

Transition of Medium of Instruction from mother tongue medium to English medium - A study based on the Bachelor of Education undergraduates.

Shiranthi N. Rajendram
Lecturer, Department of Humanities Education
Faculty of Education

Background:

The transition of medium of instruction from mother tongue media (Sinhala/ Tamil) to English medium has proved to be difficult for the majority of the students. The main reason for the difficulties experienced by the undergraduates is due to inadequate English language proficiency to read for a degree in the English medium. The unavailability of English Language courses specifically designed to cater to the B.Ed undergraduates is another reason for the difficulties experienced by students. The presentation will focus on the B.Ed undergraduates reading for their degree in the English medium. The objective of this presentation is to highlight the problems and difficulties encountered when the medium of instruction is changed from mother tongue medium to English medium.

Methods:

The data discussed in the presentation was gathered from a batch of B.Ed undergraduates reading for their degree in the English medium. Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather data. The presentation will focus on the questionnaire which was designed to gather data regarding the problem/difficulties faced by the students in reading for the degree in the English medium and the possible solutions.

Results:

The analysis of the data gathered reveals that the B.Ed undergraduates are instrumentally motivated to read for the degree in the English medium. According to the data, the main purpose of reading for the degree in the English medium is to find employment. However, the data reveals that the undergraduates face difficulties in using all four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) which prevent students from reaching academic excellence when reading for a degree in the English medium.

Conclusions:

According to the data, the majority of the students face difficulties in all four language skills. Reading for a degree in English demands a high level of academic language proficiency. Therefore, the B.Ed undergraduates reading for a degree in the English medium require English language support to overcome the language difficulties in order to effectively master the content and subject areas of study. Content based Language Instruction is one solution to the problem. The B.Ed undergraduates require an English Language programme designed to cater to their specific language needs if they are to attain academic excellence in their field of study.