



## Comparison of grade points in English language between National and Provincial schools in Batticaloa District, Sri Lanka during the period of 2005-2010

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### Abstract

English Language is one of the most widely accepted Languages used for international communication and also currently, it becomes very essential for various opportunities of livelihood, knowledge and power for citizens of any country. Further, learning of English Language promotes the success in many fields such as Engineering, Commerce, Science and Technology. With those benefits, teaching of English has a vital role towards the future generation and the importance of English language developed the situation to be a compulsory subject which need to be taught in schools of Sri Lanka where English is taught as a second language in such schools and most of the institutes of higher education are having English language as the medium of instruction. Therefore, this research aimed with the comparison of National and Provincial School students' performance on English Language and expanded towards the facts of learning Foreign Language (English) in Batticaloa District, Sri Lanka. National (BT/Alighar Central College), Provincial (Bt/Mahiladytheevu Saraswathy Vidyalaya) and International school (Good Shepherd College) were randomly selected and a particular batch which entered (2005) into secondary education level was carefully undergone until their successful completion of general examination in 2010. Results revealed that the performance of the National School in G.C.E (O/L) examination was 5.4%, 2.7%, 5.9%, 16.7% and 69.4% in Grade points "A", "B", "C", "S" and "F", respectively. Provincial School performance was lower while comparing with National Schools which hold 2.6%, 5.2% and 92.3% with "C", "S" and "F" grade points, respectively. However, the performance was tremendously higher in International Schools due to the proper approaching techniques of the curriculum with the medium of English. It would be appreciative, if teachers adapt suitable techniques to promote learning of foreign language in both National and Provincial Schools located in Batticaloa District, Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** English Language, Grade points, National schools, Provincial Schools, Techniques.

### Introduction

Sri Lanka enjoys a remarkable progress, in terms of basic education indicators, compared to many other developing countries in the world. As a result of the priority given to human capital development, the Universal Free Education Policy was introduced in 1945, by the government. It is the need of each and every one to achieve further. In addition, numbers of researches were carried out to understand the education system and the final output in society linked to the progress and performance. And also, career opportunities were taken part much more towards the employment opportunities and needs of the future generation. As a result, the educational system in Sri Lanka achieved a better position among other South Asian countries.

The general education system in Sri Lanka provides 13 years in three cycles. Children from 5-10 attend primary school (Grade 1-5), from age 11-14 junior secondary school (Grade 6-9), from age 15-16 senior secondary (for General Certificate Examination/Ordinary Level -GCE O/L (Grade 10-11) and from

age 17 -18 collegiate or GCE Advanced Level -A/L (Grade 12-13). In Sri Lanka schooling is compulsory for children from 5 to 14 years of age. The national level examination – GCE O/L marks the end of the senior secondary and GCE A/L marks the collegiate education. For GCE O/L, there is a common syllabus and it includes both compulsory and optional subjects. It is compulsory for all students to study one's own language, second language (English), Mathematics, Science, History and Religion. Three other subjects such as civics, arts, dancing, commerce, entrepreneurship, agriculture etc. can be taken from the optional list<sup>1</sup>.

However, a student should take 9 subjects for GCE O/L examination and to continue for GCE A/L class one should at least pass 6 subjects (with minimum, 3 C passes for compulsory subjects) including mother tongue, Maths and Science. In the A/L class students are free to select one main stream out of three: Arts, Science, and Commerce. For Arts, many social science (economics, geography, logic, political science and psychology etc.) and Humanities (language, culture, drama, history and classical studies etc.) subjects are offered. There are

two main streams for Science students: bio-science and physical science. The students who study bio science normally take biology, physics and chemistry and physical science students take Maths, physics, chemistry etc<sup>1</sup>.

In this circumstances, there are three types of government schools in Sri Lanka those are; National School, Provincial school and Privenas (Schools for Buddhist Priests)<sup>2</sup>. The National schools come under the direct control of the Ministry of Education. The provincial schools were introduced under the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Sri Lanka's constitution in 1983. The provincial schools come under Provincial governments/Local governments. All most all the National schools are established in cities and all the schools are in villages, fall under provincial government. Not only that, International schools also have been developed to promote the English language system in Sri Lanka. For the education administrative purpose, the provincial governments introduced the Zones in each district as sub divisions. Hence, this study focused to find out state of English language in Provincial government schools and International schools to compare the language levels and pattern in usage, in Batticaloa district of Sri Lanka.

**Statement of the Problem:** English is taught at schools since the schools were introduced in Sri Lanka. At present, English is a main subject to the primary, secondary and advance level students in schools. However, it is not a compulsory subject that should be passed in the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) (G.C.E. (O/L)) or General Certificate of Education (Advance Level) (G.C.E. (A/L)) examinations. English is included from grade four students. Students need to sit for nine subjects in G.C.E. (O/L) examination including English as one of them. Sinhala/Tamil and Mathematics are the compulsory subjects that should be passed by students to continue advance level education. Further, students need to sit for five subjects in G.C.E. (A/L) examination including three subjects relevant to their sector and General Exam and English Language. In G.C.E. (A/L) also English is not a compulsory subject.

What so ever, English is weighted as a skill in the job market. The job providers seek the candidates with fluent in English. Therefore, the responsibility is indirectly given to the schools to improve the English language of the students. But, there is a general willingness among parents that the provincial schools are not well established to promote the environment to develop English language of the students but National schools are. The reasons are given, that there are lack of English teachers in Provincial schools and the existing teachers are not qualified and well trained but in National schools, students are from high class families; teachers teach in the school are qualified and well trained; also student have qualified teachers in the environment and attend private classes.

Further, as English is not a compulsory subject in G.C.E. (O/L) or G.C.E. (A/L) students in Provincial schools mostly avoid studying English. Therefore, the passing rate of English subject

in these examinations is very low in the Provincial schools and that affects the students in getting university admission because students are needed at least Credit 'C' pass in G.C.E. (O/L) examination or Simple 'S' in G.C.E. (A/L) examination to get admission to some specific courses in university level such as Law, Marine Science, Information Technology, Communication Studies, etc. However, in case of International schools, medium is English. So that the passing rate also higher and selection for the university admission also predictable one. This situation portrays that English language should be developed in all type of schools in Sri Lanka. In these circumstances, this study tended to study the state of English language in Provincial government schools and International schools to have the better comparison during past few years at particular places (urban, sub-urban and village) in Batticaloa district of Sri Lanka

**Research Questions:** This study mainly focused on state of English language in Provincial government schools and international school as the comparison of same age group who sit for the General ordinary examination (G.C.E O/L) at the same time in Batticaloa district. Their performance rate was compared with the credit that they received in general examination held in Sri Lanka. Therefore the following research questions were formulated in order to answer in the study. (i) How the performance level was (credits) in provincial as well as international schools during the period of 2005 – 2010 of the particular age group? (ii) Where the higher performance was visible in the language system? (iii) What is the educational qualification of the English teachers teach to secondary students Provincial Government schools at villages? (iv) What is the progress of pass rate in English subject in G.C.E. (O/L) examination in Provincial Government schools in villages?

**Objective of the Study:** The main objective of the research is to study to find out the state of English language in Provincial Government schools and International schools, in Batticaloa district. Apart from this primary objective of the study, the following seconding objectives were also formulated to achieve the main objective the study. (i) To examine the educational qualification of English teachers appointed to secondary level classes in Provincial Government schools at villages. (ii) To find out how English teachers are in Provincial Government schools develop their subject based knowledge. (iii) To find out what is the pass rate of students in English subject in G.C.E. (O/L) in Provincial Government schools.

## Methodology

The researcher used both primary and secondary data to analyze the situation. In this exercise both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered where much more concern was on quantitative aspects. At these circumstances, secondary level students were selected to analyze the specified topic during the period of 2005-2010.

**The Informants:** The main objective of the research is to study the state of English language in National schools, Provincial

schools and International schools in Batticaloa District. The research area was restricted in Manmunai North, Manmunai South and Erawur Pattu Divisional Secretariat Division where Batticaloa, Kokkaddicholai and Erawur GN Divisions were considered to be the research area. Three schools were selected randomly according to the ranks and location and undergone for further studies. In addition, it was mainly focused on mixed schools to find out the yearly performance.

BT/Alighar Central College (National school) in Erawur Education Zone, Bt/Mahiladytheevu Saraswathy Vidyalaya (Provincial School/ Government School) in Manmunai South Education Zone and Good Shepherd College (International school) in Manmunai North Education Zone in Batticaloa District were recorded with a same batch who entered into grade six in 2005 and passed out in 2010 (Ordinary Level). The average results in their final common examination were compared to have the better understanding of language distribution among students who enrolled with three different schools. The schools come under Eastern Provincial government.

**BT/Alighar Central College (National school):** This school was selected, because BT/Alighar Central College is one of the leading schools in Erawur Pattu Divisional Secretariat Division and numbers of students were higher. Both male and female students were continuing their studies and successfully completed and results of common examination was fairly good. Even though, the mean value of Secondary Language outcome was considerably lower. The students who enter into grade six in 2005 was around 225 and the number showed such reduction while entering into grade eleven (O/L). There were six divisions named A, B, C, D, E and F. Hence, their records were clearly analyzed and performance was statistically compared.

**Bt/Mahiladytheevu Saraswathy Vidyalaya (Provincial School):** This school was located in Kokkaddicholai Village located in Manmunai South DS Divisions. The participation of both genders was considerably lower while comparing with National Schools located in Batticaloa District. There were two divisions named A and B. The number of students were around sixty (60) and their achievement was recorded as same as recorded in National Schools.

**Good Shepherd College (International school):** International School, very popular and consisted higher number of both gender than other International Schools located in Batticaloa District, Manmunai North DS Division. In this point of view, around Ten (10) students were at that particular batch and it was initiated during that period (2005).

**Primary Data:** Semi-structured interviews were used to collect primary data from the informants. The interviews with the school principal, English teachers were held in order to find out about their opinion about the current state of English language education in this school. Further, four (4) focus group

discussions were held among the Year 11 student in order to find out their ability of spoken English.

**Secondary Data:** As mentioned earlier, useful information and data were collected from secondary source available in three schools where attendance records, results records and history records were compared.

**Data Analysis and Presentation:** The primary data were collected in local language, Tamil and it was translated into English after the field-work. All the collected data from the field was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively as per their nature. The information collected from the field was coded, and entered to computer for analysis.

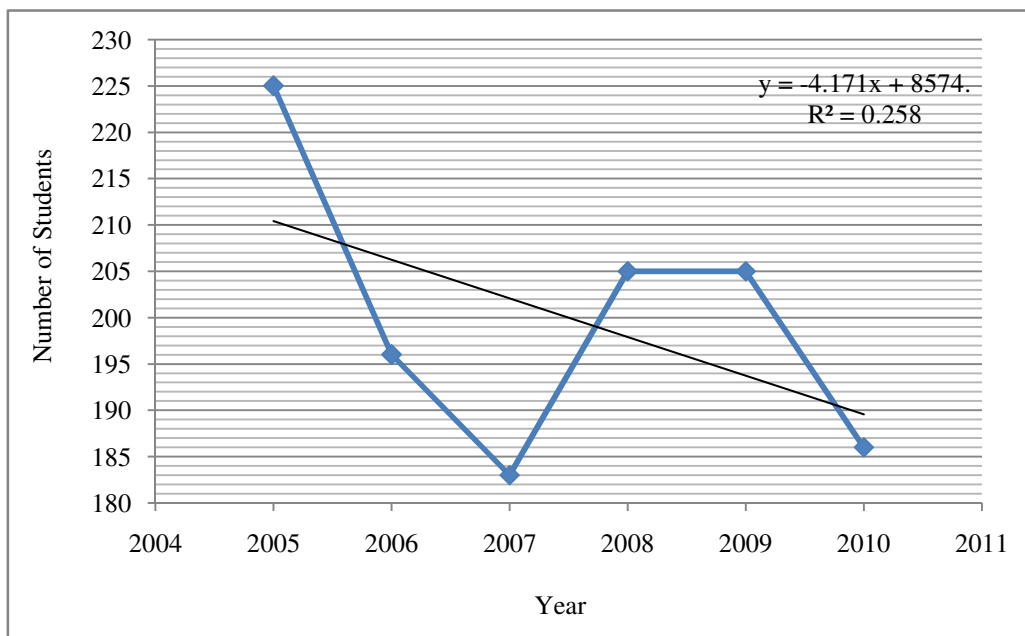
## Results and Discussion

In this chapter, collected information through interviews and from records were analyzed as per their nature and objectives of the study. The information was collected from English teachers, principal and students in Grade 11 in BT/Alighar Central College (National school) in Erawur Education Zone, Bt/Mahiladytheevu Saraswathy Vidyalaya (Provincial School/ Government School) in Manmunai South Education Zone and Good Shepherd College (International school) in Manmunai North Education Zone in Batticaloa District, through interviews and focus group discussions. The information was collected from the informants on the current situation of the English subject in the schools.

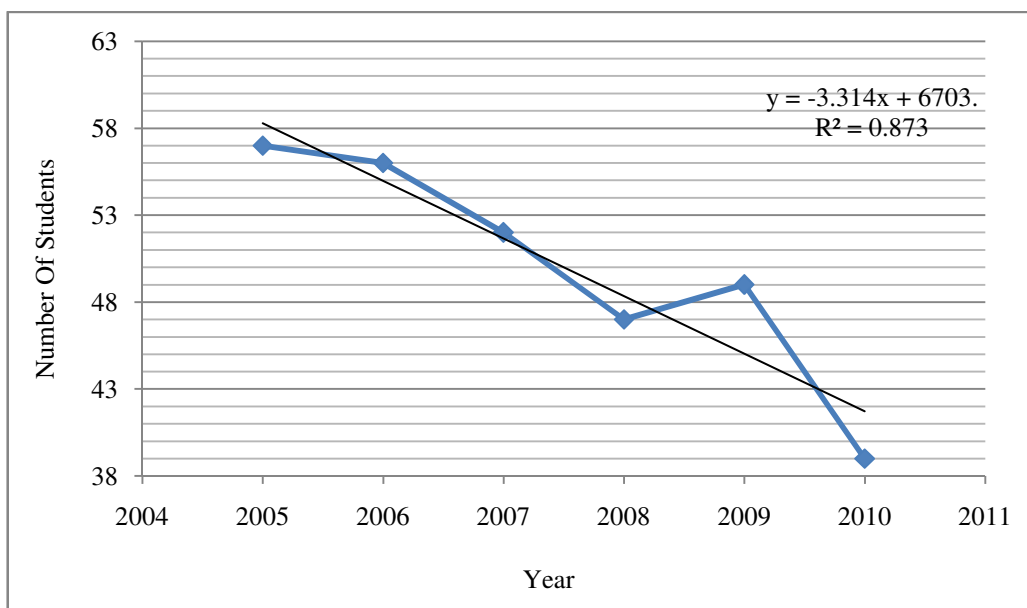
Further, secondary data was collected from the records in the school to find out the pass rate of the English subject in the G.C.E. (O/L) examination. The data was collected from the record since 2005 to 2010 for a particular batch. Each year (2005-2010), students' performance was recorded and value was tabulated. As a result, final value was used to compare those three schools achievements.

**Survey Data Analysis: Profile of BT/Alighar Central College:** It is one of the National Schools located in Batticaloa District and One and only National School located in Eravur GN Division. More than 1000 students continue their education peacefully. Selected batch which entered into grade six was around 225 and reduced to 186 while they enter into Ordinary Level Examination (Figure-1).

In this distribution, number of students selected for secondary education system was higher as students joined from other schools as well as from the same school. It was the sudden increase in counting, in this school. This level showed a rapid decrease from 225 to 185 due to the dropping and leaving of students. Because, the majority of this pupil were from Muslims ethnicity and they left for business. Although, it showed a increase up to 205 in 2007 due to the arrival of new students for their grade 9 education while considering this school as National One. Because of marriage and business again the number was reduced in 2010 from 205 to 186 (Figure 1).



**Figure-1**  
**Distribution of students in National School**



**Figure-2**  
**Distribution of students in Provincial School**

**Profile of Bt/Mahiladytheevu Saraswathy Vidyalaya:** It is one of the Provincial Schools located in Batticaloa District and newly introduced within high grade schools. The number of students showed a fluctuation in its range during the period of 2005-2010.

According to the Figure 2, counting was decreased with the year for the same batch. Kokkadicholai is a village and a backward area where the education level was lower in past years. They seemed to be with secondary and primary education level and

ultimately familiarized with paddy field cultivation and business. This is one reason for this fluctuation of this students' number.

**Profile of Good Shepherd College:** It is one of the International Schools identified with so many parents who dwells in Batticaloa Town and nearby. Although the number of students was lower it showed only the rapid increase during that period.

Mainly urban areas only consisted with International Schools where the most educated crowd and highly professional live together. And also, Batticaloa town is the central place of all the GN Divisions located in Batticaloa Districts. Hence, the education and language value was well known with such standardized population. As far the value of English language knows, people started to get appointments to their students in International Schools (Figure-3).

**Grade points distribution:** Distribution of grade points in National School: It represents that the most students were failed to gain the right grade points and it was significantly with higher percentages. Not only that, some students were absent to the examination due to the fear on second language.

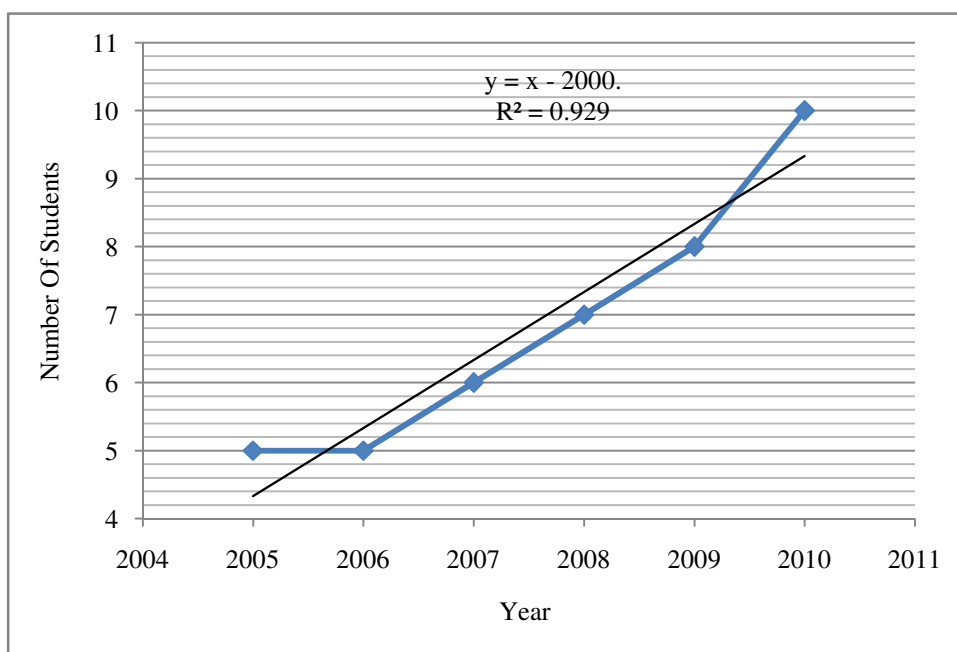
In this school, students' number was higher while teachers were few in numbers. During the study period, students were with lack of awareness and failed to focus much. Even though, those students showed success in other subjects taught in their mother tongue. Because of the concept that the English is a difficult subject students took less challenges.

In addition, around 14.9% of students gained "A" credit in English Language and 6.4% and 9.8% students credited with B and C, respectively. Those were with less percentage. Higher percentage was observed with "F" credit and it was the failure and inability of the students towards English Language. Around 20.7% of students failed to sit English Language examination which was common throughout the study period in Eravur Pattu DS Division and National Schools until they sit for Ordinary Level examination.

Distribution of grade points in Provincial School: The average pass rate of English subject between 2005 and 2010 (for the last five years) has been depicted as the high percentage in 2008 which was 8.5% (four students with "S" credits).

According to the geological location of this particular school specially considered as the well-developed village school, had the dormant results in students' grade points. It might be the one reason and this school was far from Batticaloa Town as well as urban area. The awareness was much lower in second language (English). Students just started ignoring rather than focusing on studies. However, other subjects and extracurricular performance was beyond the expectations of others. As it is a rural school, the number of students was much less. Here could not familiar with "A" and "B" grades. However, the number of droppers was lower where "S" and "C" grades were common and could not linked with National Schools' performance.

The school is located in a place which experienced with heavy ethnical war. During that period, student did not have the need of understanding the value of International Language. And also, they had no chances to know the objective of studying English, the way of study and the power of English Language. While considering the term examination, the Educational Department launches the same exam papers for all schools in that particular education zone. However, the performance level of the schools in that zone is not same. Such schools were with vast differences among them. At this situation, grade points also showed the differences when they use same papers as an examination material. This was the current issue and could not be avoided.



**Figure-3**  
**Distribution of students in International School**

Furthermore, this education system does not include child friendly schools, Government resource exchanging system and so on. This might be the cause for different facts. Government resource exchanging means, mutual transfer of efficient teachers among schools in the same educational zone. This can avoid the situation of deficiency of teachers for English Language. Nowadays, most of the efficient and skilled teachers choose National Schools which were easy to link with urban places and city sides. Not only that, but they save more money from private tuition classes.

It has been clearly depicted that skilled teachers were highly concentrated in such National Schools which is located in urban areas and city sides. As a result, the student whose performance was under the average level is indirectly concentrated in some other schools.

**Distribution of grade points in International School:** Good shepherd College initiated its services with students in 2007 and it laid foundation in 2005. Students were minimum in numbers and organization committee was severe in its launching and finally gave the highly standard language to the society.

At these circumstances, it is impossible to compare the grade points of students who learn languages in International Schools. However it could easily compared the learning of students from this school while comparing with National and Provincial Schools. All the subjects were taught in English medium which was the reason to the easy adaptation of secondary language in a skilled basis. Ability of the students in various ways was clearly seen and remarkable one. Their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills were fantastic and top while comparing with National Schools' students.

**Comparison of grade points between National and Provincial Schools:** As the general examination of Provincial and National Schools was similar in Ordinary Level (O/L), performance of students in English Language could be easily compared and tabulated. Preparation for General Examination might be different with different teaching strategy. However, everything was done for and towards the right foundation in Ordinary Level. Further, there was no any absents of students observed during period of General Examination in both provincial and National Schools (Table-1).

**Performance of National School students in General Examination:** When considering total number of students in role of grade points was with less satisfactory level. Quantity of "A" grade was lower (5.37%) and failure was higher (69.35%). Around 5.9% of total students were identified with "C" grade and 16.7% of total students were with "S" grade.

**Performance of Provincial School students in General Examination:** Here, the pass rate was lower and maximum grade point (2.6%) was "C" and around 5.2% of students were with "S" grades. Percentage was higher (92.3%) with "F" grade

and overall performance was lower due to lack of consideration of English Language.

**Table-1**  
**Grade points of National and Provincial Schools**

Grade points	National School (2010)		Provincial School (2010)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
A	10	5.4%	00	00%
B	5	2.7%	00	00%
C	11	5.9%	01	2.6%
S	31	16.7%	02	5.2%
F	129	69.4%	36	92.3%
Absent	00	00%	00	00%

Source: Result sheets, G.C.E. (O/L). 2010

**Performance of students in General Examination:** According to the Figure-4, performance grade varied in both schools and which was higher in National Schools than the Provincial Schools. It was clear with "F" grade in National as well as Provincial Schools.

For the general examination, National Schools showed the deviation higher than the Provincial Schools which might be due to the adaptation of new technologies and implementation, educationally well trained family background, appointment of efficient teachers and awareness programs in school of National. While students entered into Ordinary Examination, students were divided into equal not only in quantity but also in their qualitative performance in English. This strategy leads them to increase the level of their performance as they get mutual help from the students who are very good in English.

The basic knowledge does not reach the students who need it in Provincial Schools. Their families backgrounds also a bottle neck for the provincial students. Those factors lead them to the less interest and lower performance. Normally, students who studied in National Schools showed an average performance in the G.C.E (O/L) examination as additional classes were given to them in the evening and begun two to three months before the final examination. During those periods, students practiced past papers and memorized letters and essays for their exams points of view.

**Problems identified in National and Provincial Schools:** During the study period, direct observations and interview were carried out to identify the causal agents of poor performance in both schools. (i) Schools were located in easily accessible areas where the problems of uncontrollable noise was the big issue which distracted both teachers and students interactions. The noise gradually became worse as the school approached its last

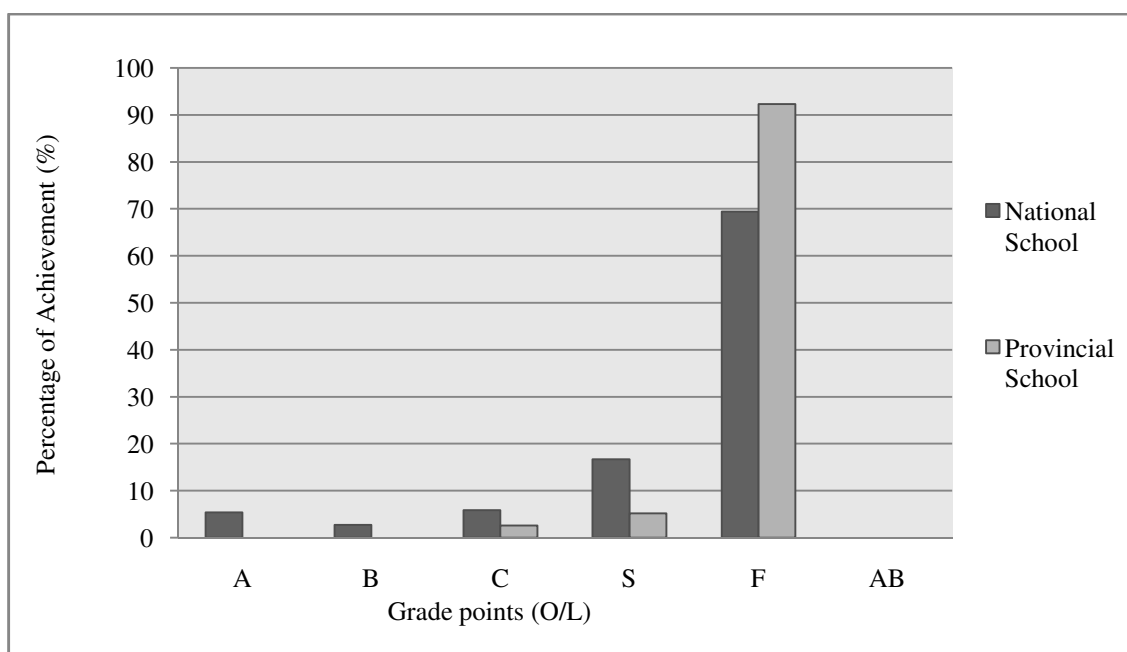
few periods of teaching. (ii) Frequent English teachers absenteeism and little number of teachers were available. Furthermore, none of the teachers attempted to engage students in any kind of learning during their absence. Lack of effort and commitment from the teachers, demonstrated by such incidents, may be caused by occupation- related discontent felt by teachers<sup>3</sup>. (iii) Students were taken to the out of the class room due to such messengers such as drama, sports competitions and extracurricular activities. (iv) Size of the class room was a great issue. Large number of students was accumulated in one class which created difficulties to the teachers for correcting books and paying attention to the weaker students. Further, class rooms were not spacious enough to accommodate the larger number of students. All the class rooms were tightly packed that barely managed to accommodate the observer. The crowded class meant by that the teachers could not physically reach all students. For students, especially the less capable one, it meant less attention from the teacher who gave them the opportunity to engage in other activities during a lesson<sup>4</sup>. (v) Some other difficulties related with timetable. Students seemed restlessness and tired when English scheduled for the latter half of the day. (vi) Another problem was identified with delays that the students occurred as students transferred between class rooms for different subjects.

**Role of teachers in International Schools:** Communicative approach was involved in teaching strategy which was less dominated by the teachers and opportunities were provided by teachers to the students for their active participation and contribution on what to learn and how to learn their subjects. Students- Centered learning lead them to a friendly and supportive environment. Here, traditional way of teaching was

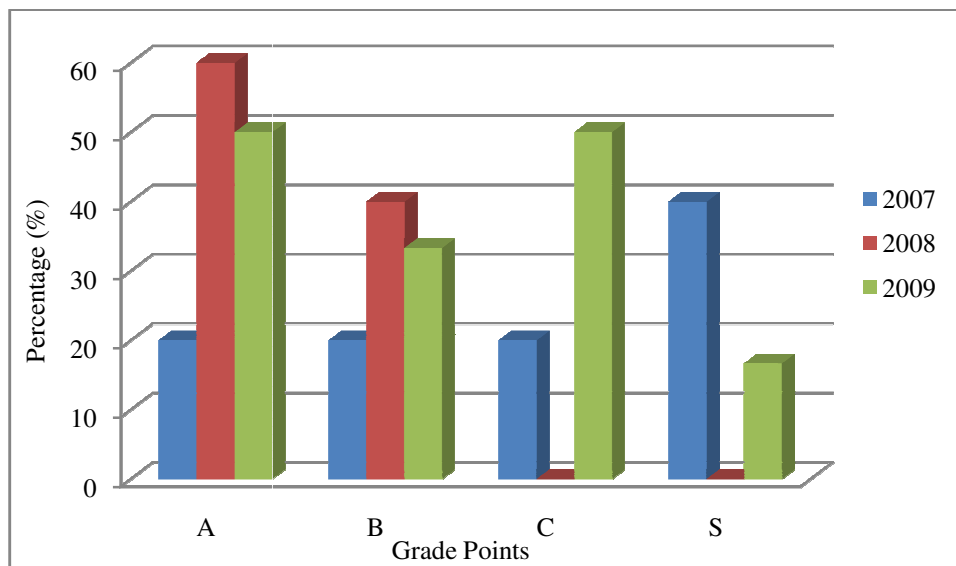
not followed because it meant by domination. On the other hand, traditional way of teaching was done mainly from the front of the class room. And also, every class teacher did most of the talking and students were obedience. This was not done in modern type of class rooms. Activities and all the works were leaded with English medium and taught successfully.

Teachers were guided with little flexible with students and second language was chosen as first in nature. Main theme is use of Tamil Language made the teachers to be strict in their presentation. While choosing English as the first language, the fact was fair and in an acceptable way. In this study, dominant approach to English teaching had more potential of bringing unsuccessful in Batticaloa District. Way of allowing students towards learning and studying need to be annexed soon to their curriculum. Because of the dominancy, automatically made the students into passive learning and controlled their learning of successful interactions in lessons.

During the study period, International School showed the increasing trend of "A" grades and there was a fluctuation at the time of 2008. And also, at the beginning percentage of "A" grade was lower. Because, students were newly introduced to the new environment and performed lower in their achievements. Again, the new curriculum leads them to the reduction (by 10%) but not as in the beginning. These are called as external parameters influenced on students achievements. On the other hand, results were lower in its percentages with the grade points of "B", "C" and "S". This showed the wonderful base had been laid to the student's language pattern and made them to realize the importance of language.



**Figure-4**  
**Performance of students in general Examination, 2010**



**Figure-5**  
**Grade points deviation in International School**

This situation can be enhanced in National as well as Provincial School. Because the fact was students needed much new innovative technology to learn a foreign language. If it is provided them at suitable time, the grade points will overlap the performance of International School students<sup>5</sup>.

## Conclusion

While comparing the grade points of Provincial and National Schools with International Schools, the grade points "A" and "B" were much prominent. All the students who attend International Schools were very talented in their Second Language (English), who were selected through interviews. This might be the one reason for the success in their grade levels.

They conducted the classes in the surrounding in which students can easily adapt to an environment enriched with English. They did not force the students and did not dominate any students. Students were allowed to do the activities of their own. It is also a reason for the great success. Students were particularly trained and examination systems were in the same manner in which they have been trained. It was rare to mention this kind of system neither in National Schools nor in Provincial Schools. It was frank that the students who study in National and Provincial Schools think that English Language was much more difficult to capture. Dropping out of the schools was one of the students' choice when they feel difficulties.

It was the reality to upgrade the students in a step wise manner as in International Schools. Easy teaching method, innovative teaching materials, fixing the power to students, and gradual increase of the level of studies were some of the prominent

techniques to lay a strong base in English Language same as in International Schools.

**Recommendation:** New technologies such as multimedia, Power point presentations, seminars and workshops should be included as teaching materials in order to higher up the progress level in English Language. These materials should stimulate the thoughts of the students. Every word should be taught in practical rather than teaching only as theory. For example, if the teacher takes a ball, students should try to display it and have the capacity to describe the characters. Students should be grouped among themselves, and compete in dictations, poetic, dramas, debates and so on. When grouping them, teacher should consider their talents and divide them not only in equal quantity but also in quality too. It will promote the students to discuss much on their doubts with their friends.

Short films which have subtitle in English should be telecasted and should guide them to listen the pronunciation of native English Speaker. Encourage the students to adapt an environment with English, through the assignments and presentations.

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