

VISIT TO SCHOOLS IN KILINCHCHI AND MANNAR

Introduction:

The objective of the visit was to evaluate the progress made in teaching spoken English to students by SPICE trained teachers in their respective schools in Kilinochchi and Mannar.

Mohan and I visited these schools from 9th November – 11th November and personally interacted with the students and teachers.

Observations at each of the schools follows.

Kilinochchi Central College MMV:

Total students 1300.

English Teacher: Ms. Goutami

The teacher randomly chose 3 students whom she questioned in English about their friends. The answers were rather disjointed at first but in a very short time they were replying confidently in reasonable English.

The students were next asked to converse amongst themselves in pairs about their friends. With a little encouragement from Mohan, there was a lively conversation amongst them. Of course there were many mistakes in grammar and pronunciation which is to be expected at this stage. In order to improve pronunciation and grammar the students repeated sentences made by the teacher. In conclusion the teacher had a question and answer session with the teacher correcting their grammar and pronunciation.

The progress made in spoken English in this class was most encouraging.

Advanced Level Class:

This class was following a lesson from a text book in the A Level syllabus. There was very little participation of the students in spoken English. The teacher and the students carried on a conversation read from the text book. The teacher was desperate to complete the A level syllabus in general English in time for the forthcoming exam and obviously had little or no time to teach spoken English.

Kilinochchi Hindu College:

The SPICE trained teacher was on leave and we were unable to attend any of the English classes. We were fortunate to meet the Principal and gathered that there was little progress in spoken English in this school. However we met another English teacher of this school and she indicated interest in following a SPICE programme to be held in Batticaloa. She has been instructed to write to Ms. Sharmila Sivakanesan for registration.

Kilinochi Maha Vidyalam:

Teacher Mr. Bala Ganeshan

Grade 9

This teacher is SPICE trained. The class consisted of 6 English stream students. Mohan was given the opportunity to converse with the students in English without the presence of the teacher. He had an interesting conversation with all the students in the class related to their sports activities and their studies. These students were eager to speak in English and had no inhibitions in speaking English.

They were fairly fluent with only a few grammatical mistakes. The teacher had made good progress in teaching spoken English. Of course the task is much easier with English stream students.

Schools in Mannar

MN/Puthukudiyiruppu MMS

450 students

Grade 10 – 10 students.

Teacher: Mr. Shihar

Teacher was SPICE trained. Mohan was asked to speak with the students with the teacher present. It was difficult to converse as they were unable to make sentences and spoke in monosyllables. However the students appeared to have some understanding of the language. Their progress in spoken English was disappointing.

MN/Sithuinaakar Hindu College

1600 students

Teacher: Mrs. Joycee

Grade 9 – 40 students

Mrs Joycee was away at the English Day Competition that was being held at St Xaviers Girls School in Mannar. However, Mohan was able to interact with the students in English. It was difficult to make conversation as here again they were only able to speak in monosyllables. It was obvious they have had only limited exposure to spoken English. More effort is required here by the SPICE Teacher, Mrs Joycee

MN/St. Xavier Boys College

No. of students 1800

Teacher Mr. Jebakireedan

Year 12 Maths stream

The teacher conducted the class in English. Pairs of students were required to discuss and write down some important events in their lives recently. They were then required to read these to the class. However it was observed that they conversed in Tamil and subsequently wrote the events in English and read these to the class in English. It appeared the lesson was badly prepared by the teacher and the students seemed to have little exposure to spoken English.

Mohan spoke to the students and the teacher on the importance of learning spoken English. They were advised to speak with each other in English as often as possible and most certainly in the English class.

Conclusion:

It is obvious that there is great interest amongst the students in learning spoken English. However the teachers appear to have little time as they have to complete the school syllabus which is mandatory. Perhaps the formation of English language clubs where there is interaction in English only and supervised by English teachers could meet a few times a week after school hours.

We were fortunate to be hosted by the ARMY during our visit. We were provided with excellent accommodation and meals in their guest bungalows. These bungalows are comfortable, clean and run at the highest level of courtesy and efficiency. The Camps are maintained meticulously with a great deal of pride and dedication by all concerned.

We made a few stops en route at a few restaurants including one run by the ARMY in particular, was well run and provided clean rest room facilities, excellent food and drinks at reasonable cost. This is a great service to long distance travellers.

We take this opportunity to thank the ARMY for their kind hospitality and help during our visit.