



ISSN

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

ELT IN MARGINALIZED INSTITUTIONS: A STEP TO DEVELOP RURAL INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to highlight the real scenario of English language teaching in marginalized or rural institutions in India. The reasons behind teaching and learning low standard English have always been a matter-of-concern. And plenty of reasons can arise in one's mind while pondering over this issue. A lot of difficulties are faced by the teachers in these 'acquisition-poor environment' and learners are poor in English language on account of unskilled teachers, lack of teacher training program, using inappropriate teaching methods, poor infrastructure etc. After making a review of challenges and importance of English language, this paper critically focuses on some factors which are creating a gap between marginalized and urban institutions regarding English language teaching and proposing some bridges to overcome this gap for developing rural India through ELT program.

Keywords: Marginalized institutions, ELT program, Bridging the gap, Developing rural India.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of communication to fulfill anyone's needs and it is the way of expressing ideas and opinions. With globalization being an influencing force in all over the world English become *lingua franca* in this 'new communication euphoria' (IJEE). It is the only language that reached at every sphere of human life and it makes bridges among the persons and cultures and one can link himself/herself beyond the borders through English language.

In most of the developing countries English is considered as official language. Country like India is none other than that; where the population is more than 1.252 billion and besides 22 official languages "English enjoys the status of associate official language at National level" (Singh 22).

With the impact of globalization English language has reached at every corner of the country but the conditions under which English has been learnt and taught in marginalized institutions are far from satisfactory level. There is a wide gap between rural and urban learners regarding English language skills. Thus, it becomes a language of the elite society specially.

Real Scenario of English Language in Marginalized Institution: If we throw light on marginalized schools and colleges, we will find English language as phobia to these learners. Although English language is considered now as compulsory subject because of its global needs but implementation of English language practically is so far away; till now it is a matter of fear in rural India. English seems *milk of tigris* to those learners as well as teachers. They

are suffering from Anglophobia and they do not have courage to “go near this cruel and wild animal” (Ghodke 99). Their sole objective is to pass out the examination and to get rid of this phobia. Even both the learners and teachers who spend several years through teaching and learning English language, they are not able to utter a single sentence in English. The teachers even do not know the goal of English language curriculum that is to enable the students to understand the language and use it in a functional way and carry them out.

70% of India lives in rural part of the country and even after so many years of formal teaching English language did not get recognition properly in these village institutions. A review of literature also said that English language is undervalued or marginalized (Pennington 7-19). There are lots of government policies to take over this problem and make a smooth way so that English language can be reached to the marginalized students. But in India and other developing countries the real scenario is not as smoother as the policies look in the paper. Therefore English language remains a stress to all these rural learners as well as teachers.

Factors that Create the Gap: In this crucial scenario behind teaching and learning low standard English there are plenty of reasons that arise in one’s mind. Some of these significant factors are

Absence of Clear Aim: In the rural part of India it is noticeable that the institutions do not have any goal to teach and learn English language. Though the policy makers prepared some objectives for teaching and learning English but in practical these are all fruitless. Teachers only understand that they have to complete the syllabus and the learners know they have to study as they will be examined by it. As Agnihotri and Khanna said, “A textbook is prescribed; teachers are expected to cover the portion. Students must be tested only within the portion covered and the examiner who sets the question paper must ask questions only on the syllabus” (Agnihotri & Khanna cited in Ghodke 100).

Interference and Frequent Use of Mother Tongue (L1): It is very natural that a child grows by learning his mother tongue. But when he goes to learn any second language (SL) automatically he follows the

same rules of L1 in SL and it seems difficult to adapt. Specially from the rural part of India the learners go to school very late and they find it more challenging. Moreover it has been seen that textbooks are written in English but mother tongue is frequently used by learners and teachers also in order to translate it.

Inappropriate Teaching Method: The method of teaching English also becomes a hurdle to learn this language. In rural part of India teachers teach through grammar translation method. Even they do not use English language for instructions in classroom also. The teachers read out the text, translate it into L1 and try to make the students understand. So, it is clear English is undervalued by faulty teaching method.

Ineffective Textbook: The textbooks which are prescribed in rural institution are not suitable. The contents of textbooks are prepared by some government association without focusing on current trends of language. As Sharma stated, “English language teaching in India... has suffered a lot, so much so that our students who pass intermediate or degree examinations with English... can neither speak nor write correct English, may be because the emphasis in our schools and colleges has always been on the conceptual content and the stylistic content has been neglected so far” (Sharma 91)

Lack of Teacher Training Program: Teachers are lacking of appropriate techniques to teach foreign language. And they are not aware of certain changes that take place in modern world regarding English language teaching. Although some professional organization has already taken responsibility to train the teachers but it is not so working in rural India.

Ill-equipped Environment: The environment of rural institutions is not conducive to learn any language. It is very easy to find out that there is scarcity of classroom, library, availability of books and lack of teaching aid i.e. computers, charts, smart board and language lab where students can enrich their listening and speaking skills. And because of these ill-equipped environment learners lag behind their urban counterpart who are learning English language with ICT gadgets in urban area.

Socio-economic Factors: Socio-economic factors are also obstacle in the way of learning process. In the

marginalized part of India most of the learners come from a poor economic and illiterate background. Therefore they opt local, government institutions where they can afford their education, rather than private or public institutions. As they are not able to have proper education in well-equipped institutions they are not conscious of the skills of English language which is the key to bright careers in future.

In rural institutions challenges like lack of learner's interest, over-crowded classroom, and examination oriented teaching system etc. are also creating gap in the process of learning English language.

Bridges to Overcome the Gap: It is very easy for anyone to find out and talk about some issues regarding any critical social scenario but solve them out or proposing some possible solutions is far-fetched.

It would not be denied that although these problems cannot be removed but these can be reduced by some remedial bridges

- At first, make the language curriculum goal so clear in rural institutions that learners can realize the importance of English language in every field like science, technology, social science, journalism, international trade etc. and can operate this language in every step of life.
- Instead of outdated teaching method teacher should apply communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in their rural classroom. This will make the classroom learner centered and students will improve themselves by interacting with others and by doing various activities.
- The teacher should know the current trends of English language. They should be trained not only in competence of language but in performance also. The government or policy makers or the reputed organizations should have this responsibility to focus on the teacher training in rural areas and encourage them to make teaching-learning process effective.
- The ELT experts should also pay attention on course syllabus of the marginalized schools and colleges, which is not updated in accordance with current trend of English language.
- Government should think about the infrastructure of rural institutions. It should be

developed by adding some latest teaching aid like language lab, computers, voice recorder, VCD player and so on. With the help of these electronic instruments learners can improve English language.

- Besides these, teachers should motivate their students and make English easier for them by using it more and more in practical or real context. Teachers should handle the learner's mistakes very carefully so that they cannot be de-motivated and there should be a friendly rapport between teachers and learners in the classroom.

Status of English Language in Current Era

English is only wide spreading language across the globe. It dominates in every field of national and international dealings and becomes the means of international banking and business. It is the language of internet and press through which you will find any information according to your choice if you are able to communicate in English language. It is seen that in most of the job requirement applicants have to have knowledge of English language.

In every sector of life whether it is education, job, business, shopping malls or in tourism you have to have the skill of English language. For surviving in a modern society it becomes as necessary as the three basic needs of human life. So, in Graddol's word it is said that "we are fast moving into a world in which not to have English is to be marginalized and excluded" (Graddol cited in Ghodke 98).

Conclusion

To conclude it can be said that keeping all these increasing demands of English language effective implementation of its curriculum should be done in marginalized institutions of India. The experts, policy makers and professional bodies should look after all the issues regarding teaching and learning English language and make this process dynamic with implementing multimedia, ICT gadgets or CALL. So that, learners of rural institutions can enhance their ability and make themselves capable to get opportunity in every step of life and through empowering own-selves they can develop the rural India.

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