

An Analysis of Competencies of English Language in General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level Examination in Sri Lanka

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This research intends to analyse the competencies tested in English language in General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (G.C.E.O/L) Examination in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the study evaluates the standard of the English examination in relation to the four competencies: writing, reading, speaking, and listening. It further discusses the suitability of test items in measuring the level of competencies. Moreover, it examines the competency expectation of the government. This is due to the general belief of many educationists and professionals that G.C.E. (O/L) English examination does not reveal the true competency levels of students. In other words, most of the students who learn English from grade 1 to 11 and pass the examination, are incapable of communicating in English. Explaining further, students lack fluency and comprehension ability in English. As a result, most of the students who continue higher education in the medium of English, face difficulties. Furthermore, the result obtained for this aforementioned examination is crucial in order to be eligible for most of the job interviews in the country. Qualitative approach has been adopted in order to gather data in achieving the objectives of the research. Accordingly, a document analysis on the past papers and the syllabus, was carried out. Analysis of past papers was made in terms of four skills and test items. Moreover, O/L English language syllabus was studied in understanding national objectives. On the other hand, a questionnaire consisted of both close- ended and open-ended questions, was distributed among English language teachers of grades 10 and 11, in order to be exposed to their attitudes. As the final method, a structured interview was conducted among students who obtained O/L results and those who were awaiting results, to be aware of their point of view. As a result, it was revealed that, G.C.E. (O/L) English examination focuses only on writing and reading skills. On the contrary, speaking and listening are not tested and they are neglected. And it was understood, a mismatch between the objectives of the syllabus and the examination, has created this result. Therefore, it is proposed through this research that all the four skills must be tested in order to give an authentic account of the competency levels of students.

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