

**PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY STUDENTS WITH VISUAL
IMPAIRMENTS AND INSTRUCTORS IN LEARNING AND TEACHING
ENGLISH WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FACULTY OF ARTS,
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Although a number of researches have been conducted to discuss the difficulties faced by students with visual impairments in learning, the studies that specifically focus on the problems they face when “learning English as a Second Language” are handful. The main objective of this study is to investigate the problems encountered by students with visual impairments and their instructors in learning and teaching English. Further, the authors aim at suggesting feasible solutions to overcome the identified problems. A mix method research design was used in this study and both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques were employed. Semi structured interviews were conducted with 12 students with visual impairments. Questionnaires were also circulated among 5 instructors. Data collected from both interviews and questionnaires assisted in collecting information related to demographics, attitudes towards learning English language, problems encountered by students with visual impairments in learning English in the class room within the mainstream system, challenges faced by instructors in the English Language Teaching Unit in the process of teaching and designing curriculum for the students with visual impairments etc. The selected sample includes 5 English instructors who are attached to the English Language Teaching Unit of Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya and 8 male and 4 female students with visual impairments (low vision and totally blind) between the age range of 20 -27, belonging to the four years, taking English as a non-credit subject for their Bachelor of Arts degree. The key findings of the study can mainly be understood from two perspectives; One from the students with visual impairments and the other from that of the instructors. Differences in the level of competency and absence of a sound basic knowledge in English, having to study in classes where there are students with different impairments and different first languages (Sinhala and Tamil) are some of the problems that were identified from the perspective of the students. As per the instructors’ perspective, one of the major problems is the absence of proper training in teaching and designing a curriculum for the students with visual impairments. This along with the lack of special or specific methodologies adopted to teach leads to non-uniformity in lessons and teaching and evaluation methods. Unavailability of well-equipped classrooms is another major issue faced by both students and instructors. The paper concludes with recommendations to reduce these problems for visually impaired students in learning English.

Keywords: Visual impairments, Language learning, Language teaching