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Insights and Innovations in Teaching ESL for Rural Students - A Case Study

C. S. U. Abhijit, M.A., and K. Sasidher, M.A.

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Abstract

The importance of English language learning cannot be under estimated in the backdrop of neo-liberal industrial background of India. In this connection an English teacher teaching in rural area confronts with two distinctly paradoxical situations. First the opportunities that are available in the market are abound for trained people in industries. Secondly the inability of the student's to catch up to the expectations of the industry due to lack of communication skills and English comprehensive skills.

In this backdrop my paper explores and analyses the problems and prospects of devising and using some workable modules in teaching English as second language to equip the rural students with necessary skills which are required by the industries.

My paper also analyses the performance of the students over three years before and after implementing the interactive methods of teaching English and proves that the methods discussed

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in the paper are not only workable but also incredibly efficacious in imparting communication skills among the rural students.

Introduction

In the modern neo-liberal scenario of India, the necessity of competence in English has become increasingly vital. The globalization has necessitated the learning of English language in an international perspective. Moreover the text materials on the subjects of technical education, science and medicine are available in English. The advance of multinational companies in all sectors of economy such as production, distribution and service sectors require personnel with a fair degree of language competence. In this backdrop the necessity of acquisition of not only spoken English but also written English has become the need of the hour. As a result, a language learner is left with no option but to acquire the language skills with the use of modern methods and gadgets. In this percept it is a high time to have a holistic approach to teach and learn English as a second language.

Role of English in Neo-liberal India

As far as Indian students are concerned the importance and pressures the students encounter are really unique. Due to globalization of Indian economy the country has become one of the fastest growing economies in the world. The economy is open to every competent person. The unemployment in India is not linked with lack of job opportunities in the country. But it is linked with the lack of competency among the prospective candidates. In the process of developing core competencies, the knowledge of English language is *sine qua non*. Even though the economy is developing the environment around the learner is not conducive to develop competency in English language. The environment around the student is a stumbling block to acquire language abilities. At home they have the heavy influence of mother tongue and whatever English they learn, they learn either in a passive lecture method or in translation method without having a chance to learn in an interactive way.

Socio-economic Background

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India is a country in which the society is well-knit with complex admixture of various castes, creeds, religions and different socio- economic backgrounds. The learning of English language as second language is highly influenced by the social background of an individual. Due to its agrarian background, majority of learners come from rural background. As a result, the students in rural schools have limited exposure towards language learning. The reason behind their low level of competency in English can be linked with two reasons: first, lack of environment that encourages the students to learn the language, secondly, they have the teachers who do not have sufficient exposure to teaching English in a scientific way. As a result they resort to teach English either by teacher-centered method or translation method. Moreover, the students learn all other subjects in their regional language by which, they do not have any need to gain mastery over English language.

Students' Problems in Learning

As has been stated above, the students with different abilities and students with under privileged backgrounds have peculiar problems to deal with in learning English language. It is to be noted that the socio economic back drop of the student cannot be altered by an English teacher. He is limited to the extent of imparting available student friendly technique to induce interest among the students. In the traditional teacher centered teaching methodology, the under privileged students have been deprived of getting the benefit of modern technical know-how that is used in teaching English. The rural students are not exposed to language laboratory, they do not hear of collaborative learning, peer teaching and they are always at home with lecture method and rote memory method of learning the language. As a result they are not able to gain mastery over the language learning.

In this connection it is to be remembered that a suitable method should be devised or designed to meet the needs of the student in learning language skills. Here we discuss some innovative methods which can be proved as student friendly in helping the students to acquire the basic language skills.

Methods of Teaching English

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As the English teacher has to inculcate the basic LSRW skills as a first step to help students acquire competency in English language he has to follow various methods in teaching of English as second language. He has to mix up both traditional and modern methods of teaching and evolve a method that is suitable to the students. The following are some of the methods that can be both innovative and student friendly in teaching English in an interactive way.

Enriching Vocabulary Method

As the students have the rural background and they are habituated to lecture method, the teacher should start teaching in lecture method and translation method initially and try to inculcate direct method of teaching English via grammar translation method. The teacher has to reschedule the entire syllabi of English into thoroughly manageable units or modules and add vocabulary that is necessary for students to understand the background of lesson. The teacher has to take live examples and the English words which are equal to colloquial language words and make the student understand and use the words thoroughly. The teacher has to engage the students with remedial work and corrective assignments in the field of grammar and vocabulary building. The teacher should talk English in natural way within the purview of their limited vocabulary giving those speaking exercises on the objects and events of their surroundings, so that they try their level best to express themselves. For example, the teacher can give exercises on local festivals, favorite dishes, favorite movies, etc.

Jumbling Method

The one of the best methods to be followed by the teacher in teaching of English is jumbling method. In this method the teacher divides a task into different small tasks which are mutually related and independent. The class is divided into groups and each group is given a segment of task. Then the members of the groups are interchanged and made into different groups again. Then the students are encouraged to talk and present their work. No student is exempted to talk. The teacher further has to encourage the student to follow reversal of roles which means that the teacher gives the tasks to the students on selected topics and they are expected to prepare the topic and present before the class as a teacher. In that way the student is able to develop not only the competence on the subject but also develop the basic life skills like problem solving and

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creative thinking. Further the teacher has to divide the class into different groups with not more than five students a group and should give them an assignment of telling the story before the class or reading news in the prayer.

Syntax Restructure Method

The teacher should reconstruct the syntax in a manageable and an understandable way. For example in the teaching of Active Passive voice, the following method should be followed. First, the student should understand that in active to passive voice they are subject, verb and object. When subject is active it is an active voice. When subject is silent or passive it is a passive voice. The verb with an object is called transitive verb and a verb without an object is called intransitive verb. When we ask a question to verb with what, whom, if there is an answer it is an object. All sentences in all tenses with general syntax can be regarded as in active voice.

Pictorial Method

Pictorial method is the other method through which students can develop their speaking skills fastly. In this method the teacher draws a picture and every student is encouraged to describe the picture in his own words irrespective of grammatical errors. Further the teacher draw a table with data and asks the students to write in a paragraph format and further encourage the students to speak on that topic.

Creative-Poetic Method

In this method every student is encouraged to listen to popular movie songs in their regional language. They are encouraged to observe the vocabulary and the situation of the songs. They are given simpler day to day English vocabulary and its colloquial equivalent words. Then they are given some controlled situations. They are encouraged to write poem irrespective of meter or rhythm. This method helps them understand the situation and develop explanatory power especially in writing in the short run and speaking in the long run.

Material Creation Method

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In this method each and every student should be given a concept and they are encouraged to write a thought provoking caption or placard sounding the entire concept in few words and after all the students prepare their captions, the material is jumbled among the students and they are encouraged to write on the concept. This method encourages the students to develop comprehension and creative skills.

Analysis of the Data

In the light of the above methods now it is our turn to prove the efficacy of these methods in teaching English in an interactive way. The following data are taken from VITAM engineering college, Visakhapatnam to prove graphically the performance of student in English before and after introduction of interactive method of teaching English.

The following table shows the enrolment of students from various social backgrounds in VITAM College in Visakhapatnam.

S.No	Academic Year	ST	SC	BC	OC	Total
1	2006-07	03	15	89	110	217
2	2007-08	05	27	120	115	267
3	2008-09	06	43	136	122	307
4	2009-10	17	26	208	158	419

The following table shows the performance of the student from various social backgrounds in the year 2006-07 in English.

Marks	SC+ST	BC	OC	TOTAL
10-20	8	29	10	47
20-30	6	30	20	56
30-40	3	20	40	63
40-50	1	8	20	29

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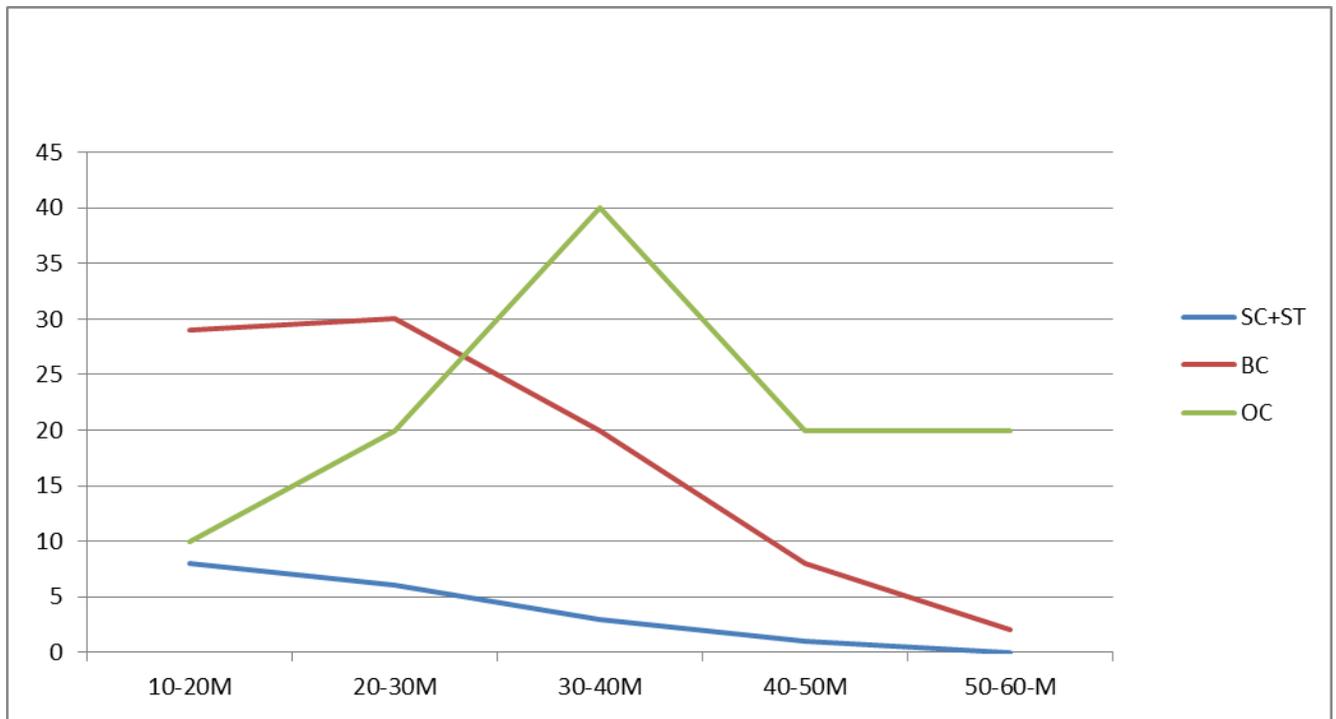
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50-60	0	2	20	22
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The above data are presented below in graphical representation.



The above chart depicts the general pattern of progress of the students of English in classroom before the implementation of interactive method in English in 2006-07.

The following table shows the performance of the student from various social backgrounds in the year 2007-08 in English.

Marks	SC+ST	BC	OC	TOTAL
10-20	10	25	10	45
20-30	10	30	25	65
30-40	8	40	35	73
40-50	2	15	30	47
50-60	1	5	15	21

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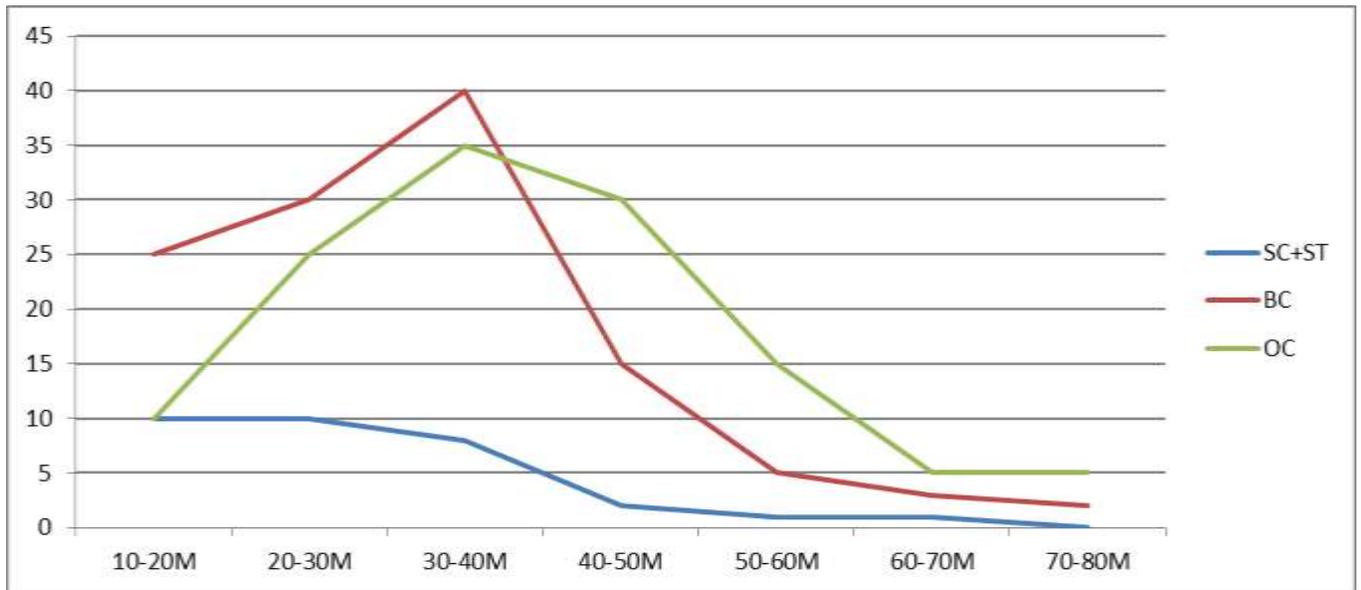
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60-70	1	3	5	9
70-80	0	2	5	7

The above data are presented below in graphical representation.



The above chart depicts the progress of the students in learning English which is shown by the marks they obtained in the subject. The chart shows that there is an improvement among the students of SC,ST scoring 40 to 50 marks in English increased from 1 student in 2006-07 to 2 students in 2007-08. The number of students scoring 40 to 50 marks among BC and OC increased from total of 28 students (8 students from BC and 20 students from OC) in 2006-07 to 45 students (15 students from BC and 30 students from OC) in 2007-08. Thus it is proved beyond doubt that interactive method is workable in all social situations and backwards to show progress among students in English language learning and teaching.

The following table shows the performance of the student from various social backgrounds in the year 2009-10 in English.

Marks	SC+ST	BC	OC	TOTAL

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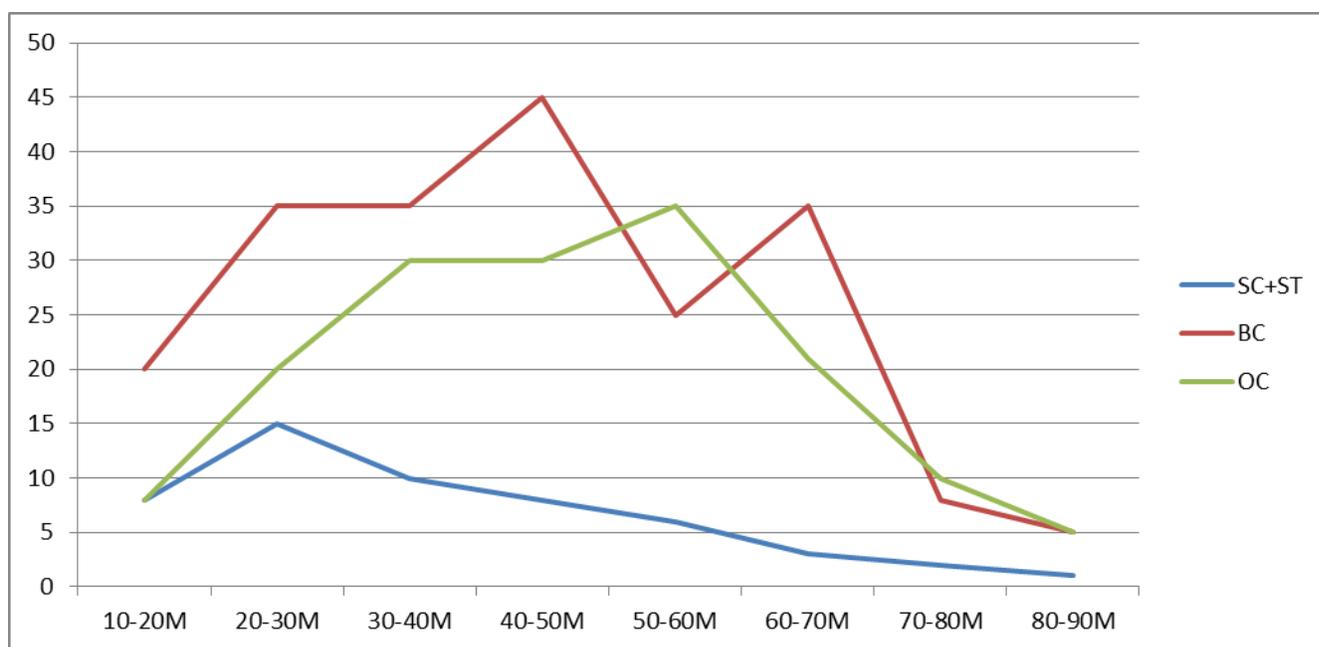
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10-20	8	20	8	36
20-30	15	35	20	70
30-40	10	35	30	75
40-50	8	45	30	83
50-60	6	25	35	66
60-70	3	35	21	58
70-80	2	8	10	20
80-90	1	5	5	11

The above data are presented below in graphical representation.



The chart depicts the progress of the students marked in English language learning in controlled conditions. Unlike the years of 2007 and 2008 in 2009 and 2010 the students getting average mark increased but also these numbers of students in all categories getting 80-90 also increased

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to a greater extent. This analysis shows the success of interactive and structural method of teaching and learning grammar.

Conclusion

In the light of above survey and analysis regarding teaching and learning of English as second language in the rural backdrop, it is found that the methods that are followed in teaching English should be flexible and the methods should be kept on changing by the teacher to suit the ever changing needs of the students. At the same time the main spirit of the teaching VIZ is to inculcate the ability among the students to express in the language in a lucid way. Thus, it is concluded that if the appropriate method is chosen and implemented effectively, the result will be fantastic.

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This is our bright hope today! The joy that comes from the Lord and that is in the Lord is our strength (Neh. 8:10). We can have joy even in our suffering. For what we do has meaning and value because of Jesus. Everyone we come into contact with is someone in need of this joy. Because we have been given that joy, we can now give it to others. Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow. Volume 11 : 2 February 2011. ISSN 1930-2940. Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D. Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D. Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D. B. A. Sharada, Ph.D. A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D. Lakhani Gusain, Ph.D. Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D. S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D. G. Baskaran, Ph.D. L. Ramamoorthy, Ph.D. G. Baskaran, Ph.D. and R. Anandam, M.A, M.Phil. =Language in India www.languageinindia.com 11 : 2 February 2011 G. Baskaran, Ph.D. and R. Anandam, M.A, M.Phil.. Review of English and Soft Skills by S. P. Dhanavel (Orient BlackSwan, Hyderabad, 2010). 423. The Book and the Author. Church and ministry leadership resources to better equip, train and provide ideas for today's church and ministry leaders, like you. visit section now. Resources For the Faith Seeker. E-Books and Other Special Offers. 7 Day Prayer Challenge for Spouses. A Different Kind of Christian. Jesus Is Love. Pastors and Church Leaders. Prayer Devotional. The Saints We Love.