
**Teaching Of English Language To Urban And Rural Students In Chandrapur And
Gadchiroli District In Maharashtra**

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Abstract:

The students from Chandrapur and Gadchiroli districts are from tribal, backward, minority and some other communities. So, there always prevails a bi-lingual, tri-lingual and multi-lingual atmosphere. Generally, the students from the primary up to the UG level have to use Marathi as their L1. It is also the widely circulated official language in all the Government offices and other formal domains. It is apparent that there is a strong tendency of the students to communicate in the local language inside and outside class. Even some teachers who are insiders there, use the local language like Hindi, Bengali, Telgu and Gondi Language in some situations while communicate with their students. Marathi for them is L2 and English occupies the status of L3 or L4 from the perspective of usability in daily life. Most of the families in the district depend on agriculture around the year, so the learners are from economically challenged background. Some private English medium schools have grown in the district these days but students' enrolment is very minimal. From this, it can be inferred that most of the UG students are from Marathi, Hindi, Bengali, Telgu, and Gondi Language medium schooling background. They enter for higher education in the UG colleges with a poor command over the English language. Factors like illiteracy, lack of awareness, poor economic condition etc., on the part of the parents, play a crucial role in their possession of sufficient communicative competence in English. This Paper examines the stark reality of the students in the rural and urban areas of these districts while teaching and learning of English language and literature. The scope of the paper is limited to the study of English Language Teaching in Gondwana University's Chandrapur and Gadchiroli District.

Key Words: Teaching, learning, Urban, Semi-urban, Rural

Introduction:

The vision of 21st century Higher Education in India is to produce skilled human resources for the all-round development of the learners so that they can re-mould the nation. In this direction teaching English language to urban and rural students according to their perspectives can contribute a good deal in making the learners competent for their adjustment and survival in the rapidly changing world.

In India English has established as a major language in spite of the multi-lingual and multi-cultural nature of the country. While writing multi-cultural and linguistic aspect Kramsch writes, "the term 'multicultural ... indicates the co-existence of people from many different backgrounds

and ethnicities, as in 'multicultural societies'. In an individual sense, it characterizes persons who belong to various discourse communities, and who therefore have the linguistic resources and social strategies to affiliate and indentify with many different cultures and ways of using language. The cultural identity of multi-cultural individuals is not that of multiple native speakers, but rather, it is made of a multiplicity of social roles or 'subject positions' which they occupy selectively, depending on the Interactional context in which they find themselves at the time" (Claire Kramsch 1998: 82). In this multi-cultural and multi-lingual India, English has been poised for its new role of empowering the learners with the much needed communicative and social functions. India is fully aware of the overwhelming position English has come to assume on the world stage and the growing demand in English language learning the world over. As a result, there has been an explosion of the demand for English in academic and non-academic sectors. This craze is reflected in the attendant demand for the introduction of English rights from an early stage up to the higher level.

The students of rural and rural-urban areas are not in the habit of buying texts though some can easily buy. As Trica Hedge says, "Good teachers have always taken a positively critical approach to appraising and developing their work, using what insights are available from their won and others' experience, and form the possible implications of research, especially from studies which are based in the language classroom" (Tricia Hedge, 2000: 39). Teachers, instead of, encouraging the learners acquire the basic skills of English to communicate confidently, merely translate what is there in the texts. Even in the English major class, there is an unhealthy tendency to translate the meaning of English words into vernacular tongue for better understanding of the students.

Teachers are very eager to finish the syllabus and finishing this is the ultimate goal of English language teaching in the UG classes. As a result, the learners show a very indifferent attitude towards English partially owing to the approach of the teachers. Teachers are not accustomed to arousing motivation in learners in English class. It is the ability of the teachers that can greatly influence on the minds of the rural students. Truly speaking, proper practice in using English language is not given to the students. An ideal platform is not created in the class. Everything is being taught like mathematical or chemical formulas.

Teachers are not teaching the language skills for larger communicative purpose to the students. The classes are generally devoid of devoting so much attention in the target proficiency in English. The other sub-skills like pronunciation, stress, intonation, creativity in writing etc., have been ignored by teachers. The colleges are producing a large number for non-creative, ill-equipped, incompetent graduates.

English Language Teaching (ELT) in rural areas is definitely a great challenge. It is a challenge in one sense that all theoretical knowledge acquired as part of English Language Teaching (ELT) training goes haywire in the classroom. The process of teaching English in rural areas is challenging but enjoyable because it involves innocent language learners. Teacher role is also more demanding. It is the teacher who is the model, to whom a student looks for all language learning needs.

Classroom observation has been continuing in English Language Teaching (ELT) research since sixties. This kind of observation is an essential strategy to investigate the problem of this research. My experiences in the teaching profession inform me that there is a widening gap between the researches in English Language Teaching (ELT) and the teaching practices of language teachers, between what our classroom practice now is and what it really ought to be.

The researcher have tried to observe the teaching learning process of English Language Teaching (ELT) in near about all UG colleges with due permission from the respective Principals and the classroom teachers. I feel the necessity to have firsthand experience of the Functional English class for the science students from the colleges where science streams are there. The researcher have extended the process of observation to colleges which is running the Arts, Science and Commerce Streams. This was deliberately done by me keeping the following goals in mind.

- ✓ To observe the teaching practice of English in classroom at rural and urbane, colleges in the district.
- ✓ To observe the teacher's role in English Language Teaching (ELT)
- ✓ To see the atmosphere in the English class
- ✓ To observe if ELT methodology is applied.

For collecting the required data for the study the researcher personally contacted for three groups: the English teachers, the students and the Principals of those colleges. Apart from those The researcher approached various stakeholders outside the English classroom. They provided their views and opinions on the target needs of the UG learners in English Language Teaching (ELT). The opinions of the teachers and their experiences in major classes and the students' oral feedback are also taken into account to formulate a broader perspective of the needs in English Language Teaching (ELT).

The following informants were consulted

- ❖ Teachers
- ❖ UG students of English class
- ❖ Parents/guardians of the UG students
- ❖ Prospective Employers
- ❖ Evaluators

Teaching English in rural and urban areas is an unplanned teaching/learning activity. In fact both the teacher and the taught are unaware of the effective pedagogical strategies. The reasons for such an unplanned perpetuation of English Language Teaching (ELT) in such areas could be innumerable but a few are enumerated below.

- The teachers entrusted with the teaching of English are untrained and unqualified.
- The training provided is purely theoretical and bookish.
- Minimum intervention of technology and in majority of cases it is not available.
- Basic infrastructure is absent.
- The primary level of schooling is completely mismanaged and ignored.
- Heterogeneous classes.
- Substandard teaching material.

Hostile socio-cultural factors.

The whole spectrum of student population can be put under two categories; Rural and Urban. By labelling them as rural and urban, the researcher is not referring to their geographical locations. There are urban-rural and vice-versa. By these two terms again the researcher mean deprived in terms of infrastructure of all kinds; educational, social, economical and familial. It is a known fact that rural students are completely marginalized as far as English is concerned. Cutting across the States and regions of India, students falling under rural category miss career.

The student who has to encounter once he or she enters an educational institution situated in a rural area. There is no ambience similar in an urban and a rural educational institution. In an urban centre of learning, like teachers, peers, infrastructure, notice board, peon, clerk, sign boards, school bags, covers on the books and the notebooks, slogans written on the walls of the school/ college, language of the reprimand by the teacher, homework etc, makes you feel 'English'. On the contrary, look at the paraphernalia in any rural school or college. It makes you feel 'un-English' and in fact subaltern. These examples may appear trivial to some of you, but do matter a lot as far as learning or teaching of English is concerned. Almost all the teachers of English themselves admit their own children in the former category of learning centres. Those who don't, I call them 'brave hearts'. Teaching of English in rural or urban areas is definitely a challenge. It's a challenge in the sense that all theoretical knowledge acquired as part of English Language Teaching (ELT) training goes haywire in the classroom. A teacher has to evolve strategies at every step and sometimes he has to be used. Before the researcher deliberate on the remedial measures, let us take an overview of the grey areas as far as teaching of English in rural areas is concerned.

- English as a phobia
- English treated as elite over other languages
- English as an indicator of social status
- English is taught like any other subject
- No introduction of Modern Teaching technology
- Incompetent teachers
- Substandard teaching material
- Non-availability of basic infrastructure
- Hostile socio-cultural factors

There could be many more other reasons and are well known to all.

Role of a Teacher to teach English Language is very important and he has to be with good command over all the skills of English language. Unfortunately, cutting across the Chandrapur and Gadhiroli district in Maharashtra, this is not so. In fact the situation at primary and secondary level is pathetic. Moreover in these districts there are very few English teachers to teach English at primary level. Any Social Studies' teacher teaches English, assuming all is well. It is known to all those who are in the business of teaching language that critical age to learn a language is up to 04-05 years. One can imagine the intensity of damage done to a young learner. On the contrary the researcher proposes to the extent that there is no need to have exclusive English teachers at

primary level at least. The logic is very simple; if teachers of all the subjects are very good at English, a learner masters the language automatically. On the contrary if non English teachers teach and communicate in vernacular (as most of the teachers do in rural areas), how could an English class of 45 minutes prove effective. The role of teacher becomes more challenging and demanding in rural areas because in such areas it is the teacher who is the model, to whom a student looks for all learning needs. As far as pedagogy is concerned, it is not simple to answer the question, 'how to teach?' In spite of the fact that there are various methods of teaching English, but practically none of the methods works effectively. In this age of English Language Teaching (ELT), we really can't discard Grammar Translation method. In case of rural students, mother tongue is one of the very effective tools of English Language Teaching (ELT).

Teaching of English in rural areas is like grand nanny's traditional prescriptions for routine ailments. Allopathic medicines may not work effectively with rural patients. The researcher will come back to the point that in rural areas, each teacher irrespective of the subject of teaching must be good at the use of English so that maximum exposure to English could be rendered to a learner. A teacher's role in rural areas is immense as compared to urban areas because in an urban setting a learner has other models like family, peers, society, technology etc to imitate. A rural student has only a teacher to imitate and learn from. The Educational institutions in rural areas are considered as temples of learning. That means school or college is considered a very sacrosanct, ideal place.

The rural students come from poor families; they come to schools with lot of expectations. The shabby ambience in the school doubles their pangs of poverty. Having said that in rural areas majority of schools/ colleges are government run, but should it be assumed or accepted that government run institutes have to be shabby. A learner cannot learn a language without the basic needs like chalk, duster, blackboard, classrooms, fans, lights, clean drinking water etc. I am very sure, money is not a constraint. National schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) have lot of funds, so the minimum required ambience can be created. How can one implement uniform syllabus at two places like a school/colleges in Delhi and a school/colleges in a backward village of Chandrapur or Gadchiroli. Uniformity in syllabus wants uniformity in infrastructure. So when I say role of an institution, I am urging policymakers, syllabus designers to take into consideration the ground realities and work towards bridging the wide gap. A rural student has to be given a special treatment in every sense. To me any institution can play an important role in three key areas, namely: providing qualitative learner friendly infrastructure, recruitment of good English teachers and different syllabus: this is an inflammable issue. Look at the kind of teachers appointed by various State governments in rural areas. Considering their incompetence at using English or Will to use English, why should one expect miraculous results from them? Appointments are highly political and mere possession of degrees like Diploma in Education (D. Ed), Bachelor of Education (B. Ed), NET and SET are sufficient to label somebody as an English teacher. I don't want to comment on the quality of D. Ed/B. Ed., NET and SET courses which are shamelessly theoretical and completely redundant. Avenues for socio-cultural opportunities: in a

rural school or college one hardly finds a chance to interact with the society/ community. The institutes should organize interactive activities to ensure participation of learners.

21 century is witnessing tremendous impact of technology on educational activities. The whole process of teaching and learning has been digitalized. Because of technology, language teaching has undergone a complete transformation. May it be Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Language Laboratories, use of CDs & Cassettes, Internet etc, a modern learner has all the technology to learn not only English but any foreign language provided he/ she has the money to buy this. But it is very painful that a rural learner is still in those dark ages and is completely marginalized as far as technological exposure is concerned. When even chalk, duster and black board are missing, expecting technology will be asking for sky. With this I am not saying that English language can't be taught without technology. Nobody can undermine the value and effectiveness of human interaction/ interface and moreover we all have learnt English without using technology. But that is no excuse to deprive rural learners of the basic technological devices like TV, Tape recorders, Computer etc. The researcher would like to bring in EDUSAT, which is an educational satellite launched across the country to provide qualitative and uniform education particularly communication skills to rural students or students residing in rural-urban areas. If I am correct, except the State of Kerala, EDUSAT has failed in its objectives; at least in a State like Maharashtra and particularly Chandrapur and Gadchirili district; in fact it has been withdrawn. The equipment worth crore of rupees is gaining dust in various schools/ colleges. The reasons for its failure lie with the administrators, schools, and teachers but certainly not with the innocent students. Now the question is what should an English teacher do in such an unsupportive situation? The only solution left is face to face interaction in form of debates, discussions etc. Using a traditional cassette player could do wonders as far as listening and speaking skills are concerned. Having said that technology cannot substitute a teacher, it can definitely act like an effective teaching aide making the whole process of language teaching and learning faster and easier. Gondwana University is a tribal area university, established by the government of Maharashtra in October 2011. The prime motto, rather the fundamental vision of the university is to empower and add value to the lives of rural and semi-urban backward students. Like any other rural institute of learning, Gondwana University, too suffers from various constraints. Majority of the learners in this universities are first generation learners and unlike the heterogeneous English classes elsewhere, English classes in this university colleges are by and large homo-genious, because of the similar socio-cultural, economical and IQ status of learners. In order to empower the rural and semi-urban backward students, the university has to emphasis on enhancing the communication competence of all the enrolled students. The university has to establish Learning Resource Centre primarily to hone their communication abilities, to prepare the target learners for job market and to prepare the target learners for international certificate courses like Business English Certificate. Learning Resource Centre can give a tremendous ignition to the desire of a learner to speak English and provides the ambience of English. The learner's accent, pronunciation, stress, tone etc can be controlled and modified according to the standard pattern. In order to develop rural and urban

students the university and colleges should have to establish Language Labs and train the students. The following steps can be taken to improve English Language Teaching (ELT):

- Administer Listening for specific information test.
- Students have to ask to listen and respond to the questions given.
- A list of words spoken by native speakers is to be transmitted to the target learners.
- Then they have to ask to repeat the pronunciation.
- Whatever was spoken by the learners, it is to be recorded and listened by the teacher.
- The tests have to be repeated once again, the responses is to be once again recorded and corrected.
- This way all the responses are to be compared over a period of time.
- It will find that there is a marked change in the pronunciation, stress and intonation. Based on the above test, it can be observed that even the slow learners perform very well when they are exposed to learning resource centre. Because in a learning resource centre the individual space allotted to each student gives enough opportunity to a learner to feel confident to make mistakes without being ridiculed by others.
- Though, initially the students will be hesitant and afraid of even touching the state of the art learning resource centre paraphernalia, but gradually it will observed that the learners adopt the technology.

Definitely there are certain advantages of conventional teaching which are really not covered under teaching through learning resource centre or any kind of technological aides.

Advantages of conventional teaching:

- ❖ Eye contact is maintained between the teacher and the student. Teaching is synchronized with the student's mind. Immediate remedial action such as repeating the material already taught or altering the pace of teaching can be executed.
- ❖ Doubts on the part of the student are immediately cleared by the teacher.
- ❖ The teacher does not spend time grappling with technology.
- ❖ Rapport and bonding develops between the teacher and the student through regular face to face interactions in class.

The teacher acts as a role model for the student, thereby enhancing the learning process. Having known that 70% of India lives in villages, majority of the work force comes from rural areas. It becomes imperative that students of such areas are given equal opportunities to learn English. The urban-rural divide in teaching of English has to be bridged. It is possible only if a committed & honest approach is adopted. Having said that a rural student is equally competent to learn English, an English teacher has to adopt innovative strategies in the classroom. One has to go for action research to find the solutions on the spot. A few measures like appointment of skilled & committed teachers of English at primary level, effective implementation of technological schemes like EDUSAT, zero tolerance on the quality of both human and infrastructural resources, provision of minimum technological aids like TV, LCD Projectors, Computers, Stereos, weekly film shows, facelift to the general ambience in schools and colleges, etc should be put in place to arrest the dwindling standards of teaching/ learning of English in rural areas.

The said measures may appear far-fetched but will certainly help in better teaching and learning of English language in rural areas and urban area.

Conclusion:

The British applied linguist David Graddol says that the official position of English in India remains that of a transitional necessity. But this position has been overtaken by events happening. For growing globalised urban middle class, English is playing a greater role in both their work and personal lives. According to a survey carried out by Indian television channel CNN-IBN in August 2023, 87% people feel that knowledge of English is important to succeed in life but 82% feel that knowing the State language is very important and interestingly 57% feel that English is making us forget our mother tongue. But the fact remains that learning of English is inevitable for prospective job seekers. With this kind of situation, The researcher have drawn his own conclusion that to succeed in life one should know at least three languages; the mother tongue, the national language and an international language. If English is an international language, then we must promote its systematic and planned learning. Realizing the global needs of the learner's traditional English language teaching methodologies need to be replaced by some newer ones.

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