



EVALUATION OF STUDENTS' ACTIVITY UNDER ACTIVITY BASED METHOD OF LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN RURAL AND URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT:

This paper intends to find the activities of the Bengali medium students of urban and rural primary schools of West Bengal in learning English (L₂) through Activity Based Method. The authors set four objectives for finding the quality of activities in those schools. An observation schedule was developed by the researchers to observe and note the activities of the students during learning. The authors also compared the learning activities of the two groups of students and found their strength and weakness in activities. Finally the strength and weakness of the Bengali medium primary students in learning English (L₂) through Activity Based Method were revealed.

KEYWORDS: Activity Based Method, Students' activity, English language learning.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The teaching of English at primary level in West Bengal discontinued in 1982 in order to increase the enrolment of students at primary level. The effect of such discontinuation damaged the backbone of English language education of primary level as well as higher education of West Bengal. When the English language teaching was reappeared in 2005 neither the students nor the teachers had any heritage of English language teaching learning in lower classes. Different methods were tried on the students but end products were almost nil (Majumder, 1993, p. 919-920, Chattopadhyaya, 2014, p. 131-134).

In that scenario Government of West Bengal had started a new thinking regarding School Education in the year 2011. The 'Expert Committee' has reviewed the entire aspect of school level curriculum, syllabus, text book and teaching learning method and recommended to revise the entire curriculum, textbook, syllabus, equipment of the classroom and teaching-learning method of primary and upper primary section of West Bengal. The approach of primary school education shifted its focus from the conventional approach of teaching learning to child centric, activity based approach to teaching-learning. It has wider acceptability and encourages both teachers and learners in second language teaching learning.

In Activity Based Method children should be active. Learning is collaborative and communicative. The students should enjoy the principle of joyful learning. The learning principle of English emphasizes on the developing audio-oral skills as well as on the skills of reading and writing. The development of Language



competence follows inductive process of learning where exposure to language items is initially provided and is followed by wide range of activities. Students' activity is a practical or reasoning task engaged in one by one or more pupils to enhance and enrich learning. While tasks are associated with evaluating individual pupil's performance, activity involves two or more pupil working cooperatively or collaboratively to achieve a common goal (Hayes, 2006, p.6). Activities are display of behaviour and discipline, training of body and mind. Acting, performing, demonstrating, playing games, thinking, writing, reading,

reasoning questioning, answering, operating something are generally considered by different educationists as the examples of students' activity while learning English as second language.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is too much use of mother tongue in the classroom. There are no significant rules for teaching grammar and the teachers are using traditional method (Ram, 1989). Cartwright and Allen (2002) observed that urban students performed significantly better in reading skill than rural students of Canada. Fareh(2010) studied the challenges of teaching learning of English in the Arab World and found that improper training of the teachers, teacher centered activities, inappropriate textbooks and teaching materials, importance on rote learning rather than emphasis on skills etc. dominate the teaching learning in school. Jalan and Panda (2010) made an investigation on the quality of primary education in rural West Bengal. A child's learning is related to family, parent's perception and household income. Khamari, Guru, et al. (2014) studied on the problems of teaching English at primary level. The study found illegible handwriting and spelling mistakes are two related problems with many other problems of English language learning at primary level. Banerjee (2016) presented a morbid picture of English language teaching in West Bengal. Students have problem in fluency. Kalia(2017) studied on the English language teaching in India: trends and challenges. She identified use of mother tongue, fear of feedback, overcrowded classrooms, lack of competent teachers, lack of students' participation in language learning, faulty methods of teaching with many other challenges of teaching of English. Vasudevan (2017) identified that slow learners need encouragement, tutoring, reading readiness, more time and relaxation in learning. Rasheed et al. (2017) studied on the challenges of teaching English Language in a Multilingual Setting and found that weak linguistic background of the learners, anxiety of the learners; problems in the books are some of the challenges of teaching. Borah (2017) studied on the development of the learners' English skills in the schools of Nagaon, Assam and found that most of the students of the class tried to speak in English but failed. The above studies observed some difficulties of the students in rural and urban schools throughout the world. But their studies did not consider the activity based method of teaching English and the difficulties occurring there in to the students in such method. The study is particularly useful to the students of West Bengal where English language education lost its pristine glory. In this connection it is the privilege of the researcher to see whether the problems noted engulf the teaching learning of the students in West Bengal in learning 2nd language English through activity.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY: IN THE ACTIVITY BASED METHOD

- i) To find the state- of –the-art of *Students' Activity* in learning English in the primary schools of rural area.
- ii) To find the state- of -the- art of *Students' Activity* in learning English in the primary schools of urban area.
- iii) To compare the performance of *Students' Activity* in the primary schools of rural and urban areas.
- iv) To find out strengths and weaknesses of the *Students'* in performing *Activity* in primary schools of West Bengal.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

On the basis of related studies and experience of the present investigator as an English language teacher the following questions might be set to probe answer through research:

1. What is the status of the *Students' Activity* in rural schools of West Bengal?
2. What is the status of the *Students' Activity* in urban schools of West Bengal?
- iii) What is the difference of performances of *Students' Activity* in the primary schools of rural and urban areas?
- iv) What are the strength and weakness of the *Students'* in performing *Activity* in the primary schools of West Bengal?

5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study comprises of observation and reporting of a few processes (techniques) belonging to the Activity Based Method of learning English as second language.

DELIMITATIONS:

1. The study was done on government aided (Bengali medium) schools under administrative control of West Bengal Board of Primary Education only.
2. Students' activity includes following processes: a) while performing activity students discuss in groups and feel free to share opinions. b) Discussion of the students is relevant to the topic given in the English class. c) Students use newly learnt words and phrases while learning through activity. d) Students do peer correction while engaged in activity. e) Students use gesture while performing listening-speaking and reading activity. f) Students perform activity using worksheets. g) Students do not try to focus separately on grammar. h) Backward learners do activity with encouragement and taking required time. [Ref: WBBPE(2014), Anandalakshamy (2007)]

DEFINITION OF IMPORTANT TERMS:

Backward learners- Learners who are socially, economically and physically backward are termed as backward learners. They are identified with help of the class teacher.

Urban Schools- Schools situated in municipality, corporation or notified areas. These schools enjoy better facilities.

Rural Schools- Schools situated in panchayat areas. These schools do not enjoy better facility.

Tool(Observation Schedule): To realize the objectives of research the researchers has developed and used an **Observation Schedule of the Students' Activity in Activity Based Method (SAABM)**. The tool has been designed in **eight (08)** activities of the students' in the classroom of English Language teaching learning under Activity Based Method in West Bengal.

Population of the study: Students of standard class IV Bengali medium primary schools of WBBPE are the population for the present study.

Sample: 30 schools selected from districts Hooghly, Burdwan(undivided), Birbhum, North 24 Parganas, Bankura, Malda, Murshidabad using stage sampling method. Students of class IV for each of those schools were selected en bloc.

6. DATA PRESENTATION

From each of the 30 schools covered under the study the observation. Data were collated in two divisions: Rural schools & urban schools. These are presented below.

Table 1 Teaching learning of English language in rural schools

Serial number of activities	Observation on the activities of the students in teaching learning of English in rural schools(observation by researcher and trained co-observers)
1	70% students are very much fearsome in discussing in groups about the topic given in the English class. Only 30% students are discussing in groups and feel free to share opinions. Students have collaborative relationship among them. Mother tongue dominates their discussion.
2	80% students are not consistent in their discussion. Sometimes they discuss and sometimes they are engaged in their own work. Discussion of the students has very poor relationship with the given topic in the English class.
3	Only 10% students' use newly learnt words and phrases while performing activity. They are little interested about the newly learnt words.

4	70% students are not habituated with the activity of peer corrections. Students are not able to exchange their copies with their peer. Habituated students are not hesitating in the process.
5	Only 10% students' use of gesture while performing listening speaking and reading activities of English. Sometimes they try to mimicry the gesture. Students are physically and emotionally strong enough but they cannot express their feelings in English language learning.
6	90% students are enthusiastic about the use of worksheets. But 80% students are unable to connect worksheets with the particular texts. Students are doing spelling mistakes in filling the worksheets. Most of the handwriting is illegible.
7	Students have enthusiasm about the learning of grammar. 80% students try to learn grammar through the process of memorization or rote learning. They are interested in the learning of grammar. Answers of most of the activities of grammar are wrong.
8	Backward learners are performing activities with the average students of the class. Slow learners of the classroom lack the basic skills of language learning. They lack encouragement and motivation in learning. Like dumb sometimes they are observing the situation.

From the Table1 it has been seen that in Activity Based Method most of the students are unable to perform the activities expected from them.

Table 2 Teaching learning of English in Urban schools

Serial number of activities	Observation on the activities of the students in teaching learning of English in urban schools(observation by researcher and trained co-observers)
1	50% students are fearsome in discussing in groups or pairs about the topic given in the English class. Students are anxious about the use of target language in the given topic. Mother tongue dominates their discussion but the use is less than the rural students.
2	70% students are not consistent in their discussion. Sometimes they discuss and sometimes they are engaged in their own work. Discussion has very poor relationship with the given topic in the English class. But they are trying to maintain relationship of thought and words in discussion.
3	Only 20% students' use newly learnt words and phrases while learning through activity. They are interested about the newly learnt words. They are habituated to use their usual words.
4	60% students are not habituated with the activity of peer correction. Some of the students are not able to exchange their copies with their peer. But habituated students are not hesitating in the process.
5	Only 20% students are using gesture in listening –speaking and reading activities of English. Sometimes they try to mimicry the gesture. But they have interest in learning and use of gesture.
6	90% students are enthusiastic about the use of worksheets. But 60% students are unable to connect worksheets with the particular texts. They are reading the worksheets carefully. Students are doing spelling mistakes in filling the worksheets. Some of the handwriting is illegible.
7	80% students try to learn grammar through the process of memorization and rote learning. They are interested in the learning of grammar. Answers of some of the activities of grammar are wrong.
8	Backward learners are performing activities with the average students of the class. But slow learners of the classroom lack the basic skills of language learning. They lack encouragement and motivation in learning.

From the table 2 it has been seen that in Activity Based Method some of the students are able to perform the activities expected from them.

7. DATA ANALYSIS

7. 1 Comparison of performances of Students' Activity under Activity Based Method in Rural and Urban Schools of West Bengal:

With reference to the table 1 and 2 we compare the performance of Students' Activity in Rural and Urban Schools of West Bengal;

Table 3 Comparison of performances of Students' Activity under Activity Based Method in Rural and Urban Schools of West Bengal

Serial number of the activity	Comparisons of observations of the Students of Rural and Urban schools of West Bengal
1	Urban students are discussing more and feeling freer in sharing of opinions than the rural students of West Bengal. Urban students excel by 20% over the rural students in the activity. Mother tongue dominancy is less in the discussion of the urban students.
2	Regarding relevancy of discussion urban students are more relevant (10% more) to the topic than the rural students of West Bengal. Urban students are better in maintaining relationship of discussion than the rural students.
3	10% urban students are using more newly learnt words in their activity than the rural students of West Bengal.
4	10% urban students are not performing better in peer correction activity than the rural students of West Bengal.
5	10% urban students are performing better than the rural students of West Bengal. Urban students are able to link their expression with their topic of learning.
6	20% urban students are performing better than the rural students of West Bengal. Urban students are reading worksheets more than the rural students.
7	There is no difference in the learning process of grammar of the rural and urban students of West Bengal. All of them are trying to focus it separately.
8	There is no difference in the learning process of the rural and urban students of West Bengal. All of them lack basic skills of language learning, enthusiasm and motivation.

From the Table 3 it has been observed that in most of the activities urban students are performing better than the rural students of West Bengal.

7. 2.Strength and weaknesses of the students in performing activities in rural and urban schools of West Bengal:

On the basis of the state-of-art (Table 1 and 2)of the students'activity and comparison of performance ofstudents' activity (Table 3) in rural and urban area their strength and weaknesses in learning are identified.

Table 4 Strength and Weakness of the students' activity in learning English language in Rural and Urban schools of West Bengal

Serial number of the activity	Strength and weakness of the students in each activity
1	Strength: Collaborative relationship among learners. Weakness: Fearsome in discussion in groups. Inadequate use of target language. Less fluent in the target language.

2	Strength: Try to discuss in tune with the topic. Weakness: Inconsistency in discussion.
3	Strength: Interested to use newly learnt words. Weakness: Little use of newly learnt words.
4	Strength: Flexible in exchange copies with their friends. Weakness: Inadequate use of peer correction.
5	Strength: Interested in learning and use of gesture. Weakness: Not frequent in use of gesture.
6	Strength: Read through the worksheets. Weakness: Illegible handwriting. Spelling mistakes.
7	Strength: Understand the importance of grammar in second language learning. Weakness: Focus on the traditional technique of learning of grammar.
8	Strength: Do not separate themselves from the average learners. Weakness: Lack of required skill of learning language. Lack of Enthusiasm and motivation.

8. RESULTS

8.1 What is status of the Students' Activity in rural schools of West Bengal?

- Students' discussion and free sharing of opinion microscopic.
- Most of them are talking irreverent talks.
- Majority of the students fail to use newly learnt words in their activity.
- Peer correction activity lies below the expected level.
- A large number of students do not use gesture in listening, speaking and reading activities of English.
- Most of the students are not acquainted with the use of worksheets. Illegible handwriting and Spelling mistakes are noticeable points of the works of worksheets.
- Most of students try to learn grammar in traditional technique.
- Most of the backward learners lack required skill of language learning, enthusiasm and motivation.

8.2 What is status of the Students' Activity in urban schools of West Bengal?

- Students' discussion and free sharing of opinion is average.
- Most of them are talking irreverent talks.
- A small number of students use newly learnt words in their activity.
- Peer correction activity lies below the expected level.

- e. A small number of students use gesture in listening, speaking and reading activities of English.
- f. some of the students are not acquainted with the use of worksheets. Illegible handwriting and Spelling mistakes are noticeable points of the works of worksheets.
- g. Most of students try to learn grammar in traditional technique.
- h. Most of the backward learners lack required skill of language learning, enthusiasm and motivation.

8.3 What is the difference of performances of *Students' Activity* in the primary schools of rural and urban areas?

In activity number 1(discussion of the students),2(relevancy of discussion), 3(use of newly learnt words and phrases), 4(peer correction), 5(use of gesture) and 6(use of worksheets) a difference in quality of performance of the students of rural and urban areas has been found by the researchers.

No difference in the quality of performance of the students of rural and urban areas has been found by the researchers in activity numbers7(learning technique of grammar) and 8(leaning of backward learners).

8.4 What are the strength and weakness of the *Students' in performing Activity* in the primary schools of West Bengal?

Strength of the students'in performing activity is the collaborative relationship among learners, Interestand Flexibilityinlearning.

Weakness of students' in performing activity is the fearsome nature of learning English language, lack of fluency,illegible handwriting, spellingmistake,traditional technique of learningand lack of Enthusiasm and motivation.

9.LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Classroom observation suffered due to lack of accommodation in some of the overcrowded classrooms.

10.DISCUSSION

The findings of the study show an overall unsatisfactory students' activity in English language learning inthe primary schools of West Bengal and this is in conformity of thefindings of the Jalan and Panda (2010) and Banerjee (2016). A great gap lies between the performance of the students of rural Schools and urban schools. Thefinding is supported by Cartwright and Allen (2002). Fearsome nature of the learners in use of Englishwas also observed by Rasheedet al. (2017). Mother tongue dominates thediscussion of the students. Students are fewwho use target language. Students have less fluencyin English. The findings also supported by Ram (1989) and Kalia(2017).Students try to learn grammar through traditional technique of learning and this finding is in consonance with Fareh(2010). Students have weakness in handwriting and this lead to spelling mistake the findingis supported by Khamari, Guru et al. (2014). Backward learners lack motivation, enthusiasm and basic skill of learning. The findings are in tune with the findings of Vasudevevan(2017). One of the strength of the students' i.e., their interest in learning and useof English language is supported by the findings of Borah (2017).

11. CONCLUSION

The present study diagnostically evaluatedthe students' activity in English language learning in government aided Bengali mediumprimary schools of West Bengal. From the findings it is seen that state-of-art of students' activity in rural schools is not up to the level of expectation. A gap lies between the performance of students in rural and urban areas. Some strength and weakness of the students in performing activity has been found by the researchers.

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