


Importance of Remedial Teaching of English for Indian Higher Education Students from Rural Background

Arvind M. Nawale *
I/c Principal,
Shivaji Mahavidyalaya, Udgir,
Dist: Latur (M.S.)

ABSTRACT

The importance of English language competency cannot be ignored in the globalised world, especially for students in India, where English serves as a bridge language and a platform for higher education and career prospects. As stated by Bansal and Deepika, “The place of English language has been elevated to its highest in the global India. It is considered as key to 'quality education' and 'window to world and opportunities.’” (Bansal and Deepika 30). However, students from rural origins have to struggle greatly to acquire sufficient English language competency, which affects their academic achievement and employment. This paper aims to investigate the importance of remedial English instruction for Indian college students from rural backgrounds, examine the socio-economic and educational elements causing their language problems, and suggest efficient ways to carry out remedial measures.

Keywords: Remediation, Remedial Coaching, English language proficiency, underprepared students.

Introduction

Remedial Teaching is synonymous with developmental education, basic skills education, compensatory education, preparatory education, and academic upgrading. Its main goal is to help students reach the required degree of excellence in basic academic skills in challenging subject like English, including reading, writing, understanding and speaking. English proficiency is indispensable for accessing a vast collection of academic resources, participating in scholarly deliberations, and for career prospects. Since many multinational organisations in India and sectors depend on English communication skills, a solid command of English oral and written communication skills also enables Indian students to be more employable. Though crucial, it is clear that students entering higher education have a quite poor degree of English language ability. Academic achievement and employability in a globalised economy depend much on the degree of English language competency of Indian higher education graduates. For

* Author: Arvind M. Nawale

Email: amnawale@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2561-9355>

Received 15 May 2024; Accepted 22 May, 2024. Available online: 25 May 2024.

Published by SAFE. (Society for Academic Facilitation and Extension)

[This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)



many students, English presents a great obstacle since it is the required language for many professional career courses and the medium of instruction in many higher educational institutions, especially for those from non-English medium schools.

Background

The AISHE (All-India Survey of Higher Education) has observed some rather unambiguous findings on English language competency of Indian higher education graduates. Based on the most recent AISHE data, English competence differs substantially across urban and rural students. Because of greater educational infrastructure and availability to quality English language instruction, English communication skills of urban students more precisely those of metro students are far better than those of students from rural areas. Those from a rural background, meantime, struggle with the lack of English exposure in their everyday life and limited resources. The AISHE statistics indicate that the general communication abilities of the students are better whenever there is a language lab and a complementing English learning course. Furthermore, English proficiency is higher among students enrolled in courses where English is the primary medium of instruction, such as engineering, management, and sciences, compared to those in vernacular language courses. The survey underscores the key role of faculty training in English instruction for better outcomes in students language proficiency. Furthermore, the AISHE notes that digital learning tools directly help to develop language and communication abilities in English, hence improving technology in the field of language acquisition increases native language competency. These things highlight the need of corrective policy interventions to level discrepancies in areas, enhance pedagogical skills of teachers, introduce technology and remedial teaching initiatives, in order to improve the degrees of English communication skills over the varied spectrum of Indian higher education. According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-21, “Out of total 96.38 lakh enrolment in Universities, 62.4 lakh (64.7% of total University enrolment) students are enrolled at Undergraduate level and 25.6 lakh (26.6%) in Post Graduate level” (“The All-India Survey on Higher Education" 25). Many of these students must have studied up to their tenth and twelfth grade in regional medium schools; a startlingly large proportion of them come from bilingual background. This linguistic diversity presents challenges in ensuring uniform English language proficiency.

India and its linguistic variety reflect more than 1,600 languages spoken there. Although this diversity surely adds a tremendous cultural richness, it also presents a great difficulty for the educational sector. Although English is a foreign language, it is a uniting language for professional communication and higher education. However, students from rural areas often receive their schooling in regional languages, resulting in scarce exposure to English. This gap becomes evident when they shift to higher education, where English is predominantly the medium of instruction or minimum one paper is compulsory in English.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to underline the need of remedial English instruction for Indian college students from rural backgrounds. As Gangadhar, et al. observes, “Remedial teaching helps in finding specific learning difficulties and provides suitable remedial measures and support to prevent them in future; thus, resolving learning difficulties” (1). It aims to find the obstacles these students encounter, assess the success of current remedial initiatives, and share the recommendations to improve English competency among Indian students in higher education.

Research Questions

1. What are the primary challenges faced by rural students in acquiring English language competency?
2. How do lack of English communication skills affect their academic and professional prospects?
3. What remedial teaching strategies have been effective in addressing these challenges?
4. How can educational institutions implement and improve these strategies?

Discussion

According to a 2019 National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) research, just over thirty percent of students enrolling in higher education institutions have sufficient English language proficiency required for academic success. Diverse states and kinds of institutions have somewhat diverse degrees of competency. For English proficiency, for example, students

from metropolitan areas and those who attended English medium schools typically score higher than their students from rural areas and regional language backgrounds.

Urban and rural students have somewhat different degrees of English competency. A 2020 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) analysis shows that just 12% of rural pupils between the ages of 14 and 18 could proficiently read English sentences. Of the students in the same age range in an urban environment, forty percent were at the same level. Higher education is much more different since rural students struggle to follow what is being taught in the classroom. Moreover, the degrees of English ability vary depending on gender. Data from the National Statistical Office (NSO) for the year 2021 show that female students generally—and particularly in rural areas—are less skilled in English than male students.

The proficiency gap in English badly affects rural students' academic performance and limits their opportunities in higher education and employment. Insufficient English skills deter their ability to understand course material, participate in discussions, and perform well in exams. What is more, proficiency in English is pre-requisite in many of the professional towns in India, and non-English speaking rural students are already handicapped even in employment market.

Lack of English proficiency bars students from tapping into global academic and professional opportunities, such as international scholarships, conferences, and collaborations. It also provides a limitation to their access to the vast body of global research and therefore their potential for innovation and thought leadership. A very common reason why employers claim to not hire graduates is that of poor English verbal communicative ability. A survey by Aspiring Minds in 2021 found, only 25% of the engineering graduates and 35% of the management graduates are unemployable only on basis of non-comparative English-speaking skills. It impacts not just the career prospects of individuals, but economic growth and the international competitiveness of the nation as a whole. It is a learning by heart and a basic formula adopted often in rural schools pertaining to gain in language skills of the researched field suggesting that lack of strong rote-based system of learning leaves little over language skills leading to poor in understanding and communicating English.

Their academic performance is hampered by the English-language disadvantage in comparison with those performing well in urban areas, of course with the lower access to higher education and employment opportunities. Students with poor English language knowledge also have issues with course materials, communication, and assessments. Furthermore, many

professional fields in India require strong English communication skills, putting rural students at a disadvantage in the job market.

To address the challenges of English proficiency in Indian higher education, several strategies can be implemented. One of them is introduction of remedial instruction in higher education. Implementing remedial English programs at the higher education level can help bridge the proficiency gap. These programs should be tailored to meet the specific needs of students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Remedial Teaching Strategies

The adjective "remedial" denotes "giving or meant to give a remedy or cure." This meant to assist those in need at a difficult period. As stated by Sharma et al., "Remedial education is a program that educational institutions implement outside the school curriculum to enhance low-achieving students' academic performance to the expected standard" (143). Remedial teaching is a method of instruction used to assist students who find it difficult to satisfy the required intellectual level. As observed by Beena Abraham, "Remedial Programs are meant for those students who are weak in academic performance to improve their basic skills to reach as per the level of their peers. It is effective through various stages like identifying or diagnosing their individual difficulty in learning, modifying them as per their need, using effective materials as required and teaching through simple step by step approach and giving proper feedback and correction" (Abraham 1). Remedial teaching approaches are crucial in India, where language, regional, and socio-economic differences define educational inequalities and guarantee that every student can realise their intellectual capacity.

i. Diagnostic Assessment

Effective remedial teaching begins with a diagnostic assessment to identify students' specific learning needs and gaps. Diagnostic tests, quizzes, and observations can help teachers understand the areas where students are struggling and tailor their instruction accordingly.

ii. Personalized Learning Plans

These learnings are incorporated in creating tailored remedial teachings plans for individual students. Such plans may include a target sequence of learning goals, and instructional and assessment strategies with necessary accommodations configured to specific needs of the student. Personalized plans can help instruction be more targeted and successful.

iii. Small Group Instruction

Small groups of students provide teachers with an opportunity to help students individually in a more focused manner. Segmenting students with similar learning needs allows teachers to focus on common hurdles and support areas. It also enables peer learning and collaboration.

iv. Use of Technology

In remedial teaching, technology has a major role to play. From educational software, online learning platforms to apps that provide interactive learning opportunities for a vast and personalized experience. Students also can have wealth of practice materials and resources to supplement classroom instruction by using Technology.

v. Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring means pairing students who are in need with other students who can offer them help. This not only serves the purpose of solidifying the tutor's knowledge, but also supports the tutoring curriculum. Peer tutoring can be especially helpful for language and communication attitudes.

vi. Continuous Assessment and Feedback

Assessments and feedback on a regular basis are an integral part of remedial teaching. We use constant evaluation to keep track of students advancement and detecting lacking-skill zones. This helps them to get improve in the areas and motivate them.

vii. Professional Development for Teachers

Such measures are essential for the long-term effectiveness of remedial teaching programs as to foster the continuing professional development of teachers. Workshops, seminars and courses on remedial learning strategies can train the teachers on skills and knowledge required to help failing students in their subjects.

viii. Effectiveness of Remedial Programs

The remedial programs incorporating interactive and student-centered teaching methods are more effective in improving English proficiency. Programs that use multimedia tools, such as English language labs, language learning apps and online platforms, have shown promising

results in enhancing students' listening and speaking skills. Through the peer tutoring and mentorship programs, students can also receive individualized help and encouragement.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Remedial Teaching, in short, are designed so that students who have missed out on their lessons, get their education back as much as possible and integrate them back into their regular classes as possible. Are we to provide adequately funded far more effective materials through technology integrated into language instruction and instruction to the teachers of the current pedagogical methods. The topmost on the agenda is the creation of a pedagogic environment that is inclusive and supportive and provides tools appropriate to the particular needs of rural students in educational institutions. A holistic policy imperative to facilitate English remedial teaching in rural colleges.

Under the umbrella of NGOs, remedial education finds one of the prime roles to be played in India. Groups such as Pratham and Teach for India have built effective remedial programs that target fundamental literacy and numeracy skills. Their community-based approach and use of innovative teaching methods have made a significant impact on student learning outcomes.

UGC started a "Remedial Coaching Scheme" last decade with a reasonable budget. Later on, the same scheme is combined under merged scheme with more funding. Most colleges and universities implemented it with good results. However, UGC stopped these programmes few years ago. Government schemes such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) include provisions for remedial teaching. However, these schemes are not meant for higher education sector. These schemes aim to improve the quality of education and ensure that all children have access to remedial support. Different governments have started these initiatives with different degrees of success, which emphasises the importance of ongoing investment in school education and improvement of it. Government should bring back the "Remedial Coaching Scheme" under appropriate financing for universities or students.

Recommendations

Including remedial teaching into Indian higher education calls for a multifarious strategy to meet the various learning requirements of the students. It is found that, "Remedial teaching is effective in improving academic performance of low achievers and bringing them back to the

mainstream” (Gangadhar, et al. 5). It “aims to create a school of equal opportunities by providing additional support to students from disadvantaged social backgrounds” (Papadogiannis, et al. 363). First, doing diagnostic tests at the start of the academic year can help to pinpoint students particular learning gaps, as Al Othman and Shuqair state: "Remedial courses, when delivered appropriately... can positively influence significant improvement in the use of language in students" (135). Creating customised learning strategies for every student guarantees focused education. Giving instructors consistent professional development helps them to have specific instructional strategies. Using digital tools and technology—such as adaptive learning programmes and web portals—can provide individualised and interesting learning opportunities. Using peer tutoring and small group instruction helps to create a cooperative classroom. Establishing specialised learning centres with required tools and qualified personnel helps meet remedial needs of the students. Monitoring development and making required changes depend on constant evaluation and comments. Encouragement of a welcoming and inclusive classroom as well as working with outside groups such as NGOs can help to improve corrective actions. Finally, the longevity and success of these initiatives depend on Government procuring sufficient fund and resources. As per the findings of Bridget, the “administrators and policymakers should be aware that remediation efforts need not focus solely on the skills students did not learn in the past, but can instead attempt to identify and provide the skills students will need for a future career or academic major. Efforts to redesign the ways in which remediation is offered should be focused much more explicitly on the areas in which students most need improvement.” (19).

Conclusion

The remedial teaching of English is crucial for bridging the educational gap faced by Indian college students from rural backgrounds as “they contribute to the overall improvement of educational outcomes” (Sharma et al. 51). We can greatly raise their English competency and open their academic and career opportunities by removing the socio-economic and educational obstacles, using successful teaching techniques, and creating an inclusive learning atmosphere. This will thus help rural Indian populations to flourish generally in terms of socio-economic level. Given the increasing demand for English, nations like India that prioritise English education can think about the efficacy of remedial language instruction. Although students' long-term English competency has clearly room for development, this study shows that the remedial programme provides a lot of possibilities for helping students prepare for standardised

tests by means of intensive instruction. It is important to remember, nevertheless, that this type of programme can never replace traditional teaching and learning. When integrating remedial programmes into education, more consideration must be given.

Works Cited:

- Abraham, Beena. "Effective Strategies in Remedial Instruction." JRSP ELT, vol. 3, no. 15, 1919, pp. 1-6, www.jrspelt.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Beena-Effective-Strategies.pdf.
- Al Othman, Fadel H., and Khaled M. Shuqair. "Effectiveness of the Remedial Courses on Improving EFL/ESL Students' Performance at University Level in the Arab World." International Journal of Higher Education, vol. 2, no. 3, 2013.
- Bansal, Punam, and Ms Deepika. "THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ENGLISH REMEDIAL PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY." THE EDUCATIONAL BEACON A RESEARCH JOURNAL, theeducationalbeacon.com/images/the_effectiveness.pdf.
- Bridget, Long T. "THE ROLE OF REMEDIAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL COURSES IN ACCESS AND PERSISTENCE." The State of College Access and Completion: Improving College Success for Students from Underrepresented Groups, 2013 ed., Routledge Books, 2013, pp. 1-24, scholar.harvard.edu/files/btl/files/long_boatman_2013_role_of_remediation_in_access_and_persistence_-_acsfa_routledge.pdf.
- Department of Higher Education. The All-India Survey on Higher Education. GOVT OF INDIA, 2021. aishe.gov.in/aishe/viewDocument.action?documentId=353.
- Gangadhar, Reneega, et al. "Impact of Remedial Teaching for Low Achievers in Pharmacology to Improve their Academic Performance." JOURNAL OF CLINICAL AND DIAGNOSTIC RESEARCH, 2019.
- Papadogiannis, Ilias, et al. "An Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Remedial Teaching Education Policy." Knowledge, vol. 3, no. 3, 2023, pp. 349-363.

Sharma, Sheela, et al. "AN ANALYSIS ON THE POTENTIALITIES OF REMEDIAL TEACHING AND LEARNING ON SCHOOL STUDENTS." *Education and Society*, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 143-151, www.researchgate.net/publication/377894919_AN_ANALYSIS_ON_THE_POTENTIALITIES_OF_REMEDIAL_TEACHING_AND_LEARNING_ON_SCHOOL_STUDENTS/references#fullTextFileContent. Accessed 2 June 2023.