

Teaching of Second National Language (2NL) in Sri Lanka: Success and Failure in achieving objectives of 2NL

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Teaching Second National Language (2NL) in Secondary schools is one of the initiatives of the Government to bridge the communication gap between the ethnic groups. Social cohesion is one of the objectives of education and it was clearly stated by the National Education Commission in its first report. Further communication with other ethnic groups and cultural understanding is also highlighted in the grade 10 Teacher's instructional manual as a main objective of teaching 2NL. Text books have been developed for junior secondary grades by the Educational Publication Department, yet it is claimed that there are many shortcomings. Objectives of this study are to identify the status of achieving objectives of teaching 2NL in Secondary grades. This study was conducted utilizing a descriptive survey design in two educational zones in the Western province in Sri Lanka with a sample of 75 students, 16 principals and 50 teachers from 16 schools. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered using questionnaires, focus group interviews and observation of teaching – learning process in classrooms. Data was analyzed using descriptive methods. Findings revealed that the teachers are less qualified, curriculum is very heavy for a 2NL learner, text books are not matching with the needs of students, content of the text books is very heavy and difficult, activities given in the text books are not interesting and teachers do not use modern teaching learning strategies and create conducive teaching – learning environment in and outside the classroom. Achieving the objectives of teaching 2NL is a great challenge because of the above indicated issues. 72% of teachers teach 2NL (Tamil) using the lecture method, they do not use proper teaching methods, aids/materials in the classroom. Teachers do not like to enhance listening and speaking competency of the students. Only 21 % of students can speak and listen in Tamil language; 68% of students cannot write Tamil letters accurately. In addition 76% of students of grade 09 cannot communicate in Tamil Language. Majority of the students and teachers do not consider Tamil as an important subject in the curriculum.

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