

Problems encountered in teaching English for primary students of Thenmaradchi zonal education office.

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This research investigates critical issues hindering effective English language instruction in primary schools in Thenmaradchi Zonal Education Office in Sri Lanka. In general, the ESL performance of undergraduate students is considered to be low in the areas of reading comprehension and proper vocalisation and vocabulary issues due to lack of motivation and lack of involvement etc. What would be the causes of these problems in adulthood? The undergraduate students' primary education was not well developed. These bottom-up issues have to be automated when the children are **young**. People may think that these matters in the teaching second language can be introduced when children become adults but, practically it seems to be very difficult, because adults' brain cells are not very capable enough to acquire everything easily when compared to brains of the children. If the government of Sri Lanka doesn't provide the appropriate learning conditions in the primary level, they will find it very difficult to access the language skills even in their adulthood. However, English seems to be '**Nobody's Baby**' in the primary level in rural Sri Lanka. It is a major issue not only in Thenmaradchi education office area but also in many other zonal education office areas in Sri Lanka where English is taught as a second language. The study found that there are only **five** primary teachers appointed in the Thenmaradchi Zone despite the fact that there are 53 primary schools and 4,218 students. This means that English is often taught by English teachers appointed to the **secondary level** or by the teachers of **other subjects** who do not have the necessary skills or qualifications to teach the subject effectively. This uneven distribution of teachers results in the absence of English in certain school timetables, hindering the development of students' foundational language skills. Despite the provision of workbooks and administration of term tests, the shortage of primary English teachers impedes effective English language education and this impacts students' cognitive development in their formative years. This research employed a mixed-methods approach, utilising surveys, interviews and classroom observations to gather data from teachers, students and parents. The research recommends the administration of a new Language **Proficiency Exit Level Examination** akin to Sri Lanka's Grade Five Scholarship Examination. This proposed examination would foster healthy competition among teachers, students and parents to address the disparities observed in English language education within the Thenmaradchi Zonal Education Office area. The findings highlight the urgency of addressing teacher distribution issues and implementing comprehensive assessments to ensure a more equitable and effective English education for primary students in the region.

Keywords: English Language Teaching; Primary education; Teacher shortage