

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES AT THE STATE UNIVERSITIES IN SRI LANKA: CHALLENGES OF ENGLISH MEDIUM EDUCATION

Galagedarage Thushari Madhubhashini Hewage

The Open University of Sri Lanka, Nawala, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka, gtmad@ou.ac.lk

Abstract

Media education was introduced to Sri Lankan university education in 1973. But media education is mainly offered in Sinhala medium in university education. Therefore, students face some challenges in finding job opportunities, foreign scholarships, research and publications etc. due to the English language barrier. In this context, the purpose of the study is to investigate the challenges of offering media education in English medium in state universities by using the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory. Therefore, the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and the in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data for the study. The results showed that there were some challenges in offering media education in English medium in the state universities such as the difficulty of finding visiting academics or resource persons who are capable of teaching media and communication in English medium, the limited permanent members available in the universities, the lack of exposure to the English language by both the permanent academic members and students in the field of Media and Communication Studies etc. Therefore, academics should take the necessary actions to offer media education in English medium. Then only the students and teachers can be familiar with English medium education to empower themselves in finding job opportunities, foreign scholarships, postgraduate opportunities, research, publications etc.

Keywords: challenges, English medium education, media and communication, Sri Lanka, State Universities

Introduction

Grunwald declaration on media education was introduced by the representatives of 19 nations at UNESCO's International Symposium on Media Education at Grunwald, Federal Republic of Germany in 1982 to emphasise the importance of having media education from the pre-school to university level, and in adult education to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes which encourage the growth of critical awareness (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1982). Media education is not only learning about media but also improving journalism skills, creativity, critical and analytical thinking etc. to understand the contemporary and practical scenarios in society as well as to cater to the industrial needs and requirements (UNESCO, 2002).

Media education was introduced to the world a hundred years ago. Therefore, it was introduced to the world in the 1920s by France mainly focusing on film studies. Furthermore, early media education (1920s-1940s) was mainly based on film and press. In the 1970s, media education was mainly focused on media studies (Fedorov, 2008). Pawar (2021) notes that, now media education is taught all over the world in secondary and tertiary education. But media education is gradually developed based on the requirements and needs of society, the media industry and the improvements of technological innovations. In most of the Asian countries, media education is given in local languages. Therefore, the students face several challenges in finding job opportunities in the media industry and academia, in finding scholarships for postgraduate programmes etc. due to the English language barrier and the lack of required skills. Pawar (2021) further notes that media education was officially introduced to India in the 1940s, but after many decades still the state universities face their own challenges and limitations in catering to the fast-changing media industry requirements. Yusof et al. (2018) also state that it is important to learn journalism skills such as writing, researching, producing videos, interviewing and English language skills. Some universities in Malaysia provide good training facilities for students while some do not provide proper training or education to the students. The most important thing is that the students should update themselves with the past moving technologies, English language, general knowledge, critical and analytical skills while training themselves in the media industry.

As far as the Sri Lankan context is concerned, media education was introduced to the Sri Lankan education system in the 1970s. Dissanayake (2003) notes that at the initial stage, the University of Kelaniya started offering an undergraduate programme in Mass Communication in 1973. At present, six state universities out of seventeen universities offer special degrees in Media and Communication Studies in Sri Lanka. Apart from these programmes, journalism, communication and media-related courses and programmes are offered by various government and private institutions. Moreover, media education is mainly offered in Sinhala medium in the state universities while the private and affiliated universities mainly offer media and communication-related degrees in English medium.

In this context, the problem is what are the challenges of offering media education in the Sri Lankan state universities in English medium. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges of offering media education in English medium in the state universities in Sri Lanka by using the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory. According to the literature review, no research has been conducted to examine the challenges of media education in state universities in relation to English medium education/instructions. Some studies were done in media education in Sri Lanka. However, these research were not focusing on the challenges of offering media education in English medium. Therefore, in order to fill in this gap and to achieve the purpose of the study, the research was carried out.

Literature Review

The English Medium Education (EME) has become more popular all over the world including in Asian countries. Therefore, EME is introduced to education from the primary level to the tertiary level.

“The transition to teach through the medium of English in higher education has become a global phenomenon that has witnessed significant growth over the last two decades. Educational models combining content and language learning are certainly not new, but the exponential growth of English Medium Instruction (EMI), or English Medium Education (EME), in universities around the world is unprecedented. Referred to as an ‘unstoppable train’. European universities have seen a ten-fold increase in EMI provision over a 13-year period starting in 2001 and significant growth is also evident in Asia EMI is also increasingly referred to in national education policies across the world” (Galloway & Sahan, 2021, p. 10).

This shows that EME is mainly offered in university education in European countries as well as in Asian countries. The governments of individual countries have made policy decisions to introduce the EME to the education system.

“The Government of Vietnam is devoted to enhancing its human resources in the age of global integration, technological advances, and internationalization. With the prime minister’s recent approval of the Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages such as English in the National Education System 2008-2020 project (Ministry of Education and Training, 2008), political will for such a move is obviously indicated” (Galloway & Sahan, 2021, p. 30).

Likewise, some Asian countries which were colonies of European countries started offering the EME. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, the Sri Lankan education system reflects mainly the British model. Therefore, until the Minister of Education, C. W. W. Kannangara, passed a bill in the state assembly to provide free education for all in 1945, secondary and tertiary education were offered in English medium. As a result, the education was offered in all three mediums such as in English, Sinhala and Tamil. But the priority has been given to English medium education.

“For political reasons, the then government, through the Official Language Act No. 33 of 1956, made Sinhala the only official language of Sri Lanka. This policy enhanced the importance given to the teaching and learning through Sinhala medium, which affected not only English medium education but also the use of Tamil too” (Navaz, 2021, p. 1881).

Navaz (2021) further notes that since the free education policy of the government and the promotion of Sinhala medium education, secondary education has mainly been offered in Sinhala medium. Therefore, there was a serious impact on the medium of instruction at the universities though the medium of instruction in the tertiary sector was English at the beginning. As a result, the University of Ceylon started to teach the students in their mother tongue in 1960, but the mother tongue instructions

were mainly given in courses in the Arts and related fields, whereas courses in Science, Medicine, Engineering and Science related subjects continued to be taught in English.

Therefore, it is evident that the Arts and related fields are mainly taught in Sinhala and Tamil medium. Arts subjects like Communication and Media Studies, History, Geography, Buddhism, Sinhala, Fine Arts etc. are mainly taught in local languages while subjects like Politics, International relations, Economics, English language etc. are mainly offered in English. As far as Communication and Media studies are concerned, this is mainly offered in Sinhala medium at secondary education and tertiary education (Sri Lanka, Secretariat for Media Reforms, 2016).

Communication and Media studies is one of the academic disciplines in Humanities and Social Sciences that mainly deals with human communications as well as with mass communications.

“Communication's specific character as a discipline thus can be understood in terms of its contributions to knowledge in certain intellectual traditions, its evolving institutional forms, and its relevance to "communication" understood as a sociocultural constituted category of problems and practices. The third of these factors — the sociocultural context of disciplinarity — has, I maintain, a primary role. Communication as a practical discipline has been constructed upon (even as it reflexively reconstructs) the foundation of communication as an increasingly central category in modern societies and global culture” (Craig, 2008, p. 7).

This shows that communication plays a significant role at the individual, societal, institutional and global levels in terms of building human relationships, contributing to social-cultural phenomena and media industry in global and modern societies. Therefore, it is important to study the communication process at the individual, societal, institutional and global levels.

In this context, media education was initially introduced to the education system in France in 1920. Media education was gradually introduced to Great Britain, Russia, Germany, Canada, Australia and the USA. Now media education is taught in secondary education and tertiary education in all the countries in the world.

“Media education in the modern world can be described as the process of the development of personality with the help of and on the material of media, aimed at the shaping of culture of interaction with media, the development of creative, communicative skills, critical thinking, perception, interpretation, analysis and evaluation of media texts, teaching different forms of self-expression using media technology. Media literacy, as an outcome of this process, helps a person to actively use opportunities in the information field provided by the television, radio, video, film, press and Internet” (Fedorov, 2018, p. 8).

It is understood that media education covers a wide range of areas in communication such as human communication, media for shaping the socio-cultural, economic, and political settings etc. UNESCO has given an operational definition for media education. The report on recommendations addressed to UNESCO by the Youth Media Education seminar at Seville, 2002, media education should be at least given at the tertiary and non-formal and lifelong education. It was also recommended at the Youth Media Education seminar at Seville in 2002 to conduct research on media education, develop curricula in media education and train teachers and other stakeholders, develop media partnership with schools, universities etc. and network all the stakeholders in the media industry and consolidate and promote the public sphere.

The most important thing is that media education should cater to industrial needs and requirements. Media education is offered at the university level all over the world. Many state universities in Asian countries also offer journalism and media degree programmes to empower students with media education and journalism skills. Though these degree programmes target to achieve the expected outcomes, there are still some opportunities as well as challenges in media education in Asian countries. Pawar (2021) notes that media education was officially introduced to India in the 1940s, but after many decades still the state universities face their own challenges and limitations in catering to the fast-changing media industry requirements. The most important thing is that the students should update themselves with the past moving technologies, general knowledge, critical and analytical skills and English language while training themselves in the media industry.

As far as media education in Sri Lanka is concerned, it was introduced to Sri Lanka based on the suggestions and recommendations given by the commission appointed by the government in 1972 to look into the 1971 Jantha Vimukthi Peramuna -JVP insurrection. As a result, some media courses were

introduced by the technical educational centers to empower the Sri Lankan youth with the media education. But in 1973 only, the University of Kelaniya introduced media education to tertiary education. That was the first-time media education was formally introduced to the education system in Sri Lanka. Professor Ediriweera Sarachchandra, Professor M.B Ariyapala, Professor Wimal Dissanayake, Professor Sunanda Mahendra, Kalakirithi Edwin Ariyadasa, Dr. W.D Amaradewa, Dr. D.B Nihalsinghe are the pioneers who contributed to establishing the Department of Mass Communication under the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Kelaniya in 1973. Now undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes in Mass Communication are offered by the department (Dissanayake, 2003). In 1993, the Department of Sinhala and Mass Communication at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura started to offer degree programmes in Mass Communication. After a few years in 1996, Sri Palee Campus, University of Colombo launched the degree programme in Mass Media. The Department of Language and Communication Studies in Trincomalee Campus of Eastern University of Sri Lanka and the Department of Media Studies of the University of Jaffna are the other two departments which offer special degrees in Communication and Media studies (Sri Lanka, Secretariat for Media Reforms, 2016). The Department of Humanities of the University of Rajarata also introduced a special degree in Mass Communication for the undergraduates in 2015.

In addition to that, some other state universities such as the Department of Social Studies of the Open University of Sri Lanka, Department of Management Science of the University of Uva Wellasa, Department of Languages of the University of Sabaragamuwa and Department of Social Sciences of the University of South Eastern also offer Communication and media studies as a subject or an unit or a stream in the other degree programmes (Sri Lanka, Secretariat for Media Reforms, 2016). The Journalism Unit of the University of Colombo has recently become a separate department under the Faculty of Arts. Therefore, the Department of Communication and Creative Arts of the University of Colombo offers the Diploma in Communication and Media Studies and media-related courses for the undergraduate programmes offered by the other departments. In addition to that the department is planning to introduce a four-year special degree programme in Communication and Creative Arts. The University of the Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) also offers communication-related courses to all the degree programmes while having a VAPA TV to provide practical experience to the undergraduates.

The Department of Language and Communication Studies in Trincomalee Campus of Eastern University of Sri Lanka only offers the four-year special degree programme in Communication Studies in English medium while the other special degree programmes are offered in Sinhala medium. The Department of Media Studies of the University of Jaffna offers the four-year special degree programme in Media Studies in Tamil Medium.

There is a wide gap between what is being taught at the university and the reality of the functioning of the media. Moreover, media education does not sufficiently cover the practical needs and realities of the media industry such as English medium instructions, practical experience etc. Therefore, the challenges of media education are associated with the curriculum, technological knowledge and language skills, resources and innovations, teaching, research, assessments etc. (Sri Lanka, Secretariat for Media Reforms, 2016).

According to the literature review, no research has been conducted to examine the challenges of media education in state universities in relation to English medium instructions. Some studies were done in media education in Sri Lanka. But any of these studies were not done mainly focusing on the challenges of offering media education in English medium.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory is the main theoretical framework of the study to investigate the challenges of offering media education in English medium in the state universities in Sri Lanka.

“Vygotsky defined the ZPD as the distance between the actual developmental level (of the learner) as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under teacher or adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. According to the ZPD theory, an individual’s learning and development depends upon crossing a threshold between what he or she can do alone and what is only achievable through the help or scaffolding of peers or teachers. Therefore, learning is a social process where interaction and engagement are essential for cognitive growth. As such, language serves as a tool

central to thought and at least some form of mediation is necessary for learning to occur" (Cohen, 2020, p. 10).

This shows that the individual learners need a kind of independent learning as well as the support of the peers and teachers in problem solving or learning a language etc. As far as media education in Sri Lanka is concerned, the Department of Language and Communication Studies at Trincomalee Campus of the Eastern University of Sri Lanka only offers a special degree programme in Communication Studies in English medium. Therefore, the undergraduates attached to the other five state universities need a kind of support from the teachers and the university to introduce the English medium instruction to meaningfully study media education to obtain the skills that are required for the media industry and academia. The ZPD theory also shows that through the help or scaffolding of peers or teachers, the learners can achieve more apart from their self-learning. Therefore, if there is an English medium instruction, the undergraduates can easily improve the required skills. In this context, the conceptual and theoretical framework or the model developed for this study using ZPD theory is presented below. Therefore, the following figure shows the overall findings and suggestions of the study which are discussed in detail in the "Results and Discussion" section.

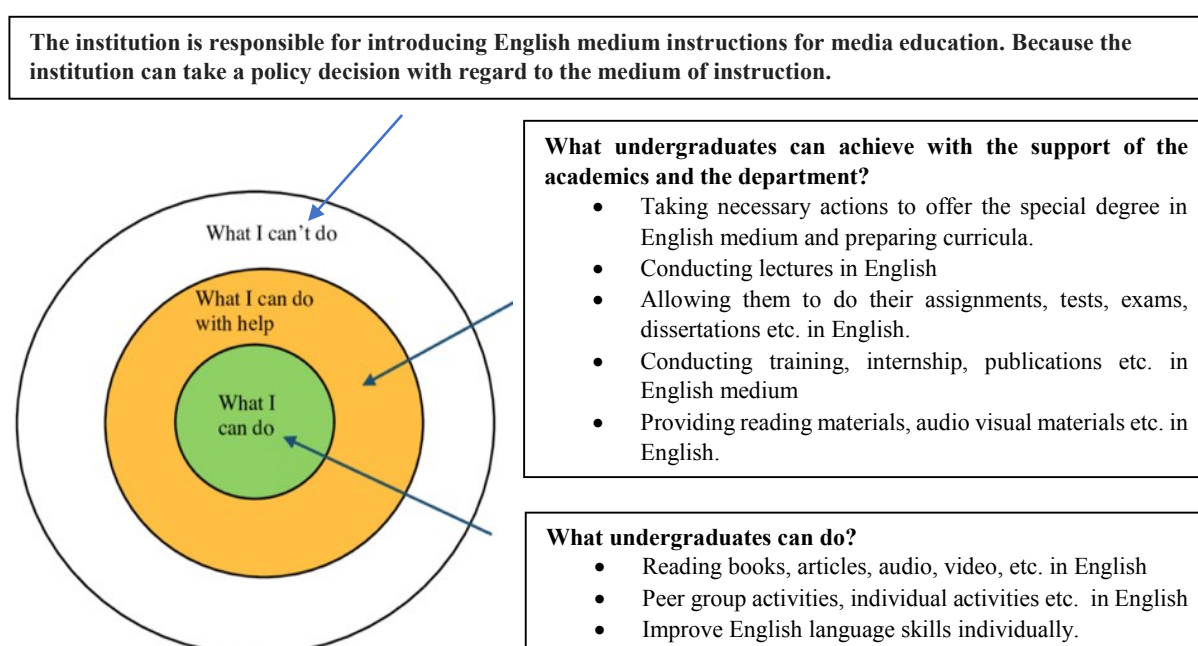


Figure 1: The proposed model for the study

Research Methods

The study used a qualitative approach to obtain data using an in-depth interview method and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The purposive sampling was used to select samples for the study. Gill et al. (2008) note that interviews provide a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon. Therefore, personal interviews were conducted with one academic from each university which offer the special degree programmes. In other words, the personal interviews were conducted with six academics in Media and Communication Studies. Moreover, the samples were selected from the Department of Mass Communication of the University of Kelaniya, the Department of Mass Media, Sri Palee Campus of the University of Colombo and the Department of Sinhala and Mass Communication of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, the Department of Language and Communication Studies, Trincomalee Campus of the Eastern University of Sri Lanka, the Department of Media Studies of the University of Jaffna and the Department of Humanities of Rajarata University Sri Lanka to investigate the challenges faced by the departments or individual staff members to offer the special degrees in English medium. Because as discussed in the literature review section, these six universities only offer four-year special degree programmes in Communication and Media Studies for undergraduates. Therefore, the personal

interviews were conducted in early February 2023 with the academics mostly using open-ended questions to get critical, insightful and informative data.

The first year and the final year of undergraduates of these six departments were also selected for the study. Because the final year undergraduates and first year undergraduates have different language proficiency levels, challenges and benefits of the English language. FGD is a structured discussion used to obtain in-depth information (qualitative data-insight) from a group of people about a particular topic. In FGDs, it is good to have 8-12 individuals to obtain more in-depth information (Omar, 2018). Therefore, it was decided to have five final-year students and five first-year students in each FGD. Altogether there were separate six FGDs with 60 undergraduates in all six universities. The FGDs were conducted with the support of three experienced moderators/ facilitators. Mostly open-ended questions were asked to get critical, insightful and informative data on the given issue. In addition to that, personal interviews were conducted with passed-out students to examine the benefits, opportunities and challenges of following the special degree programme in a particular medium. Moreover, only eight passed out students from the University of Kelaniya, the University Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Palee Campus, and Trincomalee Campus were interviewed. Because media education was introduced to Rajarata University and Jaffna University a few years ago.

The location and the samples of the study were selected based on the above-mentioned criteria, statistics, facts and justifications to investigate the challenges of offering media education in English medium at the university level. The qualitative data were analysed thematically. Some limitations were caused in the study due to some geographical and subjective reasons. But the population and sample size can be expanded, and more research areas can be covered to find more practical findings in a future study in a systematic and methodical manner.

Results and Discussion

The findings are focusing on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory which is the main theoretical framework of the study to investigate the challenges of offering media education in English medium in the state universities in Sri Lanka. The results showed that the Department of Language and Communication Studies in Trincomalee Campus of the Eastern University of Sri Lanka only offers a four-year special degree programme in Communication Studies in English medium whereas the other five special degree programmes are offered in Sinhala medium. The Department of Media Studies of the University of Jaffna offers the four-year special degree programme in Media Studies in Tamil medium. Therefore, the undergraduates need a kind of support from the teachers and the university to introduce the English medium instruction or education to meaningfully study media education to obtain the skills that are required for the media industry or academia. The ZPD theory also shows that through the help or scaffolding of peers or teachers the learners can achieve more apart from their self-learning. If there is an English Medium Education, the undergraduates can easily improve the skills required for the job market, postgraduate studies, research and publications etc.

The findings of the research further showed that, there are some challenges in offering media education in English medium by the state universities. One challenge is limited permanent staff who are capable of teaching in English medium. Because most of the teachers studied their undergraduate studies in media education in local languages. But the findings further showed that senior and junior teachers are willing to conduct academic activities in English medium as they have done their higher studies and research in English medium. But some teachers are not confident in teaching in English since there is no English working environment in the department.

The academics in Communication Studies should engage in more research, training, and work at the industrial, national and international levels compared to other academics in the discipline of the Humanities and Social Sciences. The findings of this study also showed that due to the English language barrier, some of the academics in Communication and Media Studies are not motivated in publishing in English medium (Sri Lanka, Secretariat for Media Reforms, 2016). Makovec (2018) also notes that the role of a teacher is very important in the teaching and learning process. The pedagogical skills of teachers such as subject knowledge, curriculum, teaching methods and strategies, technological skills, language proficiency, creative skills etc. are important to have an effective teaching and learning process.

This shows that English proficiency of the teacher is also important in the teaching and learning process.

A senior academic attached to Sri Palee Campus stated that “Majority of teachers attached to the department studied their undergraduate studies in Sinhala medium even though the postgraduate studies were done in English medium and some other foreign languages. Since the teachers do not have the English working environment or much exposure, they are not confident in conducting the academic activities in English. But the teachers are capable of managing their academic activities in English if there is a proper working environment and academic culture at the university. Therefore, the bilingual education can be given at the initial stage to establish a proper English medium teaching and learning for both teachers and students. In addition to that, the English course should be completed by the undergraduates as a service course to obtain the degree”.

This shows that there is a possibility of offering the four-year undergraduate degree programme in communication or media in English medium by the state universities. One option is to offer bilingual education at the initial stage and gradually move into fully English medium education. Media education should be given in the English medium to prepare the students for the future job market. At least bilingual education should be introduced by the departments. Offering English and IT as supportive courses is not the only solution to prepare undergraduates for the future job market (Sri Lanka, Secretariat for Media Reforms, 2016).

The results further showed that the English medium education can provide several opportunities for both teachers and students such as further postgraduate opportunities, scholarships, publications, job opportunities etc. at the local and international levels. Another challenge is the difficulty of finding visiting academics or resource persons who are capable of teaching media and communication in English medium in state universities. The findings of the study also showed that since the majority of undergraduate programmes in Communication or Media studies are offered in Sinhala medium, there are limited resource persons and visiting academics available for English medium instruction.

The students also have their own experiences, requirements and opinions on English medium instructions/education for Media education.

A final year undergraduate attached to the Department of Sinhala and Mass Communication of the University of Jaywardenepura said that “We requested from the department to offer a special degree programme in Mass Communication in English medium. Because we can get more opportunities in finding jobs, scholarships, postgraduate studies etc. if we study in English medium”.

Navaz (2021) notes that the mother tongue instructions are mainly given in courses in the Arts and related fields, whereas courses in Science, Medicine, Engineering and science related subjects are taught in English. Graduates who studied in the English medium get more employability opportunities. But Arts graduates are mostly unemployed due to less English language proficiency. Therefore, bilingual instruction or dual medium of instruction is one of the solutions to empower students with English language proficiency.

A final year undergraduate attached to the Trincomalee Campus stated that “We are the most benefited undergraduates who only get opportunities to do our studies in English medium compared to the undergraduates in Communication and Media studies in the other state universities. English medium education really makes us comfortable in gaining more knowledge. We also refer to English scholarly books, articles, audio and video materials etc. in writing our assignments and final dissertation. As a student, I presented three abstracts at the international conferences in English medium and now working on an article with my supervisor which is mainly based on my final research. So, we always respect the pioneers who introduced this English medium education for media studies in our campus”.

The ZPD theory also highlights that students need support from the teachers and the university for their learning apart from self-learning (Cohen, 2020). Therefore, the university or teachers should make necessary institutional decisions to introduce the English medium instruction/ education to meaningfully study media education in order to obtain the skills that are required for the media industry and local and international academic requirements and qualifications. Therefore, all the other universities should take the necessary actions to introduce English medium instructions for media education.

On the other hand, some students who follow the special degree programme in Mass Communication at the University of Rajarata emphasized that it is difficult to learn in English medium since they are mainly coming from remote areas. Though the majority of students wish to have their media education in English medium, some undergraduates find difficulties in studying in English medium due to the lack of English proficiency and exposure. Therefore, it is evident that the lack of English language proficiency and exposure of undergraduates is also another challenge in offering media education in English medium. Navaz (2021) notes that it is important to empower local students with English language, especially students coming from remote areas. Creating an English learning and speaking environment helps them to be familiar with the language.

The undergraduates of Sri Jayewardenepura University also mentioned that they are not allowed to do their assignments or dissertations in English medium by the department. On the other hand, the Department of Mass Communication of the University of Kelaniya, Sri Palee Campus, University of Jaffna and University of Rajarata have given opportunities for communication undergraduates to do their assignments, final examination and final dissertation in English medium though the medium of instructions are mainly given in local languages, English or Tamil. Moreover, the Department of Mass Communication of the University of Kelaniya delivers one course in English medium in each semester especially in the four-year special degree programme in Public Relations and Media Managements. Sri Palee Campus and the University of Kelaniya only offer both the undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Sinhala medium. But the postgraduate student can do their assignments, final examination and final dissertation in the English medium though the medium of instruction is mainly given in the Sinhala medium. But PhD opportunities in Media and Communication Studies are only offered by the Department of Mass Communication of the University of Kelaniya. Therefore, the PhD candidates are allowed to do the dissertation in Sinhala or English.

As far as these findings are concerned, there is a high possibility of introducing English medium instructions for media education in Sri Lanka. Because bilingual opportunities are available for students in learning according to the findings presented in the previous paragraphs. Another finding of the study is that the final year undergraduates are good in the English language compared to the first-year undergraduates in all six universities. The findings further showed that these students have become good in the language after referring to books, articles, audio and video materials, online resources, available at the university, engaging in group and individual activities etc. The ZPD theory also highlights that learners can improve their language proficiency by reading books, articles, audio, video, etc., engaging in peer group activities, individual activities etc. The English books, internet facilities, multimedia facilities etc. are also available for the undergraduates at the state universities to do the Communication and Media studies.

According to the findings of the study, the passed-out students of the Trincomalee campus are really benefited by studying in English medium. Some are now working as academics at the same department or other state universities and obtained their postgraduate qualifications in English medium. Some of them have obtained foreign scholarships to do their postgraduate studies in recognized foreign universities. The results also further showed that many passed out students have become media persons in English medium for mainstream media or freelance media etc. while some work for NGOs, international organizations etc.

On the other hand, the passed-out students who studied in Sinhala medium mainly work as government servants. Mostly they are teachers, officers etc. while a considerable number of passed-out students are attached to media institutions. But many of them use local languages for their day-to-day work. The teachers who studied media-related degree programmes mostly teach other subjects or work for primary sections in government schools while some of them work as development officers etc. This study found that some passed-out students have become academics in state universities. Mostly these academics do their academic work in Sinhala language while some of them get opportunities for English medium postgraduate opportunities, research and publications and exposure to English medium working environment. This shows that English medium education makes more sound professionals while Sinhala and Tamil medium education limit opportunities for professionals.

Conclusion

The results showed that the Department of Language and Communication Studies in Trincomalee Campus of the Eastern University of Sri Lanka only offers the four-year special degree programme in Communication Studies in English medium whereas the other five special degree programmes are offered in local languages. Therefore, the results further showed that there are some challenges in offering media education in English medium by the state universities. One challenge is limited permanent staff who are capable of teaching in English medium. In addition to that, there are limited resource persons and visiting academics available for English medium instruction. Therefore, there should be a mechanism introduced by the department or the university to establish an English working environment and academic culture for the academics. This helps them to do teaching, administrative work, research publications, postgraduate qualifications and other industrial, national and international contributions in English medium confidently.

On the other hand, some students found it difficult to learn in English medium since they are mainly coming from remote areas. Though the majority of students wish to have their media education in English medium, some undergraduates find difficulties in studying in English medium due to the lack of English proficiency and exposure. Therefore, bilingual education can be given at the initial stage to establish a proper English medium of teaching and learning for both teachers and students and gradually move into fully English medium education.

The ZPD theory also highlights that students need support from the teachers and the university for their learning apart from self-learning. Therefore, the university or teachers should take necessary institutional decisions to introduce English medium education to meaningfully study media education in order to obtain the skills that are required for the media industry and local and international academic requirements.

Therefore, the results showed that there is a high possibility of introducing English medium instruction for media education in Sri Lanka. The findings further showed that senior and junior teachers are willing to conduct academic activities in English medium as they have done their higher studies and research in English medium. On the other hand, the majority of undergraduates are willing to have English medium instructions for media education. The results further showed that English medium education can provide several opportunities for both teachers and students such as further postgraduate opportunities, scholarships, publications, job opportunities etc. at the local and international levels.

The findings also showed that these students have become good in the language after referring to books, articles, audio and video materials, online resources, available at the university and engaging in group and individual activities etc. The ZPD theory also highlights that learners can improve their language proficiency by engaging in peer group activities, individual activities etc. Therefore, it is concluded that there are strengths, resources, needs, infrastructure facilities etc. available at the state universities in Sri Lanka to introduce English medium instructions for media education. In other words, the challenges of English medium instructions can be overcome by establishing an English working environment and academic culture for both students and academics.

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