



THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN TRIBAL AREAS OF INDIA

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Abstract

This report makes an effort to raise concerns about the state of English instruction in India's rural and tribal institutions of higher education. Most rural schools and universities portray a deeply concerning image when it comes to the quality of English language instruction offered to their students. Important issues for effective English language instruction include teachers' own language skills, as well as their access to relevant information. The fact for students in rural areas is that they have it rough. They lack access to resources like language labs, audio-visual equipment, and the like, which are available to their metropolitan counterparts. Those living in rural areas tend to view the English language more as a subject than a language. It's one of their biggest challenges. The vast majority of students can only read English when it comes to exams. Actually, many students in rural areas have a fear of the English language, and many professors lack a linguistic perspective on their students' lives. Teachers are responsible for imparting linguistic skills to their students. Grammatical rules should be taught only after the language has been mastered. A language is more than a set of words that can be found in a dictionary. It also includes the norms and structures that link the many words we use. Humans use language to communicate. Language expresses thoughts, feelings, and emotions. This paper discusses the issues rural and tribal English teachers face.

Keywords: English Language, Situation of Classroom, Capacity, Knowledge of Teachers and Students, Modern Lab and Usage.

Introduction

There is little doubt that English is a vital international language. As Pandit Nehru once observed, "English is the doorway to the world," the expansion of scientific knowledge has increased the demand for oral and written communication in English. It serves as a global medium for exchange and instruction. There is no other language like English in the world. As an added bonus, the English language is widely admired for its expressive potential and its wealth of literary works.

English is both a first and second language in the country of India. Current trends indicate that English is the language of choice. The acquisition of linguistic competence occurs organically. This type of learning can benefit from a behaviourist approach. However, students of other languages must put up conscious effort to master a foreign language, a process that calls for a more mentalistic approach. Because English is not their first language, children in rural and semi-urban areas of India experience challenges in the classroom. It appears that a child learns the steps necessary to acquire a language beginning in early childhood (Sailaja, 2012). The classroom teaching methodology is based on the teacher's knowledge of the students' ages, levels of English proficiency, cultural backgrounds, areas of interest, and preferred learning styles. There are several challenges that rural college students must overcome. They use English as a second tongue. Students of foreign languages often lack awareness of the fact that they are learning a set of norms. This pupil is having difficulty expressing themselves in English. They have no concept of how to construct a coherent sentence. They lack a command of standard English pronunciation, spelling, and grammar. In reality, passing the exam is the ultimate goal of both the



instructors and the pupils. In my experience, pupils rarely value learning English as a second language. They would rather learn to use English in their daily lives, both verbally and in writing.

Time has shown the increasing significance of the English language in all fields. Students from rural areas and indigenous groups often lack the self-assurance necessary to express themselves fluently in English. For starters, students learned English via the Grammar Translation Method. The strategy used here encourages children to rely on their native tongue. There is no question, about how grammar is learned. Teachers are responsible for imparting linguistic skills to their students (Corder, 1972). Grammatical rules should be taught only after the language has been mastered. They interpret everything into their native language. At exam time, they are unable to produce even a single statement of their own invention. They can't communicate because of the GTM's lack of vocabulary instruction. When writing, they refer to the most popular resources available. The result is that the students barely scratch the surface of the language in order to pass the course. The students' proficiency in English is still subpar after fourteen to fifteen years of study.

Many students are unable to master the English language despite spending years studying it in school. They are limited in their ability to express themselves freely in English. The typical student at our university cannot construct a coherent phrase in English. Our students' English performance has been criticized by their families, educators, examiners, and potential employers. Most of these students struggle academically once they arrive at university. Students are still not able to use English effectively for their own purposes, despite having studied it in schools and universities for a decade. They are unable to communicate successfully on a daily basis because of their poor command of the language. Students from rural or tribal areas are disproportionately affected.

Challenges Facing English Language Instructors

We have also observed that teachers of English in rural and tribal areas are confronted with a multitude of problems and experience a wide range of obstacles, all of which work to impede the efficient teaching and learning of English as a second language. It is necessary for us to continuously identify these problems and obstacles, analyse these, and then take steps to rectify the situation. The challenges that follow are those that are faced by educators in rural and tribal areas.

Background Information on the Students Family

The vast majority of the time, these students are dealing with a variety of financial challenges. The farming industry is their parents' only source of income. Therefore, these students do not attend high schools or universities since they would rather labour for a daily pay than further their education. They want to be able to provide for their families by working and earning money. Their parents are illiterate, and as a result, they do not recognize the significance of receiving an education. The precarious state of their parents' finances presents a significant obstacle. Therefore, they do not have the mental capacity to comprehend language instruction.

Lower Condition of the Classroom

When it comes to English instruction, the teacher appears to have a lot of energy and originality. They are interested in learning the language through a variety of approaches. However, she was unable to achieve her objective since the schools and institutions she was targeting do not have sufficient space to accommodate all of their pupils (Yadav, 2012). When compared to the seating arrangements found in urban schools, this one falls short of expectations. They end up with less self-assurance as a result of situations like this, which presents a difficulty for the instructors.

Sensitiveness and Fear

Students tend to keep to themselves a lot. In comparison to students in metropolitan areas, they don't speak up much despite the fact that the teacher is friendly to them. They have very low levels of both self-esteem and confidence, so even when the teacher praises them, admires them, and tries to motivate them, the students are unable to speak up for themselves. When faced with circumstances like these, it can be difficult for teachers to manage their interactions with children. In point of fact, this is due to both their family history and the environment they were raised in. Since they were children, these students have suffered from an intense fear of the English



language (Vasishth et al., 1997). As a result, it fosters a negative attitude toward the acquisition and utilization of English. There are occasions when these pupils are the first members of their family to attend school. It would be inaccurate to characterize the rural pupils' mind-set as being either wholly negative or completely favourable. Their attitude toward learning English is quite contradictory. They have an interest in speaking and writing English, but they find it very challenging to do so.

Characteristics of the Student Body and Their Native Languages

Their perspective on their own capability and potential is quite pessimistic. Because of this pessimistic outlook, they develop anxiety regarding the topic at hand, particularly the instructor, which, in turn, causes them to have less self-assurance regarding their ability to learn English. Even when teachers are skilled, there is no point in learning anything in this environment. When teaching English in rural or tribal communities, one of the challenges that arises is communicating with students in their native language. The majority of the time, teachers don't even know if their students speak their mother tongue. There were some challenging terms or some challenging concepts that he or she was unable to articulate adequately using their language. It has been discovered that pupils become more attentive and take an interest in studying when teachers utilize their mother tongue in the classroom when they are instructing. Some teachers are unable to properly convey the meaning of English words into their pupils' native languages so that they can understand them. In order for instruction to be effective for these pupils, every single teacher needs to be able to speak and understand the students' native language.

The majority of the time, these pupils' teachers are to blame for instilling a fear of the English language in them beginning in their childhood. They keep repeating, "English is a tough language," which may be the reason why this sentence is hammering away at their subconscious mind and producing unfavourable outcomes. The teacher is responsible for ensuring that the students have the right mentality from an early age. In his explanation of the relationship between teaching and learning, Sachdeva (2002) believes that teaching and learning are inter-related and inter-dependent on one another. Learning and instructing are the two pillars that support the structure of the educational process. When there is good teaching, there is also good learning. Teaching is the activity that supplements learning in the context of the process of teaching and learning. One could say that education and learning go hand in hand, like both sides of the same coin (Dey, 2021).

Student and Teacher Bonding

A number of educators hold hostile feelings toward the pupils in their classrooms. They are consistently of the opinion that the students in question are uninteresting and have no potential for growth. Because of this mentality, students are not participating in events at their schools or colleges. They become unresponsive and illiterate, which is one of the challenges faced by the instructors. In point of fact, this has something to do with the mental makeup of the kids. It is necessary for the teacher to have a good understanding of the students' psychological makeup. There are instances when the instructor will have a very dictatorial attitude, and they will also threaten the kids with consequences. There are instances when these teachers treat their pupils with a great deal of severity. Therefore, this pupil is nervous around their teachers. It prevents the development of a positive, healthy relationship between the student and the teacher. All of these things are connected to the process of teaching and learning languages.

Lacking of Motivation and Exposure

These children have never received the appropriate motivation and encouragement from the time they were young, and as a result, it is a struggle for the educators who work with them in schools and colleges. The orders given by the institutions or the government have brought the teachers of these tribal areas into these schools. This person is being forced to work in this tribal community against their choice. This means that he or she does not put in their full effort or give these students their complete attention. Learning, in Skinner's view, involves acquisition as well as retention of information. It's possible that the majority of these students are the first members of their families to attend school or college. They have not been exposed to the English language



to a significant degree in the social environment in which they live. The English learning and teaching that takes place in their schools is not of an appropriate standard. Students in the lower grades of some schools are not given the opportunity to learn English at any point (Walz, 1982). It is necessary to provide sufficient opportunities for the students to improve their capabilities. Even at the college level, some students occasionally mess up the spelling of their own names. One of the difficulties that teachers have in the classroom is dealing with children like these.

Pronunciation is consistently cited as one of the most challenging aspects of instructing English to students for whom it is a second language. Even though teaching proper pronunciation is a challenging endeavor, it is nonetheless one of the most important aspects of language instruction for the English language. It is important for the instructors to be aware of how they themselves pronounce words. It is important for students to be exposed to a wide range of linguistic varieties and a variety of pronunciations. In this circumstance, the amount of time required for the teacher to provide additional amenities such as audio-visual aids, the screening of films, and group discussions is significant. "Alert teachers of foreign languages have always made good use of supplemental aids they must make use of whatever gadget they can conceive of" (Bhatt & Hancin-Bhatt, 2002). It is imperative that supplemental materials like as posters, photographs, pictures, postcards replica of great works of arts crafts-maps, and travel folders be utilized in order to make the study of the language both fascinating and useful.

Experiences and Practical Issues

The strength of the class presents yet another significant obstacle. In many of the schools that are located in tribal areas, the classroom sizes are quite large, with more than one hundred students in each. In addition, sometimes the classes are combined because there are not enough teachers, which brings the total number of students in each classroom to one hundred or more. There is a wide range in intelligence among the students in any given class. They have different possibilities open to them. Their approaches to learning are distinct from one another. Some people learn best through seeing things, others through hearing things, and yet others through doing things. These categories present additional challenges for educators when they are attempting to teach English. The number of available teaching hours for English teachers is extremely restricted. These hours are insufficient to teach the language in a comprehensive manner. In addition, this is one of the challenges that educators are confronted with in schools and colleges. The teacher will not be able to fully concentrate on the four fundamental language skills within this time range.

The appropriateness of the curriculum presents still another obstacle to be overcome. A committee is always responsible for developing the course outline, and some of its members might not even teach these classes. When it comes to instruction, most of the time, teachers resort to either the Lecture Method or the Grammar Translation Method. They never receive accurate results as a consequence of this. Therefore, teachers need to pick which approach or methods they will utilize in a classroom that contains students with a variety of learning styles and preferences. There are times when the teachers are not appropriately qualified or they lack the abilities necessary to deal with the kids in their classes. In addition to this, they are unable to properly communicate or have fluent language while instructing. The instructors are not allocating sufficient time for students to both practice and exercise. However, the vast majority of the time, these pupils are irregular, which makes it difficult for the instructor to achieve a satisfactory level of teaching and learning output (Allen & Prabhu, 1988).

Lab facility and Modern Techniques

Another significant obstacle is the absence of a library and language lab facility. These educational institutions are always located in secluded or indigenous communities. They are not aware of any of this and do not possess the necessary teaching facilities. In addition, they are not aware of any of this. It makes things difficult for the instructors.

The vast majority of the time, educators are not familiar with contemporary technologies such as ICT, the internet, online education, etc. They are unable of advancing due to their lack of abilities. Instruction and learning



might be considered to be mutually defining elements of the same process." (Vera, 1998). The student is not only a passive recipient of "made to measure" packages of knowledge but also an active participant, and the teacher is not only a giver but also a receiver of knowledge (Dey, Amelia & Herawati, 2023). Both roles are essential to the learning process. In spite of the fact that English is a vital language, mastering it can be a difficult challenge for both students and teachers in the context of the educational process. The fact that a successful implementation of English curriculum is still a ways off is a source of tremendous disappointment. In particular for kids living in rural or tribal areas, the English language continues to be a source of anxiety. Students in urban areas typically have a stronger command of the English language than their rural counterparts. This is due to the fact that English language instruction is more effectively delivered in urban schools, and urban students also benefit from the support of their parents, teachers, and other adults. However, the vast majority of parents in rural and tribal areas are illiterate and unable to contribute financially to their children's education. It will be easier for pupils from tribal communities to acquire English language skills if the teachers who instruct them become qualified, passionate, and aware of their responsibilities.

Discussion

Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in India presents a unique set of challenges that require a multifaceted and strategic approach. These challenges stem from various factors, including inadequate motivation among students, limited exposure to the English language, subpar classroom conditions, a dearth of appropriate teaching aids and materials, and, in some cases, insufficient teacher training. Furthermore, the impact of bilingualism on the learning process necessitates careful consideration.

To effectively address these challenges, a holistic approach is crucial. The cornerstone of successful ESL instruction lies in focusing on the four fundamental language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Educators must strive to create an engaging and supportive learning environment that fosters student confidence and encourages a genuine enjoyment of language learning activities. Effective ESL instruction requires a deep understanding of the learner's perspective. Students must perceive the practical value of English in their daily lives. Recognizing the importance of English for communication, both personal and professional, is paramount. The ability to express oneself fluently and confidently in English is essential for navigating the globalized world and achieving personal and professional success.

Furthermore, cultivating a positive and supportive learning environment is crucial. This involves fostering a strong rapport between the teacher and the learner, as well as actively engaging parents in the learning process. By fostering a collaborative and supportive environment, educators can significantly enhance student motivation and engagement. Effective ESL instruction necessitates a proactive and imaginative approach from educators. Incorporating a diverse range of teaching methodologies, utilizing engaging multimedia resources, and creating opportunities for real-life language use are crucial. Emphasizing vocabulary acquisition is fundamental, as a strong vocabulary base is the foundation for effective communication.

It is recommended that a methodical strategy be utilized in order to resolve all of these issues. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the four fundamental linguistic abilities that the instructor should emphasize. The instructor needs to think of a solution to boost the students' self-assurance while also encouraging them to take pleasure in the language-based tasks they are doing. The pupils learn by modelling what the teacher does. The teaching of English as a second language in India is plagued with issues such as inadequate motivation, inadequate exposure to the language, poor classroom conditions, a lack of teaching aids and material, incompetence on the part of teachers, bilingualism and its effects on the learner, and so on (Azad, 2024; Singh, 2018).

However, if the right relationship is developed in the attitudes of the learner, the teacher, and the learner's parents and if the learner is properly motivated through this relationship, then some worthwhile teaching is feasible. It is important for the instructor to have a broad range of enthusiasm and imagination. It is important for the pupils to become familiar with basic vocabulary. The practice of learning new words will become second



nature as a result of this. The words that they have just acquired will eventually become a part of their own personal vocabulary and can be used whenever they choose. A better expression is going to arise from using this vocabulary. In order to effectively tackle the challenges at hand, it is necessary to take into account both the roles of the learner and the instructor in the process of acquiring knowledge of a language (Sawalmeh & Dey, 2023).

Conclusion

In conclusion, overcoming the challenges of ESL instruction in India requires a multifaceted approach that considers the unique needs and learning styles of students. By focusing on the four fundamental language skills, creating a supportive learning environment, and fostering a deep understanding of the value of English in the globalized world, educators can empower students to become proficient English communicators.

The student's comprehension of the usefulness of the English language in everyday life is the single most significant factor. They intend to convey themselves primarily through the usage of the English language. They will speak fluently in English for the aim of better communication because that is the language they will employ. In addition to this, it is helpful to employ appropriate vocabulary and suitable sentence structure. They will be able to stay up with the rest of the developing globe if they can develop their public speaking confidence. In addition to this, it will assist in elevating the general level of English proficiency among college students. Allow everyone who has a stake in the matter to shoulder the burden. In order for a student's overall performance to improve, it is the responsibility of the instructor to pique the pupil's interest in the study of the English language. Only after that will we be able to make the environment better. By doing so, we will be able to improve both our methods of teaching and our students' English language skills.

Teaching English in tribal areas of India presents numerous challenges, including significant linguistic barriers due to diverse indigenous languages and limited exposure to English. Socio-economic factors like poverty, malnutrition, and lack of resources further exacerbate these challenges. Cultural factors, such as differing learning styles and socio-cultural barriers, also play a significant role. Furthermore, teachers often lack specialized training and face challenges such as low morale and isolation. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including teacher training, curriculum development, infrastructure improvement, community engagement, and addressing socio-economic issues. By implementing these strategies, we can ensure that tribal students have equal access to quality education and the opportunity to succeed in a globalized world.

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