

ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN RURAL INDIA: REASONS AND MEASURES

A.P Sovani

Associate Professor

C P & Berar College, Nagpur

E-mail: arvindsovani2019@gmail.com

Abstract :

"English Language in Rural India" focuses on teaching English as a foreign language to students in rural areas across various grade levels. The goal is to equip these students with language skills that enable them to read, understand, and critically analyze English content. In contrast to urban students, who often excel in exams and interviews, many rural students struggle to express themselves effectively. Their poor communication skills are evident from their performance in tests, exams, and interviews, prompting an investigation into the underlying causes. This study aims to identify the reasons for the communication difficulties faced by rural students and to propose remedial measures to enhance their communication skills. The paper addresses three main issues: Psychological Aspects, Lingual Aspects, and Technology Aspects.

Keywords: Lack of English language teaching, rural students, LSRW, technology, and innovative methodology

"An individual speech act is termed 'parole,' while the abstract system is known as 'langue'; together, langue and parole constitutes language." Thus, language serves as a means to express personal views and feelings. Today, English is often regarded as the 'queen of languages,' spoken natively by over 320 million people and as a second language by an additional 200 million. Unlike traditional languages, English has evolved by incorporating words from Greek, Latin, French, and other languages, demonstrating its adaptability. The term 'English' was used before the twelfth century, but it was formally introduced into the education system in 1531. Following India's independence, British rule ended, but the English language, influenced by Indian linguistic elements, remained as language which has bound the entire nation in a single tongue. As noted by Graddol, "Across India, English is widely believed to hold transformative power, symbolizing a better life and a way out of poverty and oppression." He further says, "Large numbers of people will learn English as a foreign language in the 21st century, and they will need teachers, dictionaries and grammar books." Rural students possess the same knowledge, abilities, and potential as their urban counterparts. In today's competitive world, proficiency in English is crucial for both rural and urban students, who must equip themselves with strong communication skills to succeed in interviews and jobs. English is prevalent throughout India, though the syllabus varies. For instance, in Western states like Karnataka and Rajasthan, English is introduced in grades I to III, while in West Bengal and Orissa, it begins at the secondary level. In Gujarat, English is taught around age fourteen. These variations in methodology contribute to differences in English proficiency between rural and urban students. This disparity becomes evident at the



college level, where urban students generally outperform their rural peers. Rural students often face challenges such as limited educational awareness and economic pressures, which can impede their focus on education and English proficiency. Despite a well-structured education system, these challenges hinder students from mastering English, especially in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW). This paper examines the core issues in teaching English as a foreign language in rural India, focusing on Psychological Aspects, Lingual Aspects, and Technology Aspects.

The paper will begin by examining the psychological aspects of learning the English language.

Psychological Aspects :

Psychology is the study of human behavior, and the role of one's mother tongue is particularly significant in rural India, where regional languages are predominantly used for communication. In these areas, most people work in agriculture—whether as landlords, farmers, or laborers—and the majority of the population is uneducated, with only a small fraction having received any formal education. Limited financial resources and time constraints prevent many rural families from focusing on their children's education, leading to a lack of awareness about its importance.

From a psychological perspective, learning involves three key phases: learning theory, experimental research on learning, and laws of learning. In teaching English, several principles are crucial. Initially, the teacher must alleviate students' fear of the English language with genuine enthusiasm. Recognizing that each student has unique individual differences, the teacher must be attuned to their mental state. Memory span and attention span are vital for learning English, so teachers need to identify and address students who may struggle in these areas.

Awareness about the importance of communicative English should be created. The teachers should be trained on modern skill. Teachers should find some way of helping pupils to enjoy their language activities by spending sometime inside the language laboratories thereby building their confidence. They should have wide-ranging enthusiasm and Imagination. Many schools, including government institutions, offer yoga and meditation classes to help students develop a more focused and relaxed mindset for learning. Teachers use these methods to analyze and teach English structure, content, and pronunciation effectively. It is also important for teachers to address learning disabilities, such as dyslexia—a condition where students struggle with reading, spelling, and visual processing—and dysgraphia, a disorder affecting writing and letter recognition.

Lingual Aspects :

Learning a first language happens naturally, but learning a second language is not as natural. Students use their native language when learning a second language. According to Roberts Paul, “When we learn our first language, we directly experience the world and learn to express it with words; but when we learn a second language, we often understand it through



the lens of our first language” (36). Therefore, knowing the first language can help in learning a second language.

Imitation and reinforcement are important in learning English. Students often compare their first language to the second language while learning. They might translate English texts into their native language to understand them. This method can help, but it doesn't always work because not all words and meanings directly translate between languages. For example, finding an exact equivalent for English words in Marathi or Hindi can be difficult. Also, trying to make English sounds like those in the native language can be confusing, as Marathi and Hindi are phonetic languages, but English is not. English has different stress, intonation, rhythm, and sentence patterns compared to Marathi and Hindi. The linguistic transfer here refers to the process where learners apply knowledge from their native language to the new language. This can be positive, where similarities between languages aid learning, or negative, where differences lead to errors and misunderstandings. However, there is possibility of Negative transfer, often termed as interference, occurs when the grammatical, phonetic, or lexical rules of the mother tongue conflict with those of English. This interference can manifest in various aspects of language learning, including pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

Recently, the government has opened English-medium schools in rural areas, which is a positive step. However, these schools often don't provide education at the same level as regular schools. In rural India, teachers frequently use the grammar-translation method to teach English, which helps students understand the content but not the language itself. To truly learn English, students need continuous practice in speaking and using the language.

Technology Aspects :

A picture can say a lot more than words, so using pictures, flashcards, and other visual aids helps students learn English. In urban areas and private schools, smart classrooms with advanced technology are often used for teaching. However, in rural areas, students usually attend government schools. While these schools have experienced teachers, they often rely on traditional methods like blackboard teaching. The use of educational technology to learn English both inside and outside the classroom keeps students motivated. This is because nowadays students usually feel more comfortable using digital devices when learning a language, mainly due to tools such as voice recognition and interactive multimedia exercises.

Using the flipped classroom method in English courses, together with complementary technology, transforms classrooms into an environment in which collaboration is optimal through sharing ideas, debating, and working on projects. It is a way to implement creative and participatory spaces. As a result, English classes become more motivating for students due to less teacher talking time, and in turn, student participation is encouraged.

Teachers in rural areas have limited access to modern technology and innovative methods. The education system in these areas depends heavily on the creativity of teachers. Additionally, the curriculum for state board schools is basic, often only covering up to the tenth standard. Many government-run state board schools offer free education, leading to large class sizes with over fifty students each. In such large classes, teachers struggle to give individual



attention to each student, highlighting the lack of technological support in teaching English.

General Remedies for Learning English :

Teachers should focus on all four key skills of language learning: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW). They can encourage students to practice speaking with each other and play word games. Teachers should also give regular oral and listening tests. Silent and loud reading help students improve their vocabulary and pronunciation. Writing essays and participating in speech competitions can boost students' speaking skills.

Role of the Teacher :

Teacher play most crucial role in the learning process of the students not only English language but entire personality development in general. In the process of English learning, an English teacher has to encourage the students to talk in English only. This act makes them confident. By taking extra care, the English teacher will impart the nuances spoken aspects of a language once/twice in a week as a remedial measure. When such type of spoken English classes begins, student-friendly or learner-centric environment will certainly prevail, as more and more students will participate in the session. Teachers should motivate students for participative learning. This will solve all the stumbling blocks in students. Teaching learning is not a one-way process. It is a multi-way process. As soon as the teaching is over, students should raise their doubts, clarification, etc. By doing so, students communication skills in English will grow. To develop this, sufficient practice must be given to students in their preliminary stage. While maintaining classroom management concurrently learner-friendly atmosphere should also prevail there. This ensures students to learn more and participate more. Above all, a teacher is not only a teacher but also a friend, guide and a philosopher to students. He/she guides students not only to pass in the exam but also to face challenges and take right decisions during the time of crisis in life. This is, of course, a real and tough task ahead of a good teacher.

Teachers should teach students how to use dictionaries and read newspapers. They should also use visual aids instead of just blackboard teaching. Medical camps can help identify students with learning disabilities. Schools should offer guidance and counseling for teachers to better understands and address these issues. Parent-teacher meetings can help inform parents about their children's education. Proper motivation and support from both parents and teachers are crucial for improving students' learning, including in learning English. Students should practice careful listening to English news, lectures, tutorials, practical sessions, seminars, technical presentations, academic discussions, and other interactions. Modern Language Labs can help with this, and it's important to use them fully. Being a good communicator starts with being a good listener. Speaking skills are very important for a person's professional survival and growth. It gives practice of articulating words and boosts confidence in speaking. The students of rural area must be encouraged to ask questions in order to remove their fear, as they hesitate to ask questions considering that they may commit error or go wrong. Opportunities must be given to them to voice their opinions, agreements, disagreements, and suggestions, the credits should be given for participating discussions, making presentations of project, product, graphs, tables, charts plans, maps. They must be ensured that speaking skills are the single most



important criteria in hiring professionals. Reading is just as essential to effective communication as listening and speaking. Students should be adept at reading various documents such as technical reports, business proposals, magazine articles, letters, and instruction manuals. Efficient reading skills are indispensable for any academic or business work. It is said that Reading maketh a complete man, speaking maketh a ready man and writing maketh a perfect man. Writing is very important for students and professionals in all fields. They should practice writing projects reports lab reports, summary, synopsis, abstracts, and subject notes. As they go higher on the ladder of their career they will have to handle the correspondence independently. They will require writing business letters memos, email messages, proposals, minutes, notes reports, professional summaries and so on. Both professional and students need excellent writing skills to survive and excel in their pursuits as there is hardly any academic or professional activity that does not require writing skills.

Conclusion :

The difference between urban and rural students is not in terms of intellect, but due to their surrounding environment, learning ability, availability of infrastructure, skills, and access to different facilities. Considering these factors, the curriculum for rural students must be carefully chosen and thoughtfully organized or presented. Students should work hard to achieve their goals by assessing their strengths and weaknesses and striving to improve. Teachers should provide moral support and help them overcome obstacles without discouraging them. Excellence comes from dedicated effort, not luck. With the advanced technology available today, students should use it effectively to shine and succeed.

References :

- Arulsevi, Evangeline. Content and Methods of Teaching of English. Chennai: Saratha Pathippagam, 2013. Print.
- Innovations in the Teaching of English. Chennai: Saratha Pathippagam, 2013. Print.
- Krishnaswamy N, Verma, Nagarajan. Modern Applied Linguistics. India: Macmillan, 2013. Print.
- Nagarajan, K., and Seetha Raman. Psychology of Learning and Human Development. Chennai: 2013. Print.
- Misra Binod. Innovative ways of English language teaching in rural India through Technology. International Journal of English and Literature, 2015.
- <https://www.elgazette.com/david-graddol-the-man-who-saw-the-future-of-english/>
- <https://www.ijert.org/learning-english-in-rural-india-difficulties-and-remedies>
- <https://www.dexway.com/5-benefits-of-educational-technology-in-learning-english>
- <https://www.ijert.org/learning-english-in-rural-india-difficulties-and-remedies>

