

AN ANALYSIS OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN IN NORTHERN REGION OF SRI LANKA

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to establish the state of second language (English) learning difficulties in children with visual impairments and make recommendations that could assist with special needs education in the country. The objectives of this study are to analyze the types of errors committed in second language learning, to analyze the teaching-learning difficulties in children with visual difficulties, analyze the personal-family-socio-political-economic factors that affect the learning, assess the extent of the learner-friendliness of the environments in which learners with visual impairments learn and to study the impact made by the use of Assistive Technology in the second language learning of visually impaired. This study was carried out in Northern Sri Lanka where children with visual impairments, their teachers and parents were the part of this study. 30 participants; including 25 students and 5 teachers took part in this study where both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were utilized. Data collection consisted of surveys, classroom observations, and interviews with students and teachers, as well as with a close analysis of spoken and written samples of student works and available literature. Subsequently, a purposive sample was identified to participate in the second round of data collection where an interview protocol rooted in the literature was developed to act as a guide for the semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis of the data was carried out using aspects of framework analysis. The study concludes that the students with visual impairment of this region undergo several difficulties in their second language learning where their personal, socio, political and economic factors make a remarkable impact. Despite the difficulties, the students are very motivated to learn the second language, English, and they positively regard the use of Talking Software as an Assistive Technology in the language learning context.

(Keywords; Second language learning, visual impairment, teaching-learning difficulties, assistive technology, Talking Software)