

IMPACT OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION ON GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION (GCE), ORDINARY LEVEL (O/L) ENGLISH RESULTS, SRI LANKA

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Abstract: Sri Lanka, despite its relatively high literacy rate compared to other South Asian nations, faces challenges in developing a workforce proficient in English, aligning with labor market demands. To address this, Bilingual Education (B.E) was introduced in 2001, aiming to enhance the English language pass rate among students sitting for the GCE Ordinary Level examination (G.C.E.(O.L.)). The study was conducted to assess the trend in the G.C.E.(O.L.), English language performance of secondary students in Sri Lanka and to assess the impact of bilingual education on the G.C.E.(O.L.), English language performance of secondary students in Sri Lanka. The descriptive and correlational research design was carried out using secondary data obtained from Statistics reports published by the Department of Examination and Annual census reports published by the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka. Descriptive statistics, Graphs, and Pearson correlation coefficient were used to analyze the data. Between 2007 and 2021, G.C.E.(O.L.) English results exhibited a consistent upward trend, with a growth rate of 2.16. The number of students enrolled in B.E. has steadily increased since its inception. In 2005, 33,795 students participated in B.E., constituting 0.86% of the total student population; by 2021, this percentage rose to 2.56%. Pearson correlation coefficients between the number of bilingual students and those obtaining A, B, C, S, and W grades were found to be 0.569, 0.905, 0.886, and -0.912, respectively. The study establishes a robust correlation between the enrollment of bilingual students and G.C.E.(O.L.) English language performance, highlighting the importance of increasing the number of students enrolled in B.E.

Keywords: Bilingual Education, GCE O/L, English Language

Introduction

Bilingual education encompasses a diverse range of programs wherein multiple languages are utilized within the curriculum to impart non-language academic subjects (Bialystok, 2018). According to Cummins (2003), in bilingual education (B.E.), languages are utilized to instruct subject matter content rather than solely focusing on language acquisition. Various types of bilingual education programs (BEP) exist worldwide, each with distinct objectives and outcomes.

The official inception of the B.E. Policy in Sri Lanka can be traced back to a Ministry of Education (MoE) circular dated February 2001. This circular introduced Advanced Level science stream courses delivered in the English medium. Initially, 100 schools out of 625 1AB schools implemented the programme in 2001. Subsequently, with the introduction of the "National Amity Schools Project (NASP)" in 2002, this initiative expanded to include grade 6 and was implemented in approximately 80 schools. Grade 6 curriculum encompassed four subjects: Science and Technology, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Health and Physical

Education, which were taught in English. Other subjects continued to be instructed in either Sinhala or Tamil medium, contingent upon the school's medium of instruction policy.

The inaugural cohort of students commenced the programme in grade six and underwent their G.C.E. (O.L.) examination in 2007. In response to the needs of these students, Commerce and Arts stream subjects were introduced in 2008. The programme underwent a renaming process in 2007 and became known as the Bilingual Education Policy (BEP). Additionally, in 2012, a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach was introduced as the foundational methodology underpinning the BEP.

The study aims to assess two key aspects:

1. Evaluate the trend in the G.C.E.(O.L.) English language performance among secondary students in Sri Lanka.
2. Examine the impact of bilingual education on the G.C.E.(O.L.) English performance of secondary students in Sri Lanka.

Methodology

The descriptive and correlational research design was carried out using secondary data obtained from Statistics reports published by the Department of Examination and Annual census reports published by the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka. Descriptive statistics, Graphs and Pearson correlation coefficient were used to analyzed the data.

Results and Discussion

Bilingual Students in the Sri Lankan school system

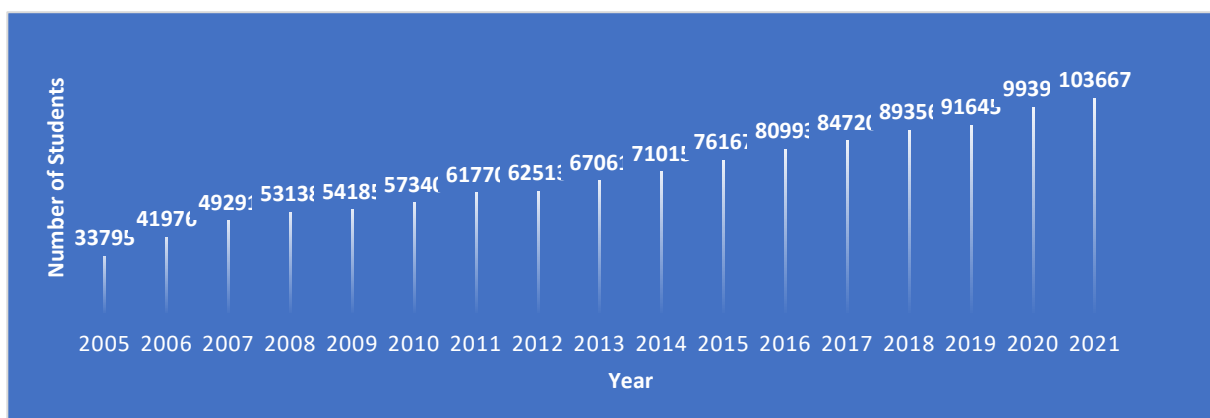


Figure 1 Number of Bilingual students in Sri Lankan Government Schools

Despite encountering numerous challenges, bilingual education in Sri Lanka has witnessed a notable increase in the number of participating students within the school system since its inception. In 2005, the number of students engaged in bilingual education amounted to 33,795, representing merely 0.86% of the total student population. However, by 2021, this figure surged, with bilingual students constituting 2.56% of the total student body. While this upward trajectory signifies progress, the rate of increase falls short of desired benchmarks, indicating the need for further efforts to promote bilingual education across Sri Lanka's educational landscape.

Performance of Candidates in G.C.E. (O.L.)

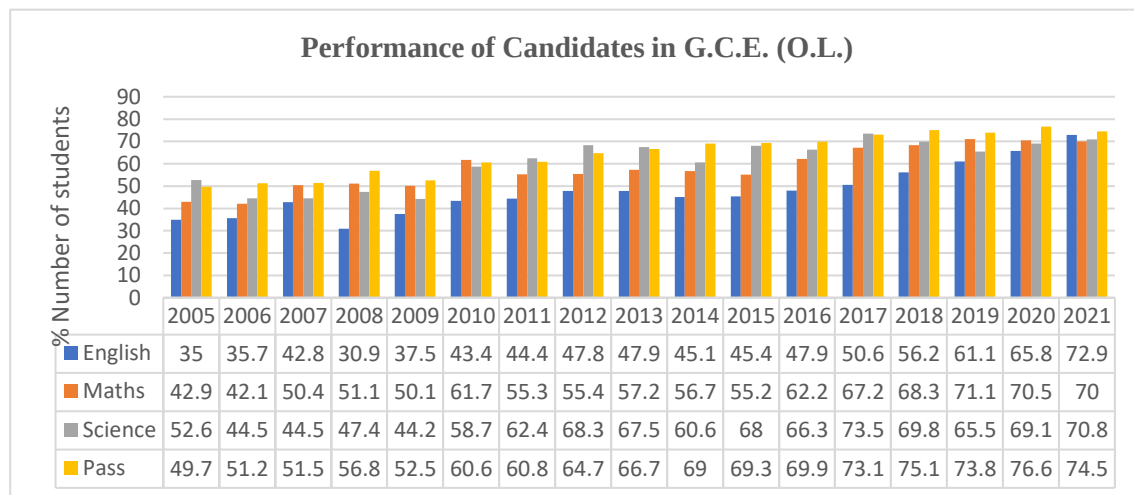


Figure 2 Performance of students (pass %) in G.C.E. (O.L) in specific subjects

Over the course of the past 16 years, the performance of students in the G.C.E. (O.L.) examinations has exhibited an overall increasing trend, albeit with intermittent fluctuations rather than a consistent, uninterrupted growth trajectory. For instance, the pass percentage for the English Language in 2005 stood at 34.98%, while by 2021, it had risen to 72.85%. Similarly, subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and eligibility for A/L also demonstrated an upward trend in performance over this period. Specifically, the rates of increase in Mathematics, Science, English, and eligibility for A/L were recorded at 1.71, 1.71, 1.8, and 2.0, respectively. Despite occasional fluctuations, these trends underscore positive advancements in student performance across various subject areas in the G.C.E. (O.L.) examinations over the past 16 years.

Performance of Candidates in G.C.E. (O.L) English Language

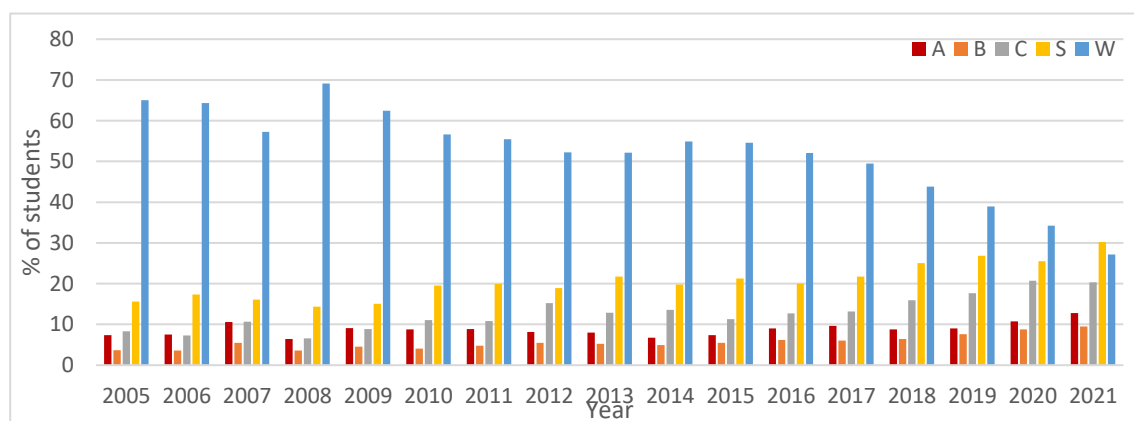


Figure 3 G. C. E (O.L) performance of students

When compared with other subjects the rate of increase in the English language over the past 16 years is much higher. The high performance of students in G.C.E O/L can be attributed to the educational programs implemented by the Ministry of Education and stakeholders. Even though the English language shows a higher rate of growth compared to other subjects. So,

there must be a specific reason behind this higher rate of increase. The researcher believes that this could be due to the introduction of bilingual education in the school system. To confirm the hypothesis, the following correlation test was performed.

Correlation between the number of bilingual students and GCE O/L English pass percentage

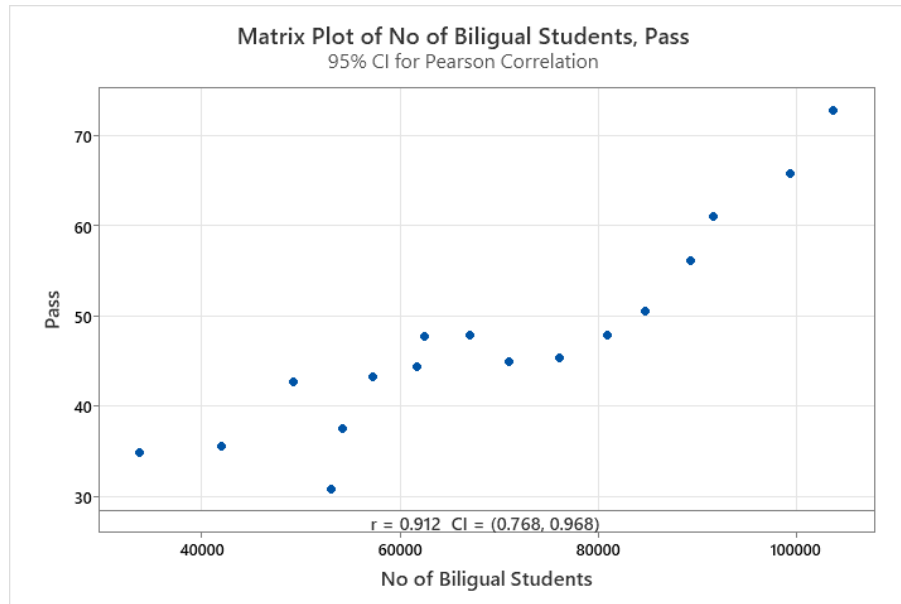


Figure 4 Correlation between the number of bilingual students and GCE O/L English pass percentage

Pearson correlation coefficient between the English language pass percentage and the number of bilingual students in the school system shows the value of 0.912 at 95% confidence Interval. The value revealed that there is a very high positive correlation between the GCE O/L English Language pass percentage and the number of bilingual students.

Correlation between the number of bilingual students and GCE O/L English A grade percentage

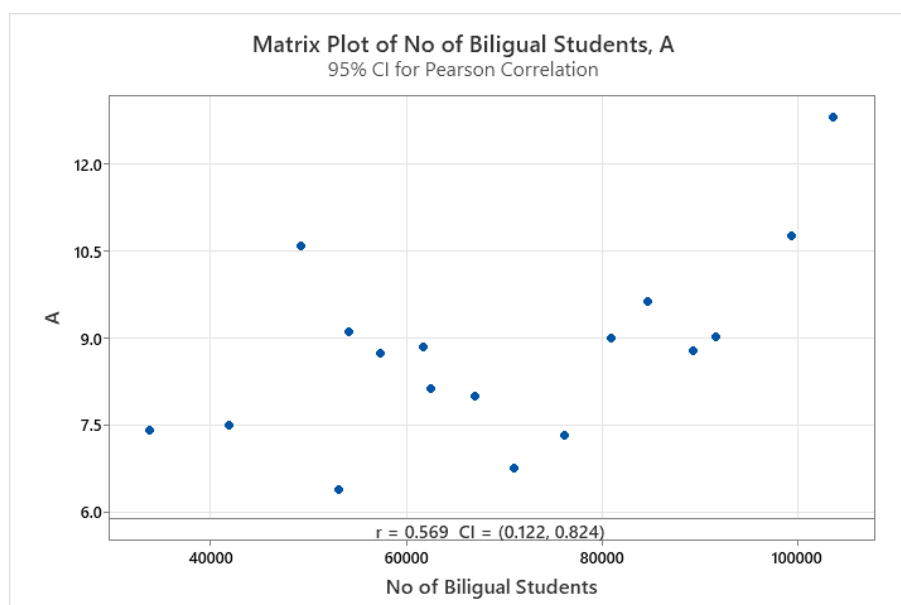


Figure 5 Correlation between the number of bilingual students and GCE O/L English A grade percentage

The relationship between the number of bilingual students and the percentage of students who obtained in GCE O/L shows a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.569, 95\%$).

Correlation between the number of bilingual students and GCE O/L English B grade percentage

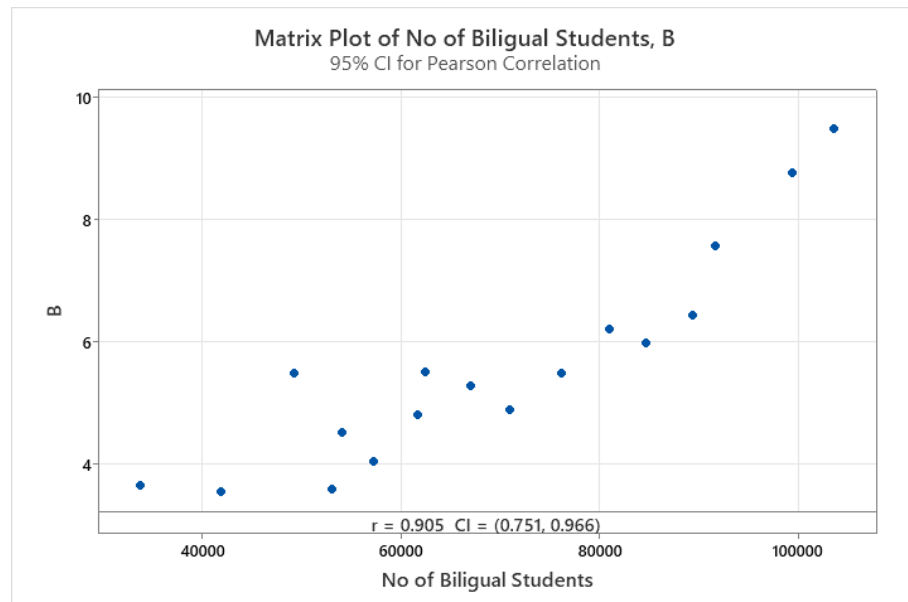


Figure 6 Correlation between the number of bilingual students and GCE O/L English B grade percentage

The Pearson coefficient value of 0.905 at 95 % confidence Interval revealed that there is a very high positive correlation between the percentage of students who obtained a B grade and the number of bilingual students in the school system.

Correlation between the number of bilingual students and GCE O/L English C grade percentage

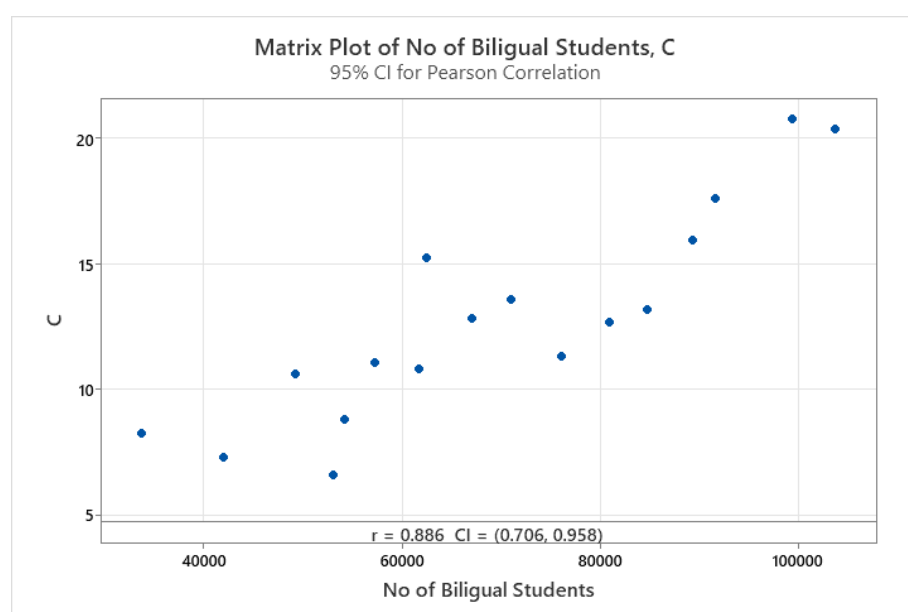


Figure 7 Correlation between the number of bilingual students and GCE O/L English C grade percentage

The relationship between the percentage of students who obtained B grade in the GCE O/L examination in the English language and the number of bilingual students in the school system shows a very high positive correlation ($r=0.8886$, 95%).

Correlation between the number of bilingual students and GCE O/L English S grade percentage

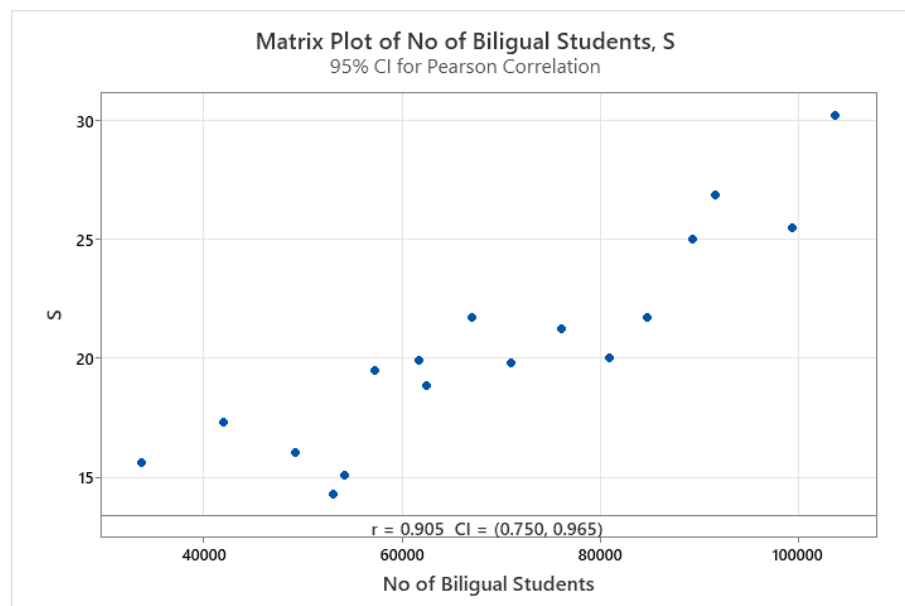


Figure 8 Correlation between the number of bilingual students and GCE O/L English S grade percentage

It also shows a very high positive correlation between the number of bilingual students in the school system and the students who obtained S grade in GCE O/L English subject ($r=0.905$, 95%).

Correlation between the number of bilingual students and GCE O/L English S grade percentage

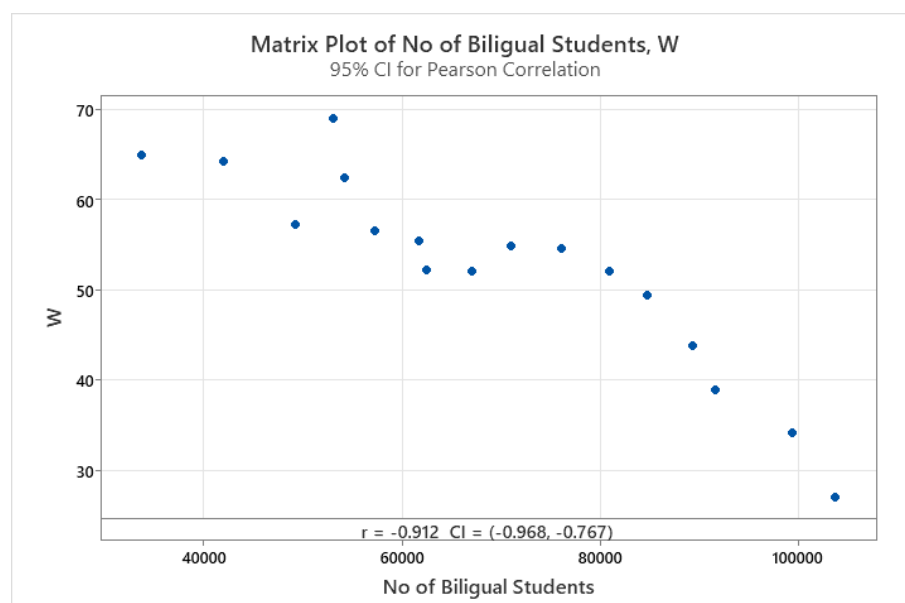


Figure 9 Correlation between the number of bilingual students and GCE O/L English S grade percentage

The relationship between the number of bilingual education students in the school system and the percentage of students who failed in English language shows a Very high negative correlation ($r=(-0.912)$, 95%).

Table 1 Summary of the analysis

Dependent Variable	Independent variable	Pearson coefficient	Relationship
% of students who obtained “Pass” grade in GCE O/L English Language	Number of bilingual students in the school system	0.912	Very high positive correlation
% of students who obtained “A” grade in GCE O/L English Language		0.569	Moderate positive correlation
% of students who obtained “B” grade in GCE O/L English Language		0.905	Very high positive correlation
% of students who obtained “C” grade in GCE O/L English Language		0.886	Very high positive correlation
% of students who obtained “S” grade in GCE O/L English Language		0.905	Very high positive correlation
% of students who obtained “W” grade in GCE O/L English Language		(-0.912)	Very high negative correlation

Conclusion

Over the past 16 years the students' performance in GCE O/L shows a positive growth rate. The students' performance in the English Language show a higher growth rate compare to other subjects. The number of students who are studying in bilingual education also showing an increasing trend. The relationship between the number of bilingual students in the education system and the students who obtained A, B, C, S and W in GCE O/L English subject was a Moderate positive correlation, Very high positive correlation, Very high positive correlation, Very high positive correlation and Very high negative correlation respectively at 95 % confidence Interval.

Recommendation

- ⊙ Bilingual education is the tool to develop the English Language skill in the school system.
- ⊙ The number of students in the bilingual education system should be improved

Reference

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