

English Language Teaching in Rural Areas

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Abstract:

The burgeoning demand for technology has enhanced the status of English as a Global language. To grab global opportunities, English has become the most essential subject. Though learning English is not an impossible task, it is a difficult task for students who complete their education in rural areas. Several reasons, such as lack of infrastructure, teachers, and financial problems, discourage students of rural areas from seeking English. This article discusses the reasons behind seeing English as a difficult language for students who study in rural areas.

Key words: English, Global Language, rural areas

Introduction:

Over the last two centuries, the English Language has gained the status of a Global Language due to the swift growth in technology worldwide. For international communication, financial growth, and business progress, it has become crucial to learn the English language and attain proficiency. Learning English is no longer like an academic course. It has become essential to empower individuals and to gain more global opportunities. As it is a foreign language, the method of learning this language is not uniform. In Urban areas, where there are unique facilities, high infrastructure, and technical development, opportunities to learn English are wide, whereas in rural areas, it has become a challenging task to gain English Language Education. Hence, effective pedagogical and systematic strategies increase the benefits and open the gate for a Global outlook.

Challenges in English Language Teaching in Rural Areas:

English Language teaching in rural areas is a complex mixture of challenges. It has its roots in the teachers, infrastructure, and existing socio-cultural factors. All these together create a space that stops effective language acquisition.

Teacher-related barriers

Teachers in rural areas face a range of professional deficiencies that directly affect the quality of English instruction. They are not formally trained. They are assigned multiple subjects due to the lack of teachers. As they need to focus on multiple subjects, their expertise in English decreases and also prevents them from allotting devoted time to give specialized instruction.

Moreover, Rural teachers are recruited with less qualifications and with limited training, as most of the best-qualified teachers do not like to work in rural areas with limited salaries. They are not financially supported to get trained. Lack of professional training leads to the use of repetitive and less effective teaching methods. As they are least trained, they cannot use basic equipment such as a Desktop, Laptops, and a projector. They confine their teaching methods to the classroom sessions. In addition to all these, teachers in rural areas feel professionally isolated. There are limited chances for peer collaboration and teamwork.

Student Related Barriers:

Most of the students in rural areas are financially below poverty line. They think of earning for the day rather than getting an education. Parents send their children to the fields or labour work. Due to the lack of motivation, students in rural areas do not show interest in studies. Even though they join schools, their concentration is only on how much they earn rather than how much they learn. Lack of motivation leads to disinterest, and disinterest leads to less focus on studies. This disinterest in studies makes them sit passively with incomplete homework and with nil participation. Statistical data from rural India, for example, shows that 42% of children between the ages of 14-18 struggle to read simple English sentences and to write simple spellings.

As they grow with meagre communication skills, they fear speaking openly in public in English. They do not try, and the students who want to try are discouraged. Their apprehension increases when they come across the urban counterparts who speak fluently with good vocabulary. This further reduces their activity and interest in learning.

The inactiveness in rural students is not merely a lack of confidence and encouragement but it is also because of less infrastructure and facilities. If the ambience is good, students will change gradually. English should not be taught theoretically in the class room but it should be practical-oriented with fine exposure in public and surroundings.

Lack of Systematic and unique infrastructure:

Most of the schools in rural areas do not have a systematic and unique infrastructure. More funds are allocated to schools in urban areas than the schools in rural areas. Due to a lack of funds, well-equipped classrooms and laboratories are not provided in schools. Access to reliable internet is not possible. There is no proper transportation for some schools in rural areas. All these physical drawbacks also lead to a lack of interest in studies.

Socio-cultural factors: In some families in rural areas, education is given less importance because the parents are not educated. Even though they send their

children to school, they do not take an interest once their children return from school. Most of the families in rural areas are joint families, and elders in the family pamper their grandchildren. In some families, girls are not sent to school. They are confined to their domestic work. Sometimes, parents like to send their children to their family's professional work without realizing the importance of education.

Curriculum factor:

The implementation of English Language curricula in rural areas often suffers from misalignments. English is taught as a subject for theory examination, but not practically, with a strong focus on speaking and writing skills. This approach dissolves students' enthusiasm for the language. The designed syllabus is taught in the mother tongue in rural areas, due to which students learn instruction in their language, but not in English, and they do not understand the importance of learning English.

Effective methods to overcome the challenges:

Meeting the challenges in rural areas in teaching English requires a strategic and effective methodology and a practical-oriented education with effective blending of technology. The method should aim to create a more relevant and effective learning atmosphere for rural students

Several teaching methods are currently available to create an effective environment in rural areas. These methods include the Audio-Lingual Method, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and Task-Based Language Teaching

Audio-Lingual Method:- This method emphasizes listening, repetition, and pronunciation. This develops students' listening capacity and also reduces mother tongue influence as they listen and repeat the sounds with the help of Audio.

Communicative Language Teaching: This focuses on enhancing the communicative skills of the students through interactions and enthusiastic activities. Students get a wide range of opportunities to get involved practically.

Task-Based Language Teaching: This concentrates mostly on Functional English, which is helpful to the students to use in their daily routine either formally or informally. Through the activities designed, help to gain hands-on knowledge and apply language according to the situations.

Content-based Teaching: It closely connects subject matter with language learning. This method is often very effective as it develops language based on the context. More often, this is done in the form of a project work.

Teaching based on the specific needs:

The needs of Urban and rural areas depend on the way they live and the cultural aspects. The influence of tradition is not much on the people who live in urban areas, whereas people in rural areas take much care of tradition and culture. The situations and contexts of rural communities vary in comparison with those of

urban areas. They have limited access to resources and technology. Understanding their necessities, a separate and specific teaching approach has to be created.

Building strong relationships with students, understanding their family background, their interests, and fostering strong bonds are essential in tailoring the rural students. Teachers should create exercises or activities based on live experiences in their villages. Teachers must not believe that they can teach only with high resources and with well-equipped infrastructure. With flexibility, adaptability, and appropriate teaching strategies, teachers should create realistic goals for students and boost their confidence.

A student-teacher comprehensive approach is vital for appropriate English Language Teaching in rural areas. Teachers should try to understand the students explicitly, and they move according to their situations and circumstances. This method turns a rigid academic exercise into a relevant and comprehensive experience, enabling the students to learn more from their own experience. Teachers can counteract students' disinterest and anxiety and can give them sufficient space for language acquisition. This approach does not make the students feel English as a mandatory global subject to get into the global world, but it engages the students with a passion to learn, which they do not know.

Bilingual Education:

Translanguaging strategies enable the students to use both languages flexibly. But teachers should be careful while implementing this method, as the students get more attracted to their mother tongue rather than the foreign language. Teachers must use their mother tongue at a very limited pace i.e, until the students understand the context. Once they grasp the content of the particular exercise, students must use English with everyone in their surroundings. Teachers should monitor them carefully. So that they do not shift to their mother tongue.

Conclusion:

The use of multilingualism, integrating mother tongue instruction is a strategic equity and cognitive development in rural contexts. By valuing and integrating students' home languages, schools not only support cognitive development and cultural identity but also build stronger foundational literacy and numeracy skills that transfer to English.

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