

# Rural Classroom Environment: A Key Factor in Teaching of English as a Second Language

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**Abstract – English is the language that the world uses most extensively nowadays. More and more Indian know the importance of English learning. By Learning English well, we can understand more information of outside world. Environment is considered a complex set of physical, geographical, biological, social, cultural and political conditions that surrounds an individual and determines his performance. The school environment is the result of the interaction of teachers- students' relationship, teachers' academic and professional qualification, teachers' teaching. School environment if the sum of all physical, emotional, social, mental, organizational and instructional factors that contribute to the total teaching learning process with in school having maximum influence on the quality and quantity of students teachers actions and has also facilitating effects on eh achievement of students. The purpose of this paper is to study the influence of the environment factors on English learning. They can help English learners to study English better and improve their English in India.**

**Keywords: Environment, Physical, Family, Social, Society, Emotional, Mental.**

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of language is the basis of all other learning. It is the language what makes us human. To be human is to use language, and to talk is to be a person. Language is the medium of communication. English as a powerful vehicle of communication serves as a link language in a multicultural and multilingual society like India and also as a global linguistic mediator. It holds a place of prominence in our country, even after many decades since Britishers left India. No other language has come up to substitute English, either as a medium of communication or as an official language. Throughout the years, English has emerged as a language of choice for, economic growth, commerce and social mobility. Teaching their children English has always emerged as one of the top prospects of parents from school.

Language is a knowledge and tool to communicate, to express thoughts, feelings and ideas. It shapes cultural ties, friendship, and economic relationships both at national and international level. Knowledge is the key factor in the present world's competitiveness. Knowledge of language is a precondition for that. Language is what makes us human. Patterned language is something particular to humans, that is to say it is the basic capacity that differentiate humans from all other living beings. Language therefore remains potentially a communicative medium capable of expressing ideas and concepts

as well as moods, feelings and attitudes. Language is a certain kind of physical event. It comes out as a response to stimuli from our outer environment. Language and its articulation are also behavioural practices. Written languages use symbols to build words. The entire set of words is the language's vocabulary, the ways in which the words can be meaningfully combined is defined by syntax and grammar. The actual meaning of words and combinations of words is defined by the language semantics.

In civilization, language has the most prominent role. Language learning is the study of the process through which human acquires language. Generally language acquisition refers to first language acquisition, which studies infants' acquisition of their mother tongue, whereas the concept of second language deals with learning of additional languages in children as well as adults. While many forms of animal languages exist, their production is often fixed and not varies much across cultural groups. The complexity, referential richness and social contextual variation of human languages are not exhibited by any other animal language.

English is in fact, world's language. Its use in India can only advantage Indians in more and more shrinking world. Now a day in the age of information and globalisation, this language is indispensable. The desire of Indians across the

length and breadth of the country to learn English as their second language is what makes it India's national language. It has been noted that as a region in India grows prosperous, there is a spurt in the English-medium schools. For instance, as metropolitan cities spread into neighbouring villages, in highly literate Kerala and the prosperous Haryana, the number of English-medium schools kept shooting up.

Urbanising and industrialising made the learning of English a focal point. English gives far more opportunities, not just in India but worldwide. It is the most powerful weapon of India's rising middle class to meet their rising aspirations. The country like China and countries of former Soviet Union are now teaching English at a war footing.

Throughout India, there is a realistic belief in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill, but as a symbol of a better life, a pathway and oppression. Aspiration of such magnitude is a heavy burden for any language, and for those who have responsibility for teaching it. The challenges of providing universal access to English are significant, and many are bound to feel frustrated at the speed of progress. But one cannot ignore the way that the English language has emerged as a powerful agent for change in India.

There is of course no denying that the English language is one of the most important tools available to human beings. It is the international language, a tool to communicate among various cultural groups, various companies, organisations, communities, and various countries. This is because the number of the people who use English as a means of communication exceeds far more than the number of the people who speak it as their mother tongue. In fact in the present technical and scientific advances, the need of a common language has been successfully met by the lingua franca i.e. English language. This is well known fact that those who have a good command on English have a great advantage over the ones who have not.

## OBJECTIVES

- 1) To study the study-habits of the students in relation to gender.
- 2) To study the academic-achievement of students in English in relation to gender.
- 3) To study the relationship between the study-habits and academic-achievement of girls in English.
- 4) To study the relationship between the study-habits and academic-achievement of boys in English.

## Problems of Teaching English as a Second Language in India

In a country like India, classes of mixed ability groups are a feature of every small town or village. In most of the rural parts of India, learning-teaching process is done in the vernacular language. On the other hand, most of the competitive examinations (higher education and employment) require English as medium of instruction. The ratio of students to teachers is high, leading to ineffectiveness. The rural atmosphere does not provide students the opportunity to speak and learn English. The size of the classes everywhere is considerably large. This is one of the reasons why individual attention is not possible to the students. Teaching of English needs a radical change for the benefit of learners in schools and colleges. The students of semi-urban and rural areas in India face a lot of problems as English is not their mother tongue. English is their second language. In many places, English becomes the third language as they have a local language, then Hindi followed by English. As compared to the learners from urban areas, learners from rural areas face more difficulties during the process of language acquisition. In urban areas parents are mostly educated. So, the domestic environment helps the students from urban areas acquire the language quickly. Students do not get chance to speak or read in English in the rural parts of the country. In villages and small towns students mainly hail from rural areas. Bilingual method is adopted in language classes. This method helps only to slow-learners to some extent. Moreover, this act reduces the real learning process as a whole. If a student does not understand in English, he or she asks for an explanation in L1 i.e. in his or her mother tongue. Consequently, the English teacher is in a state to adopt bilingual method. Lack of trained teachers in rural areas has become a reality. Teaching is a continuous process and teachers in rural India are often debarred from attending workshops and seminars to acquaint themselves with new ways and methods. The rural population of India, which depends on agriculture and limited income, end up sending their children to government schools where English is not taught as a skill but as a subject. Throughout India, there is a belief among almost all castes and classes in both rural and urban areas in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill but a symbol of better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression. Grammar translation method is used by the teacher to teach young children, where the teacher explains every word to students in the native language to make him/her understand and learn English. However, this method faces a major disadvantage. Both the teacher and the student concentrate more on L1 rather than L2. In this method English language class seems to be L1 class rather than L2 class. Students get only limited benefit through this approach. Unfortunately, this is still in use in many rural schools throughout India. Language could be mastered by practicing all the

four skills viz. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. The rural surrounding does not allow the learner to practice any of the skills. Many teachers are unable to teach English effectively because they face a lot of problems due to the lack of teaching aids, non-availability of required technical support and relevant atmosphere to teach English effectively. Teacher preparation courses are not able to equip the teachers with adequate knowledge, skills and the ability to be able to teach the subject effectively in class. The situation is worsened by the fact that English is not the language of transaction in rural India, thereby giving teachers a very little chance of practicing what they have learned. Teachers need to upgrade themselves through a variety of means—periodic workshops, video/audio recordings of content to be taught, projects and assignments. The majority of Indian rural students, especially in the states of Bihar, U.P. and Maharashtra, Haryana, Punjab find English as a very difficult subject to learn. Since most of the students are first generation learners, they need the guidance from parents and others. Even though students study English, they are not able to produce even a single sentence without any grammatical error in English. The reason for this is that they study subjects from the examination point of view. Our examination system is such that it makes students' more memorization rather than testing their analytical and creative skills. In this process, they memorize lessons, reproduce them in exam halls and forget them the same day itself. We cannot expect a uniform standard of pronunciation for a second language in such a vast country, where even the mother tongue is spoken differently by different groups of the people belonging to the same language community. In learning to speak English, the mother tongue generally interferes with its pronunciation. The learners as well as the teachers speak English with regional language habits. Even during the English periods most teachers teach English without giving the students proper practice in speech because they are not properly equipped enough to practice it. They forget that every language differs in stress, intonation and pronunciation. The result is that after learning /teaching English for many years at school and college, most people cannot speak the language with intelligible accuracy. Listening is an important language learning skill and yet the most neglected skill in Indian classrooms. It is neglected as teachers take it for granted that learners automatically acquire this skill without any special training. Peer teaching, role-play and group activities, are rare in Indian classrooms. In India, lectures speak. Teacher talking time is more than half of the prescribed time. The class listens passively. The learners are not encouraged to ask questions. The teachers must involve their students to work in pairs, groups and teams and prepare term papers, projects, etc. Therefore, in spite of being taught English in school and college for several years, learners fail to learn the language. They cannot write in acceptable English of their own, cannot use English

appropriately and fluently in speech and often cannot understand conversations in English. Why does this happen? Does it mean that the English teachers in India cannot teach? The teaching of English in India has been text-oriented since the beginning (colonial times) because the British Government's policy was to create a class of Indians who would act as a buffer between the British and the Indians. Therefore, elementary knowledge of English was needed for a class of Indians. Objectives of teaching and learning English have undergone a sea change in the years after Independence. Still English education in India is text-oriented.

One needs different types of approaches at different stages of language learning. For second language learners to make maximum progress with their own learning styles, their individual differences must be recognized and attended to. There are probably as many factors that might account for individual differences in achievement in a second language as there are individuals.

Learning process and outcomes vary considerably according to the form of learning whether the learning takes place in a formal setting i.e. in a classroom or in an informal one, the nature or society and the mode of data input. Generally common classroom instruction techniques stress rigid, linear, deductive styles of learning, one which seem conducive to SLA.

At present English is being taught in India as a compulsory language up to graduation. But despite having learnt this language over a decade, most of our students especially those pass out of colleges especially located in rural or semi urban areas show inhibition in speaking English. They pass Examinations, some of them with a high score but most of them lack effective oral and written communication skills. Majority cannot read or understand prescribed English books unless translated by teachers in the regional language. It is a matter of serious concern for the academia.

### **Selection of a right Approach**

The most innovative techniques and the most attractive materials may be rendered inadequate, if not useless, by negative classroom environment. Hence, when dealing with the classroom environment of language learners, attention is to be paid to overcoming problems created by negative emotions and fostering and encouraging facilitative emotions. The teaching schedule must progress slowly, keeping pace with the child's psychological and mental development. An ideal teaching syllabus is one which is closely matched with the developmental timetable of the child. A child must be given what he can take and only as much as he can take. For providing this kind of 'teaching

schedule' and 'teaching syllabus' the present research will be quite helpful.

Teachers can use students' emotional expression as a teachable moment to coach and support them in developing the skills needed to manage their emotions successfully. Managing emotions includes the ability to redirect disruptive impulses and to shake off negative moods. One way to teach students to manage their emotions effectively is to teach anger management, conflict resolution, and the skills needed to work co-operatively with others, with the long-range goal of teaching students to work together in positive and productive ways. Conflict resolving education involves helping students process their emotions in productive ways when disputes or disagreements occur. Teachers can help their students understand that conflicts are a natural part of life, and that there are many ways to resolve conflicts so that the parties are satisfied with the results. This process involves each one voicing his concerns, fully hearing the other's point of view, identifying the areas of contention, and seeking a plan to address these in such a manner that is fair to each person.

### Symptoms of Emotional Disturbance in Classroom

No person is without stress and no part of the body is immune to the possible ill effects of unhealthy human emotions. Suicides of children around the age of 10-12 years are not rare but have become a part of present society. This is directly due to emotional disturbance. So the identification of emotional disturbance of students and provision of an emotionally safe environment to them must be an integral part of any teaching learning curriculum. Similarly it must be one of the first priorities of the teacher, as well as the parents to provide emotionally safe environment to the students. To identify such states of emotional disturbances some measures are mentioned below:

- Various kinds of phobias lead to emotional disorders. These phobias generally include phobia of being evaluated, punished, isolated etc.
- Inferiority complex results in poor emotional output of learners in the learning situations.
- Isolation and passiveness are the direct symptoms of emotional disturbance.
- Learning Disabilities directly affective aspects of learners.
- Introvert students suffer the most from emotional disturbances.

Kesley (in Martin 1997) provides a description of "cues" to alert educators of the harmful

distress reactions of learners that can be observed in class-rooms. These include:

- Insomnia, headaches, and nervous system disorders. One of the leading causes of nerve illness is sleep deprivation.
- Poor self-esteem or self-concepts. Students who do not feel good about their knowledge, bodies or social relationships may have difficulty in expression.
- Persistent respiratory conditions such as respiratory infections, colds, asthma, and allergies are often related to emotional conflicts and distress.
- Eyes, often called the windows to the soul, reflect the emotions.
- Feelings are released through the healing capacity of tears. This leads to catharsis or purgation of their emotions.
- Skin problems such as blushing, rashes, perspiration, hives, etc. Skin colour may be pale or darker than usual. Conscious or unconscious persistent anger, fear, shame, and anxiety may be expressed through the skin.
- Hyper or hypotension may accelerate under distress. Students may be unable to focus for any length of time.
- Immediate frustration. Students may feel so overwhelmed that they are unable to organize their tasks or time in a manageable manner.

This is a common list of symptoms of emotional distress; it is intended to serve as a means to stimulate educators to be more observant of students' symptoms and behaviours that could indicate distress. Students with multiple symptoms over a long period of time may be in danger of potential suicidal or homicidal instincts.

### Creating an Emotionally Safe Classroom Environment

An emotionally safe classroom environment is necessary for students' cognitive learning, growth, and creative expression. Teachers can create emotionally safe classrooms by affirming students' accomplishments in non-competitive ways, encouraging self-confidence, providing opportunities to take risks without penalty and giving positive feedback. Researchers have found that students' emotional and academic functioning is improved when caring and respectful teachers support students' competence in a non-comparative and non-competitive way, and support



students' autonomy through meaningful curriculum. The positive relationships developed between students and teachers, in turn influence academic performance and are keys to create an emotionally safe classroom environment.

Teachers can build an emotionally safe classroom environment by giving targeted, positive feedback on successful essentials of work in conjunction with suggestions for improvement. Positive classrooms have many ways of acknowledging students' capabilities like through teacher's comments and display of students' work. High expectations of students, combined with support, encouragement, and opportunities for success help affirm students' accomplishments in non-competitive ways.

The purpose of this study is to raise awareness of educators on how emotions impact learning. Ellen White (1990) wrote, "True education includes the whole being. It enables us to make the best use of brain, bone, muscle, body, mind, and heart" (168). How can educators become alert and sensitive to cues that could indicate that students' emotional distress is stimulating the brain to process information through the right hemisphere of the brain, through emotions, instead of the left hemisphere of rational thought? When information is delayed in being processed by the left hemisphere of the brain, the result is often distortion misunderstanding, or lack of knowledge in the classroom setting.

The promotion of a positive learning environment is a key component of effective teaching and learning. This entails a huge responsibility on teachers who should try to create a positive learning environment and maintain it during a course in order to provide students with a safe environment in which they feel willing to take risks.

Consequently, teachers should draw on connections to their students' everyday lives when presenting new information. In doing so, the information is viewed as relevant and significant, associating itself with students' past experience and memory. Hence, students are more likely to pay attention given that the information is perceived as pertinent to their lives. Additionally, the use of connections conveys a sense of awareness, acknowledgment and acceptance of the students from the teacher.

### **Role of Educators in Developing Emotionally Safe Environment**

Educators or teachers can help students when human emotions and distress interfere with learning. They can create an emotionally stable environment. The suggestions thus are not intended to be competitive but clarifying and stimulating for educators. The best way to serve students in the educational setting the following recommendations are proposed for teachers:

- Be patient to listen to students' problems and notice their verbal as well as body language. Encourage students to be calm and express themselves. Such open expression decreases tendency toward depression.
- Express faith in the student. Such expression can be verbal, written, or facial expressions.
- Practice the art of empathy. Use reflective response; seek clarifications, and provide total attention during the time you are with the student.
- When a student presents a particular problem, try to discover if this has been current? Guide the students to solve problems in groups and approach the problem part by part.
- Teachers may be able to assist the student in developing a plan of action that is realistic and manageable.
- Teacher must be emotionally present with the student.
- Teacher should not be authoritative and must avoid his/her own prejudices, and should not accept telephone calls during an appointment with a student except for emergencies; use good judgment, since students often respond to a caring touch on the hand or shoulder
- Be clear with students from the beginning about what can and cannot be shared with confidence. Be familiar with school policies as well as school and agency resources.
- Distressed students often feel powerless and easily lose self-control. By providing exploration of choices and not telling the student what to do, students can regain lost confidence.

### **CONCLUSION**

Certain emotional aspects are necessary for learning to take place in classroom. Teachers must control negative emotions like fear, anxiety, and frustration so that positive emotions like enthusiasm and a sense of accomplishment can increase. Attending to emotions in the classroom enables both student and instructor to manage feelings and provides useful methods to address difficulties that could deter success.

Teaching English does not involve just the recommendation of a set of language text-books

but is also concerned with the methodology and evaluation techniques, each interlinked and viewed in totality and not in isolation, as is being done at present. If curriculum of a course concerns itself only with prescribed text-books without taking into consideration the underlying problems in curriculum planning and course designing, it turns out to be aimless. Such a syllabus neither spells out the approach of the curriculum planners, nor formulates correctly the purpose of teaching/learning which could help in course designing, since the purpose formulates the very method of learning. As a result, no learning takes place and the entire teaching/learning is reduced to simply passing the tests and examinations. Keeping these disadvantages in view, it is understandable why students are not competent.

Material developers need to include techniques which pay more attention to emotional factors in classroom, leading the learners to more self-discovery. Some helpful techniques which can be used to increase emotional intelligence in the classroom include: discussion, co-curricular activities, watching emotional clips, self-disclosure, designing questionnaires, reading biographies and auto-biographies. For example, employing questionnaires or holding discussion groups on emotional competencies can strongly contribute to emotional literacy. Well-organized questionnaires can make the learners become more aware of their own emotional capability.

Specific behaviors and skills must be taught to help students develop emotional intelligence. Teams of teachers, social workers, mental health staff, and on-site coordinators may be encouraged to work together to teach students how to lead healthier lives through programs designed to prevent substance abuse and dropouts, support peer mediation, and respond to crises.

Remedial Measures Challenges before the English language teachers in India are enormous. It 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. They should be able to cater to the practical needs of learners, to make them competent enough to interact with one another and also to retrieve information all over the world Building a rapport with your class—Assuring smile and greeting from a teacher to the students, helps them bond with the teacher instantly. When the students bond with the teacher, they will find learning the language much easier. Place of English should be defined—English offers vast opportunities to all. The policy regarding the place of English in our education system should be well defined. This should be determined keeping in view its use and vast opportunities in the field of science, technology, social sciences, philosophy, journalism, international trade and diplomacy. Keeping in mind the primary aims of teaching English—The teacher should enable the students to

understand English when spoken To enable the students to speak, read and write in English Grammar translation method should be avoided. Teacher should find some ways of helping students to enjoy the language activities and of building their confidence. They should use English as a medium of expression. To motivate the students think through English. Create confidence of speaking English in public. In a scenario where neither adequate resources nor tools are available, English teachers themselves have to devise innovative ways to make their students' climb the staircase easily. This can be done with a resolve, as Parel says: "I have to create opportunities for the students to use English in meaningful, realistic and relevant situations" (07). A teacher's role is immense in rural areas as the student has only a teacher to imitate and learn from. Teachers' responsibility lies not only with the average and above average students but also with below average and slow learners. A good teacher has to handle classes for all the students in a classroom. Individual attention will solve many problems, which arise while taking class. An English teacher has to encourage the students to talk in English only. This act makes them confident. 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. In India, majority of the workforce comes from rural areas as 75% of India lives in villages. The policy makers have to bridge the urban-rural divide in teaching of English. An English teacher teaching in rural schools has to come up with innovative strategies in the classrooms. Skilled and committed teachers need to be appointed at primary level. Teachers should be upgraded and trained to meet the problems of the learners.

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