

Challenges Encountered in Teaching English in Rural Sri Lankan Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Bandaranayake Secondary School in Kiriibbanwewa, Moneragala District

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English language competency is a necessary skill in Sri Lanka. With this in mind, successive governments have implemented various approaches to strengthen English Language Education in the rural outskirts of the country. These initiatives include projects like 'speak English our own way' and attempts to recruit candidates as teachers with higher diplomas in English in order to address the dearth of qualified English teachers. However, it is unclear to what extent these efforts have been successful. This study sets out to examine the challenges encountered in English teaching and learning in rural parts of Sri Lanka today, taking Bandaranayake secondary school in Kiriibbanwewa, Moneragala District as a case study. Data was collected through ethnographic research methods utilising qualitative observational data and semi-structured interviews, and was then analysed using thematic analysis. Findings demonstrate that students at Bandaranayake secondary school, regardless of their grade-level, lack basic English proficiency beyond an A1 level. This language outcome is a result of teaching methods that prioritise textbook-based reading and writing over speaking and listening skills, while emphasising accuracy over fluency. In order to address this gap between English language Teaching (ELT) methods and outcomes, researchers recommend conducting ELT training for English language teachers in rural secondary schools through tertiary educational institutes local to the area.

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