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Difficulties Faced By The Rural Students In Learning English: A Case Study Of Rural Students

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Abstract

English as a language has been used in India for more than a century, but it continues to pose challenges for many of the non-native speakers. It is used as a link language and widely used in academic institutes, offices, business and industrial concerns and so teaching of English in schools has gained importance in the education system of our country. In a multi-lingual and multi-cultural country like India, classes of mixed ability groups are a feature of every small town and village. In most of the rural parts of India, learning – teaching process is done in the vernacular language. On the other hand, most of the competitive examinations (higher education & employment) require English as medium of instruction. Vernacular language is spoken and is in common use. Teachers require proper guidance on the effective methods of language-teaching. The ratio of students and teachers is high, leading to

ineffectiveness. The rural atmosphere also does not provide students the opportunity to speak and learn English.

This paper deals with the problems and the difficulties faced by the rural students in learning English. There are many challenges were faced by the rural students in the areas of Speaking, Pronouncing, Communicating and Writing the second language (English). English Learning Difficulty scale constructed and standardized by the researchers is used to collect the data. This paper deals with the difficulties rural students face while learning English.

Keywords: Learning difficulties, Rural students, High School children, Speaking, Pronouncing, Communicating and Writing skill.

Introduction

Nowadays knowledge in English were increased in Urban areas, but still the students in rural areas faced many difficulties in learning English at their schools in Speaking, Writing Pronouncing English. The rural students still do not have enough encouragement to practice English.

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This paper analysis the causes that make the students difficulty in English and suggests some solutions that can overcome the difficulties. (1,2)

Though we have been using English in India for more than a century, attaining proficiency in English is all Greek and Latin for many of our learners. English is a major link language at national and international levels and is a commonly used language in offices, business, industry, preparation of professionals like Doctors and Engineers and in research particularly in the fields of science and technology. Hence, teaching of English in schools has acquired due importance in the education system of our country.

Learning Difficulties in English

Problems and Errors committed by the students in writing English is known as learning difficulties. English learning includes Mastering of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills.

The First cause that makes the Students Difficulties in speaking English is that he Environment does not support the students to speak English fluently." Since English is a foreign language in our country, most students especially high school students are not familiar with it.

The second causes are students themselves, they does not care for their Communication. There is no interest shown in the areas of learning English by the rural areas of students.

The Third causes in School Organization, they should encourage the students with the sub-coaching to motivate the students. So that teachers easily find the difficulties of students to learn English with the lower level of difficulties.

The Fourth cause rarely with The Overloaded Textbook areas.

Problems of Teaching English as a Second Language in India

In a country like India, classes of mixed ability groups are a feature of every small town or village. In most of the rural parts of India, learning-teaching process is done in the vernacular language. On the other hand, most of the competitive examinations (higher education and employment) require English as medium of instruction. The ratio of students to teachers is high, leading to ineffectiveness.



The rural atmosphere does not provide students the opportunity to speak and learn English. The size of the classes everywhere is considerably large. This is one of the reasons why individual attention is not possible to the students. (2,3)

Teaching of English needs a drastic change for the benefit of learners in schools and colleges. The students of rural and semi-urban areas in India face a lot of problems as English is not their mother tongue. English is their second language. In many places, English becomes the third language as they have a local language, then Hindi followed by English.

As compared to the learners from urban areas, learners from rural areas face more difficulties during the process of language acquisition. In urban areas parents are mostly educated. So, the domestic environment helps the students from urban areas acquire the language quickly.

Students do not get chance to speak or read in English in the rural parts of the country. In villages and small towns students mainly hail from rural areas. Bilingual method is adopted in language classes. This method helps only to slow-learners to some extent. Moreover, this act reduces the real learning process as a whole. If a student does not understand in English, he or she asks for an explanation in L1 i.e. in his or her mother

tongue. Consequently, the English teacher is in a state to adopt bilingual method. (4)

Lack of trained teachers in rural areas has become a reality. Teaching is a continuous process and teachers in rural India are often debarred from attending workshops and seminars to acquaint themselves with new ways and methods.

The rural population of India, which depends on agriculture and limited income, end up sending their children to government schools where English is not taught as a skill but as a subject. "Throughout India, there is a belief among almost all castes and classes in both rural and urban areas in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill but a symbol of better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression". (Graddol p.12)

Grammar translation method is used by the teacher to teach young children, where the teacher explains every word to students in the native language to make him/her understand and learn English. However, this method faces a major disadvantage.



Both the teacher and the student concentrate more on L1 rather than L2. In this method English language class seems to be L1 class rather than L2 class. Students get only limited benefit through this approach. Unfortunately, this is still in use in many rural schools throughout India.

Language could be mastered by practicing all the four skills viz. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. The rural surrounding does not allow the learner to practice any of the skills. Many teachers are unable to teach English effectively because they face a lot of problems due to the lack of teaching aids, non-availability of required technical support and relevant atmosphere to teach English effectively. As a result of this, teachers who handle English classes face insurmountable difficulties. Students find it difficult to listen and to understand the English language. What are the reasons for this? What are the remedial measures to be taken to alleviate these problems? This paper is an attempt to discuss the nature of second language acquisition and the factors responsible for its slow acquisition, especially in the rural pockets of India.(5,6)

Pain points of teaching English in rural schools of India:

- * Students of the rural schools face a number of problems. English is their second language.

- * Students find themselves unable to express in English.

- * Students do not know proper pronunciation, spellings and grammatical rules.

- * Students never realize the importance of learning English as a language.

- * Lack the confidence to speak in English

- * First reason is that they have been taught English through Grammar-Translation Method.

- * This method makes them dependent on their mother tongue.

- * Some teachers have good accent, but they do not possess a good command over the language.

English is used all over the world not out of any imposition but because of the realization that it has certain advantages. A very important reason for regarding English as a world language is that the world's knowledge is enshrined in English.



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It is a progressive language. It is dynamic and flexible. Over and above English is universally renowned for its power of expression and its rich literature.

Teacher preparation courses are not able to equip the teachers with adequate knowledge, skills and the ability to be able to teach the subject effectively in class. The situation is worsened by the fact that English is not the language of transaction in rural India, thereby giving teachers a very little chance of practicing what they have learned. Teachers need to upgrade themselves through a variety of means—periodic workshops, video/audio recordings of content to be taught, projects and assignments.

The majority of Indian rural students, especially in the states of Bihar, U.P. find English as a very difficult subject to learn. Since most of the students are first generation learners, they need the guidance from parents and others. Even though students study English, they are not able to produce even a single sentence without any grammatical error in English. The reason for this is that they study subjects from the examination point of view. Our examination system is such that it makes students' rote memorization rather than testing their analytical and creative skills. In this process, they memorize lessons,

reproduce them in exam halls and forget them the same day itself.(7)

We cannot expect a uniform standard of pronunciation for a second language in such a vast country, where even the mother tongue is spoken differently by different groups of the people belonging to the same language community. In learning to speak English, the mother tongue generally interferes with its pronunciation. The learners as well as the teachers speak English with regional language habits. Even during the English periods most teachers teach English without giving the students proper practice in speech because they are not properly equipped enough to practice it. They forget that every language differs in stress, intonation and pronunciation. The result is that after learning /teaching English for many years at school and college, most people cannot speak the language with intelligible accuracy.(8)

Peer teaching, role-play and group activities, are rare in Indian classrooms. In India, lectures speak. Teacher talking time is more than half of the prescribed time. The class listens passively. The learners are not encouraged to ask questions.

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The teachers must involve their students to work in pairs, groups and teams and prepare term papers, projects, etc. Therefore, in spite of being taught English in school and college for several years, learners fail to learn the language. They cannot write in acceptable English of their own, cannot use English appropriately and fluently in speech and often cannot understand conversations in English. Why does this happen? Does it mean that the English teachers in India cannot teach?

The teaching of English in India has been text-oriented since the beginning (colonial times) because the British Government's policy was to create a class of Indians who would act as a buffer between the British and the Indians. Therefore, elementary knowledge of English was needed for a class of Indians.

Objectives of teaching and learning English have undergone a sea change in the years after Independence. Still English education in India is text-oriented.

Possible solutions:

* Teachers should recite poems and not allowed to memorize it.

* Try to create interest to taste poems.

* Should avoid GT method.

* Teachers should find some way of helping pupils to enjoy their language activities, and of building their confidence.

* The English teacher should have the wide-ranging enthusiasm and Imagination.

* Group discussions can be arranged.

* Texts should be read loudly by the students.

* English will be used by them as a medium of expression.

* To motivate the students think through English.

* They will be able to use English as a language of communication.

* Create confidence of speaking English in the public.

To solve all the problems, a systematic approach should be followed.



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The teachers should aim at teaching primarily, not knowledge but skill, the different skills required for good Listening Speaking-Reading-Writing. Teachers should find some way of helping pupils to enjoy their language activities, and of building their confidence. A teacher who tries to help his pupils in this way has rightly rejected the image of the teacher who acts as the arbitrary dispenser of all knowledge. As children learn by way of imitation, similarly, the students tend to follow the example set by their teacher. The English teacher should have the wide-ranging enthusiasm and Imagination, It can make English course 'a sort of clearing house for ideas and interests which branch out into all the other subjects that the pupils are studying in school, and beyond them.(9,10)

To tackle with the problem of lack of vocabulary in the students, Productive and receptive Use of words should be kept in mind. The students should be made to learn simple words. This will help in inculcating a habit of learning new words in them. Their newly learnt words will become a part of their own vocabulary and they will be in a position to use those words. This is the natural process of movement at need from receptive to productive use of the words. This enhancement of vocabulary will result into better expression. The common

errors made by the students in the different usages of the same word can be cured by this technique.(11,12)

By noticing all such components of the language they can enjoy the richness and flexibility of language. Once their interest is aroused, they will show tremendous improvement. Reading can also help them in making aware of spellings. When the students have practiced different uses of words and have developed habit of reading, they can avoid the common errors of Translations.

There can be no learning without exposure. Group discussions can be arranged. Texts should be read loudly by the students. Simple usage of words will become a part of their speech only when they are exposed to deliver a speech and express their own ideas. The zeal for learning will help them in their own advancement. The problems of the students and the teachers are inter-related. It is necessary to assure that the learner makes a tremendous contribution in the process.

If we take into consideration the role of teacher and learner in acquiring the knowledge of a language; the problems can be solved effectively. Only then the students will realize the practical use of English language.

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English will be used by them as a medium of expression. They will be able to use English as a language of communication. Fluency in the speech, proper knowledge of sentence structure, confidence of speaking in the public will make them able to keep their pace with the developing world.(13)

Importance of English

In a multi-lingual and multi-cultural country like India, classes of mixed ability groups are a feature of every small town and village. In most of the rural parts of India, learning – teaching process is done in the vernacular language, where the word English is considered as a magical and mystical one. On the other hand, most of the competitive examinations (higher education & employment) require English as medium of instruction. Vernacular language is spoken and is in common use. The ratio of students and teachers is high that makes individualization of instruction a little challenge. Besides, learners from rural areas lack exposure in English till they complete their school education and when they step into college, they face real challenges(14).

Lack of Exposure in English

Plutarch says, “The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled”. Students of today even after twelve years of school study lack mastery over English, where English is also a medium of instruction. Teaching of English needs a sea change for the benefit of the learners in schools. Bilingual method is

adopted in language classes, because majority of the students hail from rural areas, do not have any exposure to the effective use of English. English is mostly taught only as a subject, not as a language. It is a well-known fact that language is a skill which cannot be taught or learnt. Instead a skill can be acquired by means of constant practice. One, who practises language constantly with a great zeal and zest, gets more chances to acquire mastery over the language.

Circumstances of learners

Weak domestic environment of the students may also affect their psychological and educational status. Complex is one of the barriers to the acquisition of language learning skills. Motivation removes complex. No border should be drawn between rural and urban students. Slightly modified coaching can be given to three different types of learners (Slow learners, average learners and fast learners) instead of demotivating slow learners and average learners by building the bridge of complex.(15)

Difficulties of Learners

Generally, learners from rural areas face more difficulties than those from urban areas during the process of language acquisition. In cities, mostly parents are educated.



So, even domestic environment helps the students from urban areas acquire the language quickly because there are more chances that the wards can speak in English other than their mother tongue with their family members. But in rural parts of the country, students of today mostly do not get chances to either speak or read in English. Even in classroom, teachers use vernacular language in order to help the students to learn.((16,17)

Dominance of Vernacular Language in Learning and Teaching

English :

Even though students study English as a medium of instruction, they find difficult to frame even a single sentence without any grammatical error in English. The reason for this plight of the students is that they study subjects from the examination point of view only. Even English language is taught in the vernacular language. Our examination system encourages the students to learn lessons by heart and reproduce them in the examinations, just aiming at a pass mark or some grade in English. The focus of the teachers in general is more on teaching about English rather than teaching in English.(18,19)

Teaching about English rather than Teaching in English :

Students learn basic grammar at school level with the so called intention of getting a pass mark in the tests and examinations, and not to confront with challenges they face due to lack of communicative skills in English. Application-oriented

advanced grammar is not taught in schools. Furthermore, adequate practice is not given to students to effectively use the language for their prosperous future. Exposure too is far less to them. School study is an important phase in every student's life. A student grows from a small child to a grown up when he/she completes higher secondary examinations. A student, after this phase, enters into college life. This period is considered a transition period. The system followed in colleges is different from that of schools. They suffer a lot due to poor communication skills and knowledge over the language. Each and every child has much talents and capabilities, but it is unfortunate that they do not get proper guidance and opportunity to develop their skills and ignite their talents.(19,20)

Challenges faced by the rural students :

Problem in understanding the abstract idea

- Psychological, financial and environmental interference



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- Learning method
- First generation learners
- Mother tongue influence
- Pronunciation difference in language
- Lack of interest
- Lack of practice
- Lack of motivation

Remedies:

- ☐ Building a rapport among learners in classroom
- ☐ Importance of English should be explained
- ☐ Using different methods of teaching
- ☐ Building confidence among students
- ☐ Improvement in teaching facilities

Conclusion :

“The aim of education is not the acquisition of information, although important, or acquisition of technical skills, though essential in modern society, but the development of that bent of mind, that attitude of reason, that spirit of democracy which will make us responsible citizens.”

- Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

As Gandhiji said, if village is destroyed, India too will be destroyed. The restoration of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Whatever the wealth one has the real wealth that never gets lost and never be carried from us by any is ‘Education’. Such an effective and qualitative education should be provided to all without any difference. Mostly in the classrooms, the teachers are the active speakers and learners

passive listeners. This scenario must be changed. Students should be encouraged to take part in communicative based activities. Evaluation should be based on assuring the effectiveness of English language teaching and learning. Students are mostly involved in the writing process in the name of written exam. Written exam is there to test their subject knowledge not mastery of writing skills and the learners are not involved in other skills namely listening, speaking and reading and other communicative based activities. Awareness about the importance of English and developing the communicative competence must be stimulated in the minds of the school students. The ultimate objective of English teachers must be developing the communicative competence of the students in English. Curriculum revision is the need of the hour.

The syllabus in English must be challenging and updated, and cater to the academic and professional needs and requirements of the student community.

In India, majority of the workforce comes from rural areas as 75% of India lives in villages. The policy makers have to bridge the urban-rural divide in teaching of English. An English teacher teaching in rural schools has to come up with innovative strategies in the classrooms. Skilled and committed teachers need to be appointed at primary level. Teachers should be upgraded and trained to meet the problems of the learners.



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That will also help in raising the standards of English as a language at the school level. On the basis of suggestions given above, the critical situations in the teaching of English can be checked from further deteriorations. Decidedly one or two persons can't do anything solid. Let everyone concerned with it take the responsibility. Only then we can create a congenial environmental & we can be able to achieve better results in the teaching and learning of English.

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