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PAPER

Providing Support for Visually impaired ESL Learners of Jaffna University

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The term “visually impaired” in this study refers to the learners, who are deprived of total and partial visual perception. Since the theme of the research symposium deals with the multi-faceted nature of research, the present study has been carried out to investigate the support that can be rendered to the visually impaired English as a Second Language (ESL) learners of the University of Jaffna. The ESL teachers claim that among the four language skills, reading and writing, along with enriching vocabulary are found to be the most challenging tasks for them to deal with. As the visually impaired learners are not treated separately, the learners face numerous problems in using printed teaching materials, taking notes from the lectures, producing handwritten work and assignments, identifying spelling, decoding the meanings of unknown words and reading graphic material like, graphs, charts, maps and tables.

Since, it has been a longstanding issue of the teachers of English, the present study was designed to investigate how the teachers of English can provide support for the visually impaired learners in their language learning. The subjects of the study include twenty visually impaired students including both undergraduates and graduates who passed out from the University of Jaffna. Questionnaires were administered by the teachers of English and in-depth interviews were conducted among the participants in order to collect data for the study. The findings suggest a number of practical strategies that can provide support for the visually impaired learners of English. Apart from the usual practice of allowing the learners to use tape recorders in the lecture halls, the teachers can be guided to provide teaching materials incorporated with Braille, screen readers, microcapsule papers and thermoforms. The learners can also be guided to use laptops to take notes and do assignments. The administration can assist by recruiting technical assistants with a fair knowledge of Braille to assist the teachers and learners.