

Teaching of English in Rural Areas: Issues and Challenges

(With reference to the North Maharashtra Region)

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to focus on issues and challenges in the way of teaching of English in rural areas taking at Centre the North Maharashtra region. The continuation of the study of English is both desirable and necessary in India. Since, Jawaharlal Nehru proclaimed 'English is the window in the world'. It is still used as the official language of our country. With such an immense importance English should be acquired by the students of rural areas as in the North Maharashtra region which a mostly surrounded by adivasis, farmers and labour communities. The need of facing certain issues and challenges in teaching English is observed. It is obvious rural areas suffer from certain educational inadequacies. The paper attempts to throw a light upon it and provides certain steps to resolve the challenges faced by the teacher and students in rural areas to acquire English at a grassroots level to gain the potential to reduce the gap between rural and urban.

Key Words: Issues, challenges, facilitator, globalization, rural, urban, language skills, technology

• Introduction

One hundred and fifty years of intimate contact has made English an integral part of our national system and this cannot be changed without injury to the cause of education in India. In addition English has today become one of the major languages of the world and Indians can neglect its study only at the risk of loss to themselves. I am convinced that in the future as well, the standard of teaching English should be maintained at as high a level as possible. (Dash, 1-2) -Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad

In the light of the above statement, it is true that the importance of English language has grown up in this the world of globalization. The English language plays a vital role in Indian education. It is mandatory subject at all levels. Government of India and all state government have followed the education

policy which is why English is a compulsory subject from the primary to the higher secondary level. Degree education like engineering and medical is in English. Understanding the vital role played by the knowledge English language, people prefer to enroll their student in English medium school but the parents from socially weaker section do not afford to send their offspring to the English medium school. To groom students in English language and to impart them sufficient knowledge of English so that the poor students can acquire the knowledge of English, in Maharashtra, like other states in India, is taught from the primary level. English is a compulsory subject up to 12th standard. In Indian situations putting standard of English among the students/pupils of vernacular background has created many issues and challenges, for

which the positive steps have to be taken at governmental, societal and educational level to meet with some productive results about teaching of English in rural area .

The North Maharashtra region is basically surrounded by much rural area. It includes three districts as Jalgaon, Dhule and Nandurbar among which Nandurbar is at large surrounded with adivasi communities hence it is adivasi district. A brief journey of these three districts can provide the appropriate developmental difference between the students from remote areas like Dhadgaon and Molgi and urban students from proper cities like Jalgaon and Dhule.

- **Teaching of English in Rural Area: Issues**

The teaching of English in rural areas has lot of issues, as the students from rural areas even after studying English for eight to ten years do not come with positive results. Their language skills as LSRW are not as developed as the students from urban areas. It can be easily identified by the teachers that there is much difference in the linguistic competency between rural student and an urban student in the North Maharashtra region.

- **Regional impact:** The rural students are mostly under the impact of their regional variety of language: So it creates barriers in their communication. It has been mostly observed at UG level. It is because the ambience is not similar in an urban and a rural educational institution. In an urban Centre of learning like teachers, peers, instruction on notice board, peon, clerk, sign board, school bags, slogan on wall, makes you feel English. On the contrary, the

paraphernalia in any rural school or college is different; it is totally un-English

- **Inadequate facilities:** So far as rural situation in India is concerned educational sectors like school, colleges and university gets grants under different heads. Still the scenario of remote and rural area is worst due to non-availability of adequate infrastructural and educational facilities. For instance, remote areas like Taloda, Akkalkuwa, Dhadgaon, Molgi...many Z.P schools are still waiting for benches to sit and necessary material to provide to the students. Even at college level students are deprived of essential books in the library. Very few colleges like M.J. College, Jalgaon, Jai Hind College, Dhule and Nahata College, Bhusawal...are providing the facility of language laboratory to the students of English. On the contrary, the UG students are not provided with language laboratory in the aided college in Nandurbar district.
- **Lack of qualified teaching staff:** it has been a frequent problem with the rural area that the educational institutions lack qualified staff. At the college level due to the compulsion of passing eligibility tests like NET and SET, the ratio of qualified teachers is less in compare to the vacancies. On the other side of the coin, many of the colleges and schools in rural areas are unaided, so the qualified teaching staff is not recruited at par. It is mostly observed in the North Maharashtra region. Even many of the rural areas have been occupied by private English Medium Schools, they strive for well qualified staff.

- **Teaching of English in Rural Area: Challenges**

Teaching English in the North Maharashtra region is definitely a challenge. It's a challenge because all theoretical knowledge acquired as a part of ELT training is not properly implemented and the conditions do not allow a teacher to execute the plan of teaching English. There are many reasons for the problems

- **Mindset of rural students:** When a child enters in school at primary level, he is taught English language as a subject not as a language. Stress remains on formation of alphabets not on speaking or listening. In VII and VIII Standard English text books there are lessons in which only words are given to teach. It is expected that a teacher should pronounce the words correctly and student should follow him. In this way student will learn words. But the shocking fact is, in many schools teacher either prefers to skip the lessons or gives an exercise of reciting those spellings. To enhance vocabulary they are forced to crème a long list of words. When these learners enter at secondary level they are competent enough in written and understanding English language but this is cramming based not on creativity. At tertiary level situation becomes more pathetic
- **Implementation of innovation by teachers:** There are some common reasons for the student's underdevelopment. The students are poor learners, they are regularly irregular, and they cannot afford to buy rich material. In other words we can say

that the rural students are very much affected by this diseased ELT system. They learn without understanding what is being taught. This is the sole reason why a feeling of backwardness itself embodies among these learners. Most students find it difficult to understand the substandard of the prescribed section of English. Not only the students but the teachers also are responsible for the present condition of English. Teachers follow bilingual method of teaching. Typically a teacher reads the test in small portion explains its meaning and allusions and tells the meaning of difficult words and does occasional discussion on grammar. Teaching is rarely student centre and most students have neither the chance nor the motivation to actively participate.

The students in a rural area suffer from English phobia. Some horrible things are found. The teachers are untrained in many schools. The teachers of other subjects are appointed to teach English. They are incompetent and untrained. Teachers training programmers are nothing but waste of government money as they always turn out a great fiasco. They only purpose it to somehow complete the syllabus. The purpose of the text and syllabus is never achieved. Non-availability of basic infrastructure, hostile- Scio-cultural factors are other hurdles in teaching English language. Theories of language learning and even the great philosopher Aristotle have said that human beings are imitative by nature. A learner imitates a teacher's every utterance and gesture. The students in rural area who are very ignorant and first generation leaners of

English language treat a teacher's voice as sacrosanct. So it is very important that a teacher teaching English at any level in the North Maharashtra region must be well trained. Teachers and students are horrible at pronunciation. They have a little knowledge of grammar. Syntax and semantics are far away from them. Rural students are deprived of technology as enjoyed by urban or university students. Lack of technology. Books & other things become an obstacle in their learning process. In urban areas there are language labs, computers, LCD projector, CD players' tape recorders, microphones & many more instruments that create an atmosphere of learning but in rural areas they lack even classrooms for proper teaching & the proper supply of electricity. More over teachers are not so competent to handle these instruments as they don't have any such training. At the name of audio visual they have only chalk & blackboard, centuries old method of teaching. No doubt a teacher can teach more effectively & creatively with chalk & duster but with such a big class of hundred to one fifty students she/he feels him/her self-handicap. Rural students do not get the opportunity to interact with other renowned personality or peer groups. The other reason is that other subjects are taught in Marathi. So like other subjects, students take English as a subject not a language. They don't put their effort to learn it as a language. The problem is not with tertiary level but from the primary & secondary level. The fact is that the roots are rotten. That's way so many policies are made but all are failure. A teacher has to use mother tongue to make them understand. A

language teacher is well aware that their students bring to the language classroom a variety of attitude, experiences & strategies as well as variety of beliefs & he/she has to handle them. But he/she feels him/her self helpless without teaching aids. He ultimately has to adopt translation method to handle this unwilling crowd. Mother tongue influence can also be seen in the students with rural area background because they were not given proper pronunciation drill from the primary level. (Stem, 25-26)

➤ **Education Cost:** In the postmodern scenario the education cost is reaching its height. It has also become a challenge in teaching of English. Most rural students are dependent upon the governmental policies like educational scholarships, Earn & Learn Scheme and the income of their parents. As the North Maharashtra rural region is occupied by farmers & labourers, so the rural students cannot afford to the expensive education of metropolitans.

● **Steps to meet the Challenges**

One of the best ways of solving the problem is to teach English as language not as a subject. English texts are consisting of prose lessons, poems and it taught and examination in conducted. This process achieves nothing. Instead of all this mayhem and mess, functional English course book should be formed according to the level of the students and teachers are trained to teach the course books. Student should be groomed to acquire the virtuosity in communicative English. No doubt there're lots of drawbacks in our present education system. It is not in tune with current

scenario Even then we cannot be stand still. System of teaching cannot change overnight. Hard work is the requirement of time. Teacher's positive attitude & their use of innovative method of teaching can provide a reliable bridge to the process of learning English in rural area. Taking in consideration the learning background of the learner, if a teacher designs his/her method & she may get in implemented more successfully.

- Modern requirement seems to get satisfied by following the learner centered approach which view language learning acquisition as a process of acquiring skills rather than a body of knowledge. Dash dreams for future. "Leadership in the modern world cannot be achieved without the knowledge of history, economics, politics and the religion of many lands English is a symbol of this contact with the outside world" (4)
- Here teacher is a facilitator -a person who manages the environment & material which will help the students becomes autonomous learner.
- A learner centered approach facilitates learning through techniques involving in activities. A learner has to be given some mind engaging task. This allow greater peer interaction, which is more effective in acquiring features of information use in language, which are often not available in a formal teacher centered class. This generates the ability to manipulate language in social context which is an important feature of communicative competence. Singh has stated the utility principles of teaching-learning as: Principle of Habit-

formation, Principle of SRW, Principle of Selection and Gradation, Principle of multi-skill approach which facilitates teachers of English to take useful steps in the teaching of English (Singh, 62-64)

- English teachers cannot confine themselves with centuries old translation methods or text books they themselves have to be very creative to save the degrading standard of ELT in India. This we can do by adopting situational method of teaching. In the way learner get & they do not feel bore. Again an English language teacher has to be innovative & be receptive to adopt new technology or method to make the teaching process effective. It is clear that computer cannot be the supplant of the language teacher but the role of language teacher has been changed & they have to transform themselves to meet the challenges at global level. They cannot confine themselves with centuries old translation methods or text books they themselves have to be very creative to save the degrading standard of ELT in India & particularly in the Northern Maharashtra.

Conclusion:

In order to bring reevaluation in English language teaching, reoriented program & updated knowledge is the requirement of time. More & more technology should be used while teaching language to create the interest in students. Teaching of English has to be viewed as mastering of language skills as a portion to be covered. Optimistically, the challenges in front the English teacher of the North Maharashtra region would get diluted to shine the future of the India globally.

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