

The Influence of Teachers' Teaching Approaches on Senior Secondary Students' English Language Learning

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.10200033>

Received: 09 February 2026; Accepted: 14 February 2026; Published: 22 February 2026

ABSTRACT

Contemporary English is regarded as a significant language at the international level. Proficiency in English has become indispensable across diverse fields such as knowledge of development, scientific research, international trade, and communication technology. In Sri Lanka the foundations of English language competence are primarily provided at the school level. The teaching approaches adopted by English language teachers in schools play a decisive role in determining students' future levels of English proficiency. In the Mannar District, there are two Education Zones, Madhu and Mannar. Within the Madhu Education Zone, there are two Divisions: Manthai West and Madhu. This study focuses on the level of English competency of Grade 11 students studying in schools belonging to these two Divisions of the Madhu Education Zone, as well as the influence of English teachers' instructional approaches on students' performance. Since both quantitative and qualitative data were employed, this study adopts a mixed-method research design. Descriptive analysis was used to carry out the study. The study population comprised of 200 senior secondary Grade 11 students from the Manthai West Division, 52 English language teachers, 10 school principals, one English Subject Advisor, and one English instructional resource person. In the current context, schools are progressively being transformed in line with the digital era. As a result teaching and learning approaches are expected to be aligned with to be these changes, promoting innovation, and effectively contributing to the enhancement of English language proficiency.

Keywords: Teachers' Instructional Approaches, Students' proficiency levels, Socio - cultural background and Learning resources.

INTRODUCTION

In Sri Lanka, English is an essential language. Contemporary English is gaining international importance. It is taught by all schools. The development of the English language has led to an increased influence of English in knowledge, scientific projects, international economic development and discussions, business and information technology (ICT). English is very essential in Sri Lanka. It is taught as a main subject in schools and as an international connecting language. English is also seen a bridge to gain international knowledge with English skills, become accessible (Ratwatter, 2016).

Sri Lanka English teachers use (I) Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (II) Traditional Teaching (III) Scaffolding Strategies (IV) Learner-Centred Approach (V) Technology Integration Approach (VI) Other Approaches in their teaching approach.

(Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It is believed that the teaching and learning approach of teachers in schools is mediocre and low. In the Madhu Education Zone, the percentage of students achieving English subject level based on the results of the G.C.E. General Examination has been low for the past five years. Education officials criticize that factors such as students' unhappiness, lack of awareness about the need for English language, lack of interest in learning English, and the inadequacy of teachers in teaching English in schools and the influence of mother tongue are influence these low scores.

English teachers are aware that the teaching and learning process influences the achievement level of students. Therefore, this study focuses on the influence of English language teaching approaches on grade-11 senior

secondary school students in the Madhu Zone, based on grade II students. With the aim of improving English knowledge, teachers should use modern learning techniques in the use of this language. This study is carried out in such a way that the English language can be increased as a change in the English language teaching method of teachers by encouraging students to improve their learning and teaching approaches.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the different teaching approaches used by English language teachers.
2. To identify the influence of teachers' teaching approaches on students' engagement in English language learning.
3. To identify the relationship between students' English language achievement level and teaching approaches,
4. To present suggestions for improving teachers' teaching approaches in English language learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines various teaching methods such as Teacher-Centred, Student-Centred Teaching, Communicative Approach, and Task-Based Learning. Furthermore, it considers the role of technology in teaching methods, culturally appropriate teaching practices, and the professional development of teachers.

It has been recommended that there is a need to provide training to teachers on using modern teaching methods in English language instruction (Ghasab, 2022). A study conducted on the interest and pronunciation of English language teachers points out that the mind-set regarding teaching and the involvement of English subject teachers create an impact on educational policy (Hettiarachchi, 2015). Although various projects related to English language learning and teaching have been introduced, the participation of teachers in making them successful is significant. Factors such as teachers' knowledge, skills, attitude, and teaching practices contribute to this. It is essential to transition teachers from traditional teaching methods and align themselves with new teaching skills to ensure students success. Effective professional development helps Teachers shape career-long learning (Sivananthan, 2022).

Developing teacher professionalism is necessary (Gunawardana & Karunaratna, 2017). These languages are built upon traditional teaching methods. These methods are seen as strategies for teaching secondary foreign languages (Gamage & Lanka, 2020). Modern techniques should be used in English language teaching. A specifically, it is essential for teachers to use a SWOT which analysis strength, weakness, opportunity and threads of teaching methods in the teaching-learning process. It helps in developing advanced thinking, processes, generating new ideas, control over the language, good communication, and fluent speaking (Arora et al., 2017).

Schools undertake various activities for the development of student's education. The views of educationists are that the standard of student's education would uplift when the parents' contributions and engagement in the activities of the school are found to be high (Sivananthan, 2021). Classroom activities alone cannot improve the academic achievement of students. On the other hand, the daily attendance of the students should be regular, late attendance should be less frequent, and there should be no dropouts (Sivananthan & Wedikandage, 2023).

The literature for this study would help identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the teaching methods of English teachers in the Madhu Zone. This will pave the way for providing recommendations to improve teaching practices and create a foundation for future research. This study aims to explore what teachers' teaching methods should be applied and how they can serve as a support for the advancement of English education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the level of English competency of Grade 11 students studying in schools belonging to these two Divisions of the Madhu Education Zone in Sri Lanka, as well as the influence of English teachers’ instructional approaches on students’ performance. Since both quantitative and qualitative data were employed, this study adopts a mixed-method research design. Descriptive analysis was used to carry out the study. The study population comprised of 200 senior secondary Grade 11 students from the Manthai West Division, 52 English language teachers, 10 school principals, one English Subject Advisor, and one English instructional resource person.

In the Madhu Zone (Northern Province, Sri Lanka), the teaching approach often reflects a transition from traditional methods to more modern, interactive styles. Understanding the difference between Teacher centred and Student – centred approaches to the schools.

The teachers centred learning and the students centred learning in summary forms.

Data Analysis

The mean and standard deviation for the teaching approaches used by teachers in the classroom are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Teaching Approaches Followed by Teachers

Teaching Approach	N	M	SD
Traditional Method	52	3.3	0.48
Group Activity	52	3.1	0.75
Lecture Method	52	3.4	0.61
Play way Method	52	3.6	0.57
Mixed Method	52	3.5	0.78

Among the teaching approaches of the teachers, the Traditional Method (M = 3.3, SD = 0.48) and the Lecture Method (M = 3.4, SD = 0.61) are utilized in learning activities. Furthermore, Group Activity (M = 3.1, SD = 0.75) and Mixed Method (M = 3.5, SD = 0.78) are observed.

It is noted here that teacher-centred learning is high, while student-centred learning is found to be low. The influence of the teachers' teaching approach is observed to be significant.

Table 2: Data Analysis of Teaching Techniques and Aids

Teaching Techniques and Aids	N	M	SD
Explaining grammar rules to students	52	3.4	0.64
Implementation through play way methods	52	3.1	0.73
Utilizing modern technological tools	52	3.1	0.65
Visual Aids (Flashcards, Slides)	52	3	0.65

Looking at the data in Table 2 above, Grammar Teaching received the highest mean score ($M = 3.4, SD = 0.64$). Teachers utilize this in connection with learning and approaches ($M = 3.1, SD = 0.73$). This shows the importance given to grammar in the English language subject.

Games and Technology: Both of these methods received equal scores ($M = 3.1, 3.1, SD = 0.73, 0.65$). Most teachers use these methods at a "Moderate" level (Scale 3). The use of Visual Aids (Flashcards and Slides) obtained a score of ($M = 3, SD = 0.65$). It is observed that teachers use this at a moderate level. All technical methods are found to be at a moderate level. It is observed that teachers in the Madhu Education Zone depend only on a specific method, and furthermore, teacher professional development appears to be low.

Table 3: Teachers' Teaching Approaches and Strategies

Teaching Activities	N	M	SD
Creating interest in the English language among students	52	3.4	0.64
Using strategies that are understandable to students	52	3.4	0.61
Showing interest in encouraging students' proficiency	52	3.4	0.78
Teaching according to the individual nature of students	52	3.4	0.58

According to the questionnaire survey conducted among the teachers mentioned above, teachers face high challenges in teaching the language among students who hold the perception that English is a difficult foreign language ($M = 3.4, SD = 0.64$). While teachers handle simple teaching strategies ($M = 3.4, SD = 0.61$) that students can easily understand to a moderate extent, they show sluggish interest in encouraging students' language proficiency ($M = 3.4, SD = 0.78$).

Specifically, teachers do not plan their teaching methods according to students' learning nature, despite realizing that every student is unique ($M = 3.4, SD = 0.8$). Since teachers have obtained an average score of 3.4 across these four major teaching components, it indicates they do not follow a uniform teaching approach. Here, teaching approach strategies are found to be low.

Table 4: Teachers' Teaching and Students' Achievement Status

Teachers' Teaching and Student Achievement Status	N (Teacher)	M	N (Students)	M
Teaching methods and grammar usage	52	3.4	200	3.2
Encouraging exercises and evaluations	52	3.4	200	3.6
Integration of textbook and co-curricular activities	52	3.6	200	3

Teachers' creative teaching activities lead to changes in achievement levels through them. These include clarifying teachers' positions and raising achievement levels. According to the data, students' achievement levels are found at average positions of ($M = 3.2, 3.6, 3.6$), while teachers' teaching approaches are found at higher levels. Regarding teachers' learning achievement positions, teaching methods and grammar usage ($M = 3.4$) are used, and to a moderate extent ($M = 3.4$), teachers involve themselves in textbook activities, while in co-curricular activities ($M = 3.6$), they are engaged. Here, learning achievement in teacher activity is found to be high; conversely, student learning achievement is found to be low.

An analysis of G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) English language results for the year 2023 across 10 schools in the Madhu Education Zone is shown below.

Table 5: G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) Pass Rates for the Year 2023 (2024)

School	2023 (2024) G.C.E. (O/L) Pass Rate (%)
A	50%
B	22%
C	41%
D	48%
E	58%
F	52%
G	13%
H	54%
I	0%
J	41%

An analysis of the 2023 (2024) G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) English language results of 10 schools in the Madhu Education Zone revealed that the pass rates are not in a uniform state. While some schools show an upward trend in pass rates, many others show a downward trend. In some schools, the pass rate has been observed to be in a very stagnant state (Zero growth or stagnant) without any progress over the past one year. This can be observed through the table above.

In the 2023 (2024) G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) examination results, schools I - 0%, G - 13%, B - 22%, C - 41%, J - 41%, and D - 48% are seen to have pass rates below 50%, while a few schools are seen to be slightly higher. However, when looking at the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) examination results, a high influence of teachers' teaching approaches is observed. Therefore, a low level is observed in English language learning based on the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) examination results.

Qualitatively, through discussions with principals, teachers, and students, it is observed that the learning process in this region is predominantly teacher-centred, while the student-centred approach is low. Due to the very high influence of students' familial and social factors, weaknesses, challenges, and a lack of learning approaches are observed in the English language subject.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The teaching approaches of English language teachers in the schools of the Madhu Education Zone are predominantly teacher-centred. This study highlights several key findings regarding teaching methods and their impact:

Teacher-Centred Influence: Analysis shows that teachers' approaches are based on basic activity-oriented and grammar-based methods, where the teacher's influence remains dominant in the classroom. **Challenges in Rural Education:** Teachers in rural areas face significant challenges. However, the role of the teacher remains foundational in these regions (Mishra, 2015). This study reflects a high influence of teaching approaches on overall learning outcomes (Kong, 2017).

Technology and Modern Tools: While modern technological tools (ICT) can help students respond easily to language learning (Rus, 2020), their use in these schools is observed to be low. There is a critical need to increase

the use of modern technology and improve teacher professional development (Isamiddinova, 2019). Resource Constraints: Most schools in this zone are rural and lack adequate human and physical resources. Physical resources such as buildings, computers, smart boards, internet facilities, and consistent electricity are insufficient. Systematic professional development for teachers is necessary to overcome these hurdles (Arif, Junan & Niazi, 2021). Student Learning Barriers: A lack of interest among students, inadequate basic facilities, and the influence of their native language contribute to low proficiency levels (Abdul, 2021). This often leads to failure in English language learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Professional Development: Many teachers lack proper appointments, such as bilingual certificates or higher diplomas in English. It is essential to improve teacher professionalism and adapt to modern requirements (Kaplina, 2015). **Shifting to Student-Centred Learning:** Teachers should utilize innovative activities to introduce new concepts to students. Teaching approaches must be reorganized from teacher-centred to student-centred. **Strategic Management:** Improvements in teaching approaches require direct management and the adoption of easily understandable methods. Utilizing resources from school management committees and alumni can help transition to more effective language use (Ahmed & Othman, 2018).

Engagement Activities: Students should be encouraged through games ie (Scribble), group activities, and dramas to make learning student-centred (Ordu, 2021). **Post-COVID Adaptations:** The use of computer-based activities and online platforms like Zoom (developed further after COVID-19) can reduce costs and travel time while improving safety and engagement (Schleicher, 2020).

Conclusion

This study identifies the influence of English teachers' teaching approaches in the Madhu Education Zone. Despite high dedication, the lack of resources and modern training results in low student achievement. By implementing systematic planning and modern teaching methods, the quality of English education can be improved, leading to higher achievement levels for Grade 11 students in the G.C.E. (O/L) examinations.

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