

Level of English Language Proficiency among Rural and Urban based learners in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT. Many in the academic field believe that urban based learners perform well in English language and their English language proficiency seems to be reasonable, while low proficiency and poor performance in English could be observed among the majority of the rural learners at South Eastern University of Sri Lanka. This issue has become a major challenge for the University community at South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, and so the author was persuaded to undertake this research to establish the truth. This research aims to investigate and establish the truth of this consideration and find out to what extent English Language proficiency is lower in rural areas.

This research adopts primary and secondary data using mix methodologies (qualitative and quantitative): 139 questionnaires were administrated among undergraduates from three universities and 99 teachers' questionnaires were also administrated from English trainee teachers in in-service teacher training colleges using Convenient Random Sampling. A brief questionnaire was also administrated to collect data from selected professionals followed by telephone interviews. The above collected data from different sources were triangulated.

This research found out the root causes of low level English language proficiency in rural areas; especially in the north-east region which was considerably affected by the long lasting war. This research also found out the rural and urban learners' attitude towards languages and investigates other relevant factors, especially how the long lasting war affected the English Language teaching and learning in the North-East region. In addition this research suggests some possible solution to overcome these problems and improve the English language proficiency in rural areas, especially in the South Eastern region.

Key words: English Language, Language Proficiency, English Language Proficiency in Sri Lanka

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