

ENGAGING MINDS, ENHANCING ENGLISH: A STUDY ON ACTIVE LEARNING IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract:

The current study investigates the efficacy of the activity-based learning approach in teaching English at the elementary level in comparison to traditional methods. Emphasizing efficient classroom management, this method facilitates personalized learning, teamwork, and enhances confidence in acquiring a foreign language. It addresses language interference issues, underscores the importance of early language exposure for skill mastery, and is grounded in tangible experiences. The activity-based approach fosters essential process skills and self-directed learning, prompting a shift in teachers' roles for optimal results in English language and literature education.

Key Words: *Activity-Based Learning, Process Skills, Self-Learning, Diverse Teacher Roles, Transformative Impact*

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Introduction:

Expert English teachers often prioritise grammar rules and vocabulary citations in their teaching, employing the widely-used grammar translation method for literature and grammar units. However, this approach can lead students to rely on ready-made translations in their mother tongue, causing stress. An alternative is to teach content in the target language, fostering thinking and gradual improvement in speaking skills. The traditional method may be slow in achieving these objectives, but Activity-Based Learning (ABL) is suggested for more favorable outcomes. Eminent English faculties advocate effective teaching methods, emphasizing that the use of ABL can enhance language proficiency and ensure lasting learning experiences for students.

Activity based learning method and its history:

ABL, rooted in constructivism, encourages active participation of students in classroom activities to enhance their language skills. The inception of Activity-Based Learning dates back to 1944 during World War II when David Horsburgh, a creative British intellectual and charismatic leader, settled in India and began teaching at Rishi Valley School. His efforts marked a significant milestone in the development of ABL. From 2003 onward, the ABL method has been implemented in various schools in India, offering specialized education for children liberated from bonded labor.

Literature Review:

The present research discussed various aspects of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) in elementary education: Singh Budh's (2016) study focused on creating activities for developing life skills among elementary students through an intervention program. ABL was found to have a significant impact on students' life skills, with experimental and controlled groups showing effectiveness through pre and post-study assessments.

Padhye L.K.'s study explored the effectiveness of ABL techniques in English language teaching in government elementary schools in Odisha. The research revealed that many teachers showed more interest in traditional methods like comprehension, explanation, and grammar, rather than prescribed ABL techniques.

Daphne's (2015) work evaluated the overall performance of grades III and IV students under the ABL program in primary schools in Chennai. The study highlighted the effectiveness of teacher child interaction and the "ladder method," emphasizing positive outcomes in scholastic and co scholastic areas.

Somnath Hazra's (2019) doctoral thesis analyzed the ABL technique's impact on teaching English in West Bengal's primary schools. The research identified challenges such as students lacking awareness in solving English worksheets and needing improvement in spelling and handwriting skills. English holds global significance, being extensively spoken and crucial for non-native speakers in diverse life contexts. The initial phases of English language learning are pivotal for both students and instructors, leading the government to systematically introduce an activity-based learning approach for elementary students.

This study explores the effectiveness of the activity-based learning method in teaching English at the elementary level, drawing comparisons with conventional teaching methods. Its focus is specifically on students in Z.P. schools in Ambegaon Tehsil, emphasizing effective classroom management as an essential skill ensures a seamless teaching and learning process while maintaining discipline.

The activity-based learning method proves advantageous for students, providing them with the opportunity to stay engaged and learn at their own pace under teacher supervision. This not only facilitates personalized learning but also nurtures teamwork and social skills alongside academic studies. The approach significantly enhances students' confidence in learning a foreign language, particularly in remote areas where exposure to languages beyond their mother tongue is limited.

Acknowledging the paramount importance of English language learning, school leaders underscore the necessity for suitable teaching methods, particularly in language and literature. The study addresses language interference issues by encouraging students to learn and communicate in the target language through activity-based learning. The early exposure to language using effective methods substantially increases the likelihood of mastering language skills and proficiency.

The activity-based learning method, rooted in concrete experiences, develops critical process skills such as listening comprehension, reading comprehension, speaking, and peer discussions. Additionally, it fosters self-learning, enabling students to study according to their natural abilities. In this approach, teachers undertake various roles, including evaluators, disciplinarians, guides, catalysts, and observers, moving away from a strictly traditional teaching and advisory role.

Language teaching, centered on skill acquisition, rests on the instructor's ability to effectively impart knowledge. Success in this process relies on students' understanding and acquisition of language skills. Therefore, methods prioritizing language learning goals without compromising linguistic integrity are indispensable. Engaging students in innovative and purposeful activities aligns seamlessly with current educational needs, considering their interests, aptitudes, and enthusiasm.

Iowa T. Moni's (2006) research emphasized teaching English subjects through action and oral practice in primary schools, revealing higher progress in groups using action and oral practice compared to traditional teaching methods.

Bhauasheb Karekar's (2013) work focused on testing the efficacy of an activity-based approach on writing skills in English for Std. VI students. The researcher developed an engaging program with various writing activities.

Prema P.'s (2009) doctoral research examined the long-term effects of ABL in designated districts of Tamil Nadu, emphasizing positive changes in students' cognitive domains, social skills, and engagement in the learning process as classrooms shifted from teacher-centered to student centered.

Research Questions:

- What is the linguistic performance of students who are learning through Activity-Based Learning (ABL) methods in comparison to those using non-ABL methods?
- How is activity-based learning implemented in various schools within Zilla Parishad where the activity-based learning method is being utilized?
- What are the differences observed in language classrooms between those employing Activity-Based Learning (ABL) and those using non-ABL methods?
- In what ways do students learning English through the activity-based learning method differ from those learning through non-activity-based learning methods?
- What are the obstacles encountered in the implementation of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) methods for English language teaching?
- What are the perspectives of teachers and headmasters towards Activity-Based Learning (ABL) in terms of its effectiveness and challenges?

Research Objectives:

- To study the linguistic performance of the students learning through ABL methods.
- To explore how activity based learning is carried out in different schools in Zilla Parishad where the activity based learning method is implemented.
- To compare the language classrooms of ABL and non ABL methods.
- To compare the methods of learning the English language using the activity based learning method and the non-activity based learning method.
- To understand the obstacles in the implementation of ABL method.
- To understand the perspective towards ABL of Teachers, Headmasters.

Research Method, Research Design and Data Collection Tools:

This is a multi-method research. The present study is based on qualitative and quantitative information and its analysis. She used the comparative method, survey method, and case study method as per the requirements of the research objectives.

In this study, researchers employed a random sampling method to select 40 schools where the activity-based learning (ABL) method is utilized and another 40 schools where traditional teaching methods are employed to

teach English. The sample includes 400 Grade 4 students selected randomly from schools implementing ABL and another 400 students randomly chosen from schools using traditional methods in Ambegaon Tehsil.

The researcher collected data for her research purpose from the available sources. Those were called primary sources. For e.g. test, observation, interview, questionnaire. The researcher has used the secondary data sources. For e.g. Journals, newspapers, books, periodicals, official publications of the central, state, and local governments, publications of research organizations, research scholars, economists, etc. In the present research, the researcher has collected the information through observation, interview, rating scale and questionnaire.

Main Findings:

Significant differences exist in scores between students using Activity-Based Learning (ABL) and those using non-ABL methods. It proved effective for English education in elementary schools. It enhances students' language skills, promotes discipline, and encourages self-expression and critical thinking. Traditional methods, focusing on prior knowledge, lack innovation, while ABL inspires learners to use diverse strategies and activities.

ABL improves students' capacities, fosters motivation, and makes learning enjoyable through practical and real-life approaches. It reduces stress in learning English as a third language, promotes comfortable foreign language acquisition, and encourages informal and playful exposure. It minimizes errors caused by mother tongue interference, enhances language skills, and leverages the child's age for effective language learning.

ABL schools prioritize learner-centric teaching, adaptability, and effective classroom management. It maintains a balance between learning goals and student motivation, fostering an interest in English subjects. ABL classrooms use English as the primary language of communication, promoting speaking skills through systematically arranged interactions. It focuses on real-life applications, strengthening language skills and making grammar learning less monotonous.

ABL enhances student interest, creates supportive bonds, and allows students to develop their own learning methods. Non-ABL schools often use the grammar translation method, relying on native languages and deductive grammar teaching, which may hinder effective language learning. Cooperative learning is encouraged in ABL, fostering team spirit and peer learning.

Students prefer friendly and approachable teachers, and group work enhances learning outcomes. It simplifies language skill acquisition, requiring motivated teachers with a learner-centered approach. ABL emphasizes inductive grammar learning within the context of literature lessons, reducing the burden of rote memorization.

Contribution to knowledge:

This study is useful to all the primary level students in Maharashtra. Therefore, if the recommendations made based on the findings of the researcher are actually implemented, it will be easier for the students to reach heights in further education if the fundamental knowledge base of all the students is strengthened at the elementary level only.

If all the students get their elementary education through the activity-based learning method, then they will not feel apathetic about any subject. As they become accustomed to self-study, they will develop study methods

suitable for themselves. Students will improve and enhance their potential in different language aspects. Their divergent abilities will be enhanced, and they will explore their creativity when completing the different activities.

Conclusion:

Engaging students in activity-based learning for their elementary education can prevent them from experiencing disinterest in any subject. This approach cultivates a habit of self-directed study, empowering them to devise personalized study techniques. As students become familiar with this method, their proficiency in various language skills will advance. Their unique talents will flourish, and they will unlock their creative potential while undertaking diverse activities. The present research, 'Engaging Minds, Enhancing English: A Study on Active Learning in Language Education' is the outcome of important facts. It is explored that the students will be benefited if they will learn and comprehend through this method effectively.

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