the English language represents in the classroom**

The culture English language represents in the undergraduate classroom can come via the content of the lesson materials and through teachers of English. Teachers may bring some elements of a culture that may be related to the English language they teach by means of their mannerisms, certain dress codes, behavior patterns, etc. However, such elements may not necessarily represent the culture related to the English language, for there could be a tendency for teachers to represent their own individuality than the English culture (which may be different from or similar to English culture). Yet, there is a propensity for students to associate and identify their teachers’ aforementioned patterns with the English culture, at least the local variety of it. Such identification may extend to students forming, reinforcing and changing attitudes towards English. However, a more reliable sign of the culture of
English language can be represented in the undergraduate English language classroom via the cultural content of the syllabus.

Literature has been recognized as an influential tool to teach English language in the communicative classroom. In addition, it was assumed, in this study, that how students view literature in English would be a fair representation of their perception of the culture the English language represents in the classroom. The results of the queries made in order to see how students received literature in their English language lessons reveal that there is a positive attitude to the variety of the English culture that is represented in the classroom. The liking to learn English literature among the undergraduates is mainly for language improvement. In addition, they show varying preferences for local and foreign literature in English.

*The use of the Language model in teaching literature*

The reasons the undergraduates have given for their preference to learn English poems seem to fall mainly within the scope of the Language model and Personal growth model, two of the three models (the other being the Cultural model) identified by Cater and Long (1991) in teaching literature. The Language model aims at developing language by exploiting the literary text to teach vocabulary or structures or language manipulation. The aim of the Cultural model is to give students an understanding of cultures and ideologies other than their own. The Personal Growth model aims to bridge the other two models by making students critically aware of the literary experience (Zafeirdou, 2001).

Most of the students who major in English have the background of studying English literature at the G.G.E. (A/L). They have a higher level of English language proficiency than other students who follow other Arts subjects in the university. Even when G.C.E. (A/L) English is not a prerequisite for studying English literature in the university, only those who have a higher proficiency in English opt for majoring English literature or offering it as one of the core subjects in the university. Degree programme in English (both general and special) are
predominantly literature biased and language aspects such as grammar are given less emphasis due to the general understanding of the high English language proficiency of the students who opt for a degree in English. Given such a scenario, in the Sri Lankan context, teaching literature in the undergraduate English literature classroom differs from teaching literature in the undergraduate English language classroom. This is due to many reasons: as stated before, one, it is assumed that the former has students with relatively better English language proficiency. Two, there would be differences in terms of the focus given to the aforementioned three models: For instance, teaching literature in the literature classroom may draw heavily on the Cultural model and the Personal growth model whereas in the language classroom, it may be mainly on the Language model even without teachers being aware of it. This is because the effect of using the other two models may depend upon the use of the Language model in the language classroom. In other words, without fulfilling the aim of making students understand the language used in the selected literary item, mainly the lexicon and the syntax, it would be nearly impossible to achieve the purposes of using the other two models: to make students appreciate cultures other than their own and to enable them personally engage with the literary text for enjoyment, for criticism, etc. We draw this conclusion by observing the main reasons for the undergraduates' preferences to learn literature (poems) in the language classroom: they are, “English poems would help improve English” and “English poems could denote deep meaning with fewer words”.

Undergraduates' intentions of learning literature in the two contexts also differ. In the literature classroom, students may not necessarily expect to improve their language knowledge through learning literature. Their main objectives are to appreciate the literary work in terms of themes, ideologies of other cultures, etc and to have a personal engagement with the text. The course objectives support this view. For instance, the introduction to the selection of English Poetry for the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination states the following:
The study of literature gives us the opportunity, therefore, to feel life in greater variety than we can reach by ourselves, and to feel it with greater intensity and depth of understanding. (p. vii)

The aim of teaching literature in the language classroom may be the same. As Wijeratne stated, by teaching literature in the multicultural classroom in ESL/EFL context, it is aimed to raise students' consciousness about multiculturalism or to build cross-cultural understanding (2006). In the language classroom however, students want to learn literature predominantly to “improve” their English though they like to learn it for pleasure, cross-cultural experience and creative influences as by-effects. For instance, most of the responses conveying the notion, “English poems could denote deep meaning with fewer words” reveal students' belief that there is a scope of learning not only the English language but also the way to use it in an economical way through learning English literature.

At the same time, the aim of using the Cultural model in the language classroom could be made effective in catering to an aspect, which has been neglected in undergraduate level of teaching. At the undergraduate level, less focus is given to individual differences in terms of student interests, and least to their abilities. The undergraduates' expectations to have cross-cultural experience and creative influences show the importance of offering them a variety of experiences. Such versatile experiences can cater to individual interests and abilities in the undergraduate classroom to motivate them to learn the language. The total negative responses, that is, the reasons for not desiring to learn English poems are few in number and with reasons such as lack of training to read English poems and due to comprehension difficulties. Such reasons do not show an exact dislike to learn English poems provided the English language classroom could support them in overcoming the above problems.

However, a close scrutiny of the lesson materials in use reveals that poems are not included in the materials in some universities. For instance, in the University of
Jaffna, literature is not taught in the general English language classroom. In the Sabaragamuwa University the prescribed book, “Explorations” for the undergraduate English language teaching does not have poems in it. In some others, the poems that have been included are few in number (Table 4.16).

Table 4.16: Number of poems in the lesson materials – Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Number of poems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level I</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level II</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level III</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level IV</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level V</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Areas of convergence and divergence

The areas of confluence and divergence of cultures represented in the language classroom are important in teaching a language to students. This is because of the centrality of student attitudes towards the culture of the language that is present in the classroom in forming and shaping of attitudes to the discourse of language teaching and learning. In the case of English language teaching, it is important to see the areas of congruence and divergence in terms of the two cultures namely, the English culture (or the local variety of it) represented by the content and the student culture, predominantly local, in order to utilize the effect of them in the English language classroom. The first step of such an endeavour would be to identify the areas of convergence and divergence. Converging areas are useful to maximize the use of cultural aspects to teach English and diverging domains could be harnessed through building bridges. Literature being a strong representative of culture, can be used to identify the areas of conjoins and diverse, and to use them for the enhancement of English language teaching and learning. Students’ attitudes

1 Information provided by the Head, ELTC, University of Jaffna
to literature are one trustworthy scale to measure the intensity and the degree of confluence and divergence of cultures within the classroom. Contextual familiarity as the main criterion for the undergraduates to select a novel in English by a local writer, an area of divergence between local and English cultures has been recognized. This identification is further supported by the students’ dislike to read English novels by a foreign writer because of contextual unfamiliarity and stylistic differences. The extract of a poem written by an undergraduate of the Department of English, University of Kelaniya, quoted by Gunasekara (2008) perhaps reveals this concept of divergence best:

Don’t talk to me about John Keats,
His Grecian urns and immortal men.
Don’t talk to me about Romantics and Elizabethans.
I do not know them not being a great fan of literature.
And don’t talk to me about culture in general;
Where I do not belong.
I’m but an alienated subject of a distant land and culture.…. (2008, p.108)

Considering the content of the poem, that is about John Keats, Elizabethan works, etc, it seems that the undergraduate (Premathunge, 2006 quoted by Gunasekara, 2008) who offered English literature as a core subject in the degree programme has written it as such components are taught in English literature in the degree course. At the same time, the obvious good command of language used in the poem also supports this view. The protagonist in the poem is confused and the poem, as Gunasekara points out “symbolizes the discomfort of the postcolonial in a world of conflicting values compounded by the role of English in globalization” (p.109). This reveals that notwithstanding the higher level of English language proficiency of the poet than the average undergraduate who follows other subject streams and who participate in general English language classes, the poet persona feels the cultural alienation with the content that is being taught. So, the condition of the
average student, in this regard, would be more daunting. Similarly, Ramanathan (2005) views such a situation as “cultural dissonance” where “…students believed that…certain experiences and themes were too far removed from their everyday realities or could not be culturally transposed into local themes” (p.106). Therefore, one way of building bridges between cultures would be by selecting the content to teach English language through literature using contextual familiarity as a parameter.

As it appears, students identify simplicity and easy comprehensibility of language with the local writer’s work. This throws light into other possible ways of building bridges between cultures via literary works: Herein, simplicity of language and easy comprehensibility of texts as criteria for selecting foreign literature to teach in the undergraduate language classroom can be used. If we compare the undergraduates’ general preference to read novels in English with their overall dislike to reading comprehension activities, which was brought to light earlier, narrations of varying sort can be made use of in improving reading.

Despite the preference to read novels in English, the contextual familiarity may not be positively influential always as some students show their dislike to read novels in English that deal with local issues. This, a recognized area of divergence within contextual familiarity needs to be further analyzed. Herein, there is a sign of an inner clash in the minds of students of local context and the foreign language through which it has been presented. This evidences that however much English has crept into the lives of students, still a certain segment of the mentality does not permit them to take English language as their own. Why has it not become close to undergraduates in spite of the recognized importance of it in the society today? Is it because English has gained importance only in certain domains? And in certain other domains such as literary appreciations, spending leisure– the quarters that involve emotions, feelings– English is not taken as a close entity, but foreign?
Students' perceptions of the use of mother tongue in the English language classroom

Different approaches to teaching English as a second language have given recommendations for the use of MT in varying degrees in the Teaching English as a Second Language classroom. While a method like the Grammar Translation promoted the use of MT in teaching English, the Direct Method declined its use completely. In the Direct method, English is taught only in English and MT has absolutely no place. Over the history of the use of various methods and approaches to teach English, the place and the utilization of MT in the English language classroom faced treatments of varying degrees. In the Communicative Approach, MT is recommended to use only when necessary; for instance, to describe an abstract concept. Though the views of experts and the recommendations of teaching approaches may claim as above, in the realities of the undergraduate English language classroom, our students may be totally demotivated or disheartened due to the teacher's use (or non use) of the MT. The students' responses reveal that while some teachers use MT as Communicative Approach professes, some still adhere to the Grammar Translation Method's advocacy with more use of MT in the classroom.

Exposure enhances language acquisition. The undergraduates perceive that the use of English improves English and the use of MT impedes English language improvement. Such views mainly come from the students who study in the medium of English. This may be because they experience the advantages of being more exposed to English than those who study in the mother tongue. As a result, they may prefer non-use of MT in their general English classes. Such views validate the point made by some academics that the opportunity of the average Sri Lankan learner to be exposed to English is limited to the exposure provided by the English language classroom. Therein, the chief model of English language is provided by the teacher (Wickramasuriya, 1981, p.37). This seemed to be even more relevant to certain Faculties where English medium instruction is made available, yet operate
under great constraints: with a dearth of teachers who are able to teach core subjects in English. As one university teacher of English observes:

Once I listened to a lecture in English given by a lecturer in the Faculty of Management. He was fully qualified in his subject, but the way he communicated, delivered the lecture was full of mistakes. This is our second language and people are not perfect. Considering all that I would say it was a very bad lecture and I could not understand what he was telling. I don’t know exactly how the students accepted it or whether they understood anything at all. For me it was a total flop.¹

This evidences that the opportunity students get to be exposed to English is limited even when the medium of instruction is English. As stated earlier, the teacher of English provides the main model for them to acquire English. Therefore, teachers’ extensive use of mother tongue in teaching English as reported by students in some universities is highly questionable as such a situation restricts students’ exposure to English.

Students’ attitudes towards assessment practices

The undergraduates state that the current testing practices are adequate. Those who are of the view that testing requires changes have prioritized testing for speech. This highlights the need of students to develop their English speaking competence. The emphasis for testing speech has been reiterated throughout the student responses. In addition, students’ emphasis for testing all four skills, variety and more frequency may have been due to lack of them in the testing system. Moreover, the tests that are in practice seem to be less challenging in terms of their compulsion as well as content quality. The students who state that the testing requires changes suggest that teaching should be changed first and testing should follow it. The needs of the students for changes in testing could be categorized into two main areas in terms of temporality: Some are for their immediate use and some

¹ Personal interview held on 05.07.2007 at the ELTU, University of Colombo
others are for them to use later in life. For instance, testing mechanisms for different ability groups, and both language specific and main subject specific testing system belong to the former category (for immediate use), while recognition for the degree, and “to face challenges in careers” may come under the latter (to use later in life).

Students’ attitudes towards the English language programme

The overall picture of the current English language teaching programmes in the universities seem bleak with the majority of the undergraduate responses falling under the ‘negative’ category. Some of the main reasons include the following: ‘monotonous, student unfriendly materials and teaching’; ‘there is less space for speech development’; ‘the course is examination oriented’; and ‘it is inefficient, impractical and non-systematic’. These shed light into many aspects of the kind of teaching-learning process that is taking place inside the English language classroom. Among them, the learning materials that are being used, the teaching methods that are in practice and the overall propensity towards which the programme is geared may be reflected through such student responses.

Monotony in the language classroom can be attributed to two main reasons: less motivating materials and failures in teaching methods. Either the kind of materials that are being used lack variety or the teaching methods that are used by teachers are monotonous in spite of having variety in materials. It is possible that both have inefficiencies. This is a serious issue as the totality of any teaching programme depends on these two main aspects: Failure in one may result in the handicap of the other. If both are failures as per students’ perceptions, needless to say that student faith is not bestowed upon the system. High student absenteeism, as viewed by a senior member of the teaching staff of the University of Colombo, is a problem for the smooth functioning of the English language programme. Especially where student attendance is not compulsory, less stimulating English language teaching-learning process itself may make students less motivated to attend the English language classes.
Some experts believe that over dependency of teaching materials should be avoided in teaching a language. As Hall and Hewings see it,

There has been a tendency for overreliance on classroom teaching materials, with unrealistic expectations made of them. However, the effectiveness of teaching and learning is not explained solely in terms of how good or bad the learning materials are. (2001, p.256)

Nonetheless, in the context of Sri Lankan undergraduate English language programmes, lesson materials and teachers are the main resources. In such a situation, we believe that, well-instructed teaching materials would avoid possible discrepancies in teaching. Herein, well-instructed teaching materials need explanation. The inclusion of guidelines for both teachers and students in the same material would make teaching effective in situations where the teaching materials comprise the totality of resources in teaching. This will make both teachers and students responsible for their roles: teachers will know what students expect of them in teaching a particular lesson while students will be aware of the extent of teacher intervention.

The undergraduates have viewed the examination orientedness of the course as one of the reasons for them to have negative attitudes towards the English language programme. The students continuously reiterated their need for improving the speaking skill. When the course is non-credited and if the examination does not have a sound speech-testing component, as viewed by the students, they may not find the examination as important. This is because it fails to add any value to the degree certificate or to the practical life situations. If the course itself tries to cater to the examination, which has less or no space for testing speech abilities, it is inevitable that students give less importance to the programme.

The positive attitudes of the undergraduates towards the programme do not reveal much as the responses are “fair,” “good,” or “excellent” and are not elaborative. The moderate attitude of the students towards the course emphasizes that the
 programme should improve in terms of more time allotment for teaching along with improvement in other areas such as teaching and materials.

Apart from the above, students view some administrative policies as negatively reinforcing the English language teaching-learning in universities. For instance, the non-credited nature of courses, non-compulsion for student attendance, etc are some of them (In the Sabaragamuwa University, 80% of attendance requirement has been lifted). Such administrative decisions may hinder the upliftment of the English language programmes.

**Students’ opinions regarding medium of instruction**

Medium of instruction in education has been a much debated issue in the Sri Lankan education context in the recent past. The medium of instruction underwent changes even during the colonial period from mother tongue to English and then after independence, in 1956, to mother tongue again. In this postmodern era, the politicians still have been toying with the issue of changing the medium into English in the entire education system with incremental use of it in the school education. Educationists have been trying to strike a balance between the needs of the society and the healthy practice for students in terms of psychological aspect of language learning. Parents are concerned about the best way to make their children suitable for the future, while students are torn between and among all the above. In the higher education sector too, the scenario has been far from complications with some serious issues for educationists and administrators to ponder. Though the majority of the Faculties have English medium instruction in all the universities, some of them have Arts Faculties with mother tongue instruction. The university system in Sri Lanka, with considerable autonomy to decide on the language issues such as medium of instruction at the undergraduate level (See the Chapter on Language Policy), the administrators have been in a dilemma for a complete switch over to English medium in the Faculties that do not have English medium instruction. This dilemma is due to two main reasons: most of the Arts undergraduates are from rural backgrounds with poor exposure to English. There is
an anxiety that students’ degree will suffer because of their lack of English language proficiency. The other reason is the lack of able staff to teach core-subjects in English.

How do the students view English medium instruction at the undergraduate level? Do they also face the dilemma that the administrators face? Or are they willing to take the potential risks? The findings of the study, quite interestingly, reveal that despite all the aforementioned constraints and possible risks attached to it, students prefer English medium instruction. The groups that already have English medium instruction seem to reap the benefits of using English as the medium thus want continuation of it. At the same time, they feel more strongly about the potential utility of English than those who do not have English medium instruction. The preference of the groups, which do not use English as the medium, to a complete shift over to English medium implies that despite all the fears and dilemmas attached to the English as the medium, the need for it amongst the student community is very strong. Moreover, their perception of English medium as an enhancement for learning English may be stronger than their fears of it.

However, despite their preference for English medium instruction, a small minority of undergraduates whose current medium is mother tongue show an apprehension for English medium by preferring both English and mother tongue as media of instruction and some students for mother tongue instruction only. Apart from the reasons they expressed (such as importance of the MT and language balance), such preferences can be interpreted in the context of the awareness of the constraints encountered by sister universities that have already switched over to English medium. Some of such problems are listed below:

1. High degree of student drop-outs - many students come from rural area schools that do not have sufficient facilities to learn English, and as a result, there are records of large-scale undergraduate drop-outs.
2. Student complaints about not being able to grasp the subject matter taught in English.

3. The risk of having the degree depends not on the knowledge of students’ chosen field, but on English language proficiency

4. Lack of able staff to teach a variety of subjects in English

5. Because of large student population individual attention cannot be expected (there have been instances where some universities had to intake two batches at a time)

6. Reports on students committing suicide because of the inability to cope with the demands of English language proficiency required to follow a degree in the medium of English

Some of the concerns mentioned above are at the administration level. Nevertheless, the student community is aware of them. This may make the students who do not have English as the medium of instruction feel apprehensive about a complete shift over to English medium despite their preference for it. This may be substantiated by their preference for English medium instruction with additional support such as the use of mother tongue where necessary. They seemed to view the use of mother tongue along with English as a viable solution to problems associated with lack of proficiency in English to follow the degree programme in English.

4.6. Conclusion

This Chapter focuses on students’ perceptions regarding the current English language teaching programmes in the Sri Lankan universities. The undergraduates’ opinions in relation to lesson materials, their content, teaching-learning practices, testing methods and medium of instruction are analyzed in order to understand
students' needs, motivation to learn English and their attitudes towards English and the culture it represents in their language classroom.

The motivation of the undergraduates to learn English is mainly for instrumental purposes. However, some students show integrative, instrumental + integrative and instrumental + resentment motivational orientations as well. The nature of the core-subjects has a bearing upon undergraduates to develop a 'faculty-specific' motivational orientation to learn English. For instance, the vocational-bent in the core-subject areas gives students a certainty of future prospects in terms of their careers. This in turn makes them having clear objectives for learning English. Conversely, the non-existence of such a vocational-bent in core subject areas makes undergraduates indecisive about their expectations in learning English. In addition, the contextual features of the university such as geographical location and the regional variations attached to it play a role in students having 'university-specific' instrumental and integrative motivation types: Those who are in constant contacts with the urban, commercial society have career purposes in mind and have developed instrumental motivation. Therein, their motivation to learn English for integrative purposes is low. The students in conflict zones have developed instrumental motivation to learn English because of the international standing of the language. At the same time, they have developed higher level of integrative motivation when compared to their counterparts in other universities, establishing the need to have contacts with other groups. On the whole, the undergraduates show their motivational orientation to learn English for benefits and exhibit low preference to learn English for non materialistic gains such as knowledge and interest.

Undergraduates need to learn English for speaking. There is no difference among students in different universities in this regard. However, the reasons for undergraduates to learn English speech are university-specific and in some occasions faculty-specific in nature. For instance, the students who study in metropolitan universities and who interact with the commercial world have needs to learn English speech as a societal requirement. The students whose universities
are isolated and located in conflict areas need speech for interpersonal relations. At the same time, the students whose medium of instruction is mother tongue feel the need to develop speech more than other students who study in English. The need for the speaking skill to be developed in the undergraduates runs through their responses with their constant reiteration of it. However, speaking is not given due emphasis to match the needs of the students in the current programme.

The attitude of the students towards the English culture that is represented in the classroom is positive. They like to learn English literature. Their main purpose of learning literature is for language improvement. They use contextual familiarity as one of the main reasons to learn literature in the language classroom. This is because they associate contextual familiarity with easy comprehension of language. Due to this reason, students find it difficult to respond to literature when the context is foreign. So, there are areas of divergence because of cultural dissonance. Taking the parameters such as simplicity of language and easy comprehensibility the students apply to choose between local and foreign English literature, the areas of confluence to teach literature can be found, even if it is foreign. However, there are traces of emotional dissonance with English literature in relation to literary appreciation.

The attitude of the undergraduates towards the teaching process in the current programme is negative. This is mainly due to student unfriendly teaching and material. The preference for various components the undergraduates studied show that they do not like reading comprehension, listening, writing and grammar lessons in use. However, some students show preference for the learnt grammar. The explicit nature of presentation and deductive teaching of grammar seem to derive different opinions amongst undergraduates. They show consistent preference for speaking activities. The students find the programme as a whole inefficient and unsystematic. However, they show positive attitudes towards the testing practices of the programme.
The preferred medium of instruction of the undergraduates is English. They find the exposure to English would enhance their English language learning. Those who study in the medium of English show strong preference for English as the medium. Some students whose current medium of study is mother tongue show some anxiety for a complete switch over to English by preferring both mother tongue and English as the media.

The focus of this chapter is on the undergraduates’ perceptions of the English language teaching programme in Sri Lanka. The views of the undergraduates as regards lesson materials, content, teaching and testing methods, and preferred medium of instruction are analyzed and discussed at length for obtaining a profile of their needs, motivation and attitudes to learn English.