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Abstract

Aim of this research is to find how rural school students learn English as a second language. A target group was selected from Galkanda Primary School of Balangoda Educational Zone, and English learning problems were observed using questionnaires, question papers, observations and interviews. They led to a conclusion that rural school students face many difficulties in the process of learning English. They had problems with listening and speaking skills resulted from lack of interest and prior practice, insufficient physical and human resources and confidence. It was also discovered that students were unable to read or write even simple words properly as a result of lack of prior knowledge, exposure and insufficient time allocated to learn English. Students' pessimistic outlook has restrained self motivation. Family background has also been frequently affected to learning English. Consequently insufficient learning atmosphere at home and addiction to television have been affected to have a poor knowledge and learning skills. Low number of students in classrooms has created a barricade to perform activities. Solutions to those problems should be taken in order to eradicate learning problems. Problems related to listening, speaking, reading and writing could be reduced by introducing extra activities in class. Self motivation can be enhanced by improving English learning atmosphere in school. Providing qualified English teachers and recourses and allowing the students expose to English speaking environment will enhance the four skills. Consequently acknowledgement programs for students and parents will also be effective. The education level of rural school students could be enhanced by reducing the problems and applying necessary recommendations.

Keywords: second language, learning problems