

Teaching English to Rural Students: A Case Study of a Select Batch at SSN College of Engineering, Chennai

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Abstract : There exists a wide divide between the urban and the rural students in a vast country like India. This dichotomy is seen in the resources available to them, like the learning facilities, the infra-structure, the learning ambience and meeting of their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. This paper discusses the effect of English language teaching as a Bridge course on a select batch of rural students at an Engineering college in Chennai, one of the four Metros of India. The study aims to understand how the teacher input and the teacher- peer-student interaction facilitates the acquisition of the basic structures of the English language to a group that is minimally exposed to the language. The objective in conducting the Bridge Course is to integrate these rural students into the mainstream and empower them in terms of English speaking ability; to enable them to comprehend their respective engineering classes where the medium of instruction is English and also to be able to interact with their urban peers. This program is conducted prior to the start of a regular academic session to equip them face the rigors of engineering education. The study is placed within the framework of Interaction theory in second language acquisition. The study evaluates the impact of linking theory and practice by implementing meaningful interaction not only within classrooms but also in the common areas. By providing intensive comprehensible input, it is anticipated that participant's level of English language improves. The teaching methods and classroom activities included individual and group participation, encompassing all the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW). The diagnostic tests that were administered before the commencement of the course and the exit test after the completion were used to record the impact of the training.

Keywords : comprehensible input, interaction, rural students, teaching English

Conference Title : ICELLL 2015 : International Conference on English Language, Literature and Linguistics

Conference Location : Singapore, Singapore

Conference Dates : September 10-11, 2015