

## Political Influence on Language Education in Sri Lanka: Challenges and Opportunities

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### ABSTRACT

The English Language was introduced as the medium of instruction in 1833 in Sri Lanka, while Sinhala and Tamil remained indigenous languages. During the British Colonial rule in Sri Lanka, English language proficiency seemed to be instrumental to get government employment. Since Sri Lanka became an independent state, politicians have frequently intervened in the language policy of the country. The objective of this study is to categorize the challenges Sri Lankans encounter in language education and identify the opportunities to promote language education, particularly English as a second language proficiency. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were involved in the Research. Tools for data collection to implement this research included interviews, group discussions and secondary data sources. In 1960 s, as far as the government schools were concerned, the natives were keen to receive education in their own native languages. Yet, after a lapse of 18 years of the adoption of the system of bilingual education, the crisis such system underwent in its course is still recalled regrettably. It is disappointing to note that most of the students do not achieve the required level of English knowledge despite their school education for 13 years. Particularly students from rural areas, hill countries and poor families face serve difficulties in learning the language. It is suggested that politicians should consider for sighted amendments to the existing language policy for better prospect considering the higher educational prospects and career opportunities worldwide.

**Keywords:** Bilingual Education, English as a second language, English Language Proficiency, Government Employment, Indigenous Languages