

Difficulties of EFL Teaching at Elementary Level in Rural Areas in Punjab

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Abstract: *This study highlights the difficulties of teaching English at primary level in rural areas of Punjab Pakistan. The sample population was from District Vehari. Data was collected from 50 primary teachers including both male and female of government schools. Data was analyzed on SPSS version 16. A questionnaire gave to the teachers to express their views about difficulties of teaching English at elementary level in rural areas. The teachers described their difficulties related to grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary; literary devices i.e. rhyme scheme, alliteration, assonance, consonants, syllable etc. The teachers were found to have English teaching training and the teachers also showed a keen interest for trainings in order to learn new methodologies of teaching for making English teaching easy, interesting and effective at elementary level in rural areas.*

Key words: *Teacher, teaching English, difficulties.*

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language and the language of science and technology. It has a wide scope. It is taught as a subject as well as source of communication with the foreign countries. In many countries it is taught as a foreign language. Native speakers learn it as a first language. Teaching is a significant task. A teacher is a nation builder. He plays a model role for his pupils. A teacher is like a candle that spreads its light everywhere. So, a teacher has many

responsibilities and duties related to his/her job. A teacher, he must have gripped on his subject, he must be determined and a critical thinker. His personality should be flexible enough to interact with the students in a convenient way. He should respect others opinions, views and suggestions. He must change his mind set up according to the needs of time and society. He inculcates his knowledge in the minds of the students. If a teacher fails to convey his ideas, concept of knowledge in his students then his knowledge will become like a pool of stagnant water. So teaching is a process which continuously needs growth in the knowledge of a teacher. He may always try to learn more and more at each and every step of life.

In the English teaching classrooms at elementary level the teachers face many difficulties especially in rural areas. The reason is rural areas; learning environment does not match with English teaching and learning. Students consider English a difficult subject because it is a foreign language for them. They have to learn it as foreign language. To set their mind they learn second language complexity in their minds. They are unable to understand its rules because their mental level is not enough to comprehend or learn it in an appropriate way. So they believe English a tough subject. Their family background is anti-English. In Pakistan, the students first learn Punjabi or some other language as their mother tongue especially in rural areas. In schools they learn Urdu as a national language after this English is taught. Students' difficulties in learning English are closely related to the teacher teaching difficulties.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were:

1. To find out teachers' teaching English difficulties at elementary level in rural areas
2. To find out teachers' perception towards available sources of teaching English at elementary level
3. To explore teachers' satisfaction about measures on the behalf of government to improve teachers' performances at elementary level

LITERATURE REVIEW

English grammar is known as a bone in the process of learning a foreign language (Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam, 2011). It is taught to the students from preparatory and nursery classes. The teaching of grammar is normally seems a hard and difficult job for the teachers within the classroom environment. It also becomes necessary to teach grammar in the English classroom. It is described the teaching difficulties of the teachers as well as the learning difficulties of the students during learning a second language. The focus of the teaching of English indicates the differences of difficulties related to the unlike situation of teaching within the classroom environment.

Haboudijes (2009) study on “Teaching Foreign languages: A challenge to Ecuadorian bilingual Intercultural Education” the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights in 1996, described the importance of quality education. The learning of language and culture are the main domain of the quality education which is a worldwide phenomenon. This study showed the importance of languages first the mother tongue and then a foreign language. For teaching a foreign language policies were defined as there is also a comparison between native and non-native language during the process of teaching a second language. In the end some suggestions were given for teaching a foreign or second language in the non-native environment.

English is known as the world language due to its wide scope and exposure to the educational world (Kannan, 2009). The Indian people treated English as a dismal subject because when they very first time hear it they are unable to understand it especially in rural areas. So the conclusion showed that the English teacher have to cope with the difficulties while teaching English in rural areas. Students also faced difficulties in the learning English. The reasons of learning English difficulties and some reasonable solutions were mentioned in a number of studies across the world in the field of foreign language learning and teaching. The problems can be solved if some steps be followed which are helpful to make English learning easy.

Wiriyaichitra (2001) conducted research on the present situation of English language teaching and learning in Thailand. His main focus was to find out the problems of teaching English language in Thailand, there is a lack of sources within the educational institution and also lack of resources for teaching of English in a better way. Some suggestions were given for the improvement of English language teaching at end of the study. There was a sharp contrast between the previous and the present’s developments that were practiced for improving English language teaching.

Ud-Din (2010) described the problems of English language teaching at primary level in the Northern Districts of Pakistan. There is a contextual link between problems of both English language teachers and learners (Ud-Din, 2010). In the difficulties of English, one of the reasons is the low education and less educated teacher in the education system. English teachers are not well versed and well trained in the subject. Most of the teachers in the elementary school do not know about English. So, it’s a need of time to take suitable measure to overcome the teaching difficulties especially in rural areas.

METHODOLOGY

The present study used descriptive survey method. A questionnaire was used as a survey tool as well as semi structured interview also used. The target population of the study was District Vehari. The researchers selected 50 teachers from District Vehari. The researcher adopted convenient sampling approach and distributed questionnaires to 50 teachers including male and

female were and collected data personally and collected data were analyzed on SPSS version 16. The results were displayed statistically in tables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Table 1: Teachers' difficulties at elementary level in rural areas.

Statements	N	Mean	SD
In rural areas student are very lethargic towards learning English		3.51	1.119
Students feel no interest in English		3.22	1.356
Students have anti English background	50	4.08	.852
Schools are not provided with ICT facilities		3.70	1.225
Teachers do not use AV aids in classroom during teaching		2.79	1.252
Teachers are unable to teach English		3.20	1.231

The table 1 shows that the mean score about the first objective goes up from 2.79 to 4.08 while std. deviation has been from .852 to 1.356. The results make known to us that there are many problems and difficulties for the teachers at elementary level in rural areas regarding teachers' difficulties.

Table 2: Teachers' perceptions towards available sources of teaching English

Statements	N	Mean	SD
Teachers are not properly trained and skillful for English teaching		3.40	1.154
Syllabus of English is very difficult for students		3.88	1.073
Latest teaching methodologies are not applied in the Classroom environment	50	3.63	1.071
Parents of the students are illiterate who enhances the problems in teaching		4.30	.949

The table 2 shows that the mean score about the first objective goes up from 3.40 to 4.30 while standard deviation has been from .099 to .121. The results reveal that there are many problems

and difficulties for the teachers at elementary level in rural areas about teachers' perception toward available sources of teaching English.

Table 3. Showing results teachers satisfaction on the behalf of Government to improve teachers performances.

Statements	N	Mean	SD
Government conduct trainings and workshops for teaching English	50	3.35	1.058
Expert, trained and self motivated trainers are invited of teachers training.		3.47	1.168
Training material cope with the objective of syllabus.		3.49	1.099
English teacher' guides are a good source to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge.		4.37	.661
Teachers training fulfill the purpose of English teaching		3.59	1.043

The table 3 shows that the mean score about the first objective goes up from 3.35 to 4.37 while standard deviation has been from .069 to .122. The results reveal that there are many problems and difficulties for the teachers at elementary level in rural areas regarding teachers' satisfaction on the behalf of government to improve teachers' performance.

DISCUSSION

During data collection semi structured interviews were conducted to get awareness about the ground realities at elementary level education. The data collected through interviews was analyzed thematically. Hence the data were separated according to the order of research objectives.

The study revealed that the learning conditions at elementary schools are pitiable. Majority of the teachers face various troubles from learners. In many government elementary schools there is only one teacher who has to teach more than one classes. The government is equally responsible for this sad condition. The situation goes on deterioration.

With regard to the difficulties in teaching English at elementary level in rural areas, first item of questionnaire shows that the students are very lazy towards learning English and in this way teachers face a many of problems in teaching English in rural areas at elementary level. The process of their learning is very slow hence the teacher is in great problem most of the time. Majority of the teachers complain that the books which are taught in school are very difficult so

students find no interest in English books so they become very lazy towards learning English and feel boredom. This situation creates troubles for the teacher.

Teacher Guides provided by Directorate of Staff Development are considered valuable source to enhance the knowledge of teacher for teaching English. They are now using this material for better results. This is a notable advancement from the situation that existed in the past few decades. But it is also revealed during survey that most of the teachers do not use teacher guides as they think that they are very difficult to understand.

Another very thing pointed out by teachers of the government school was that there is lack of facilities in government schools. There is no suitable language learning environment. In many elementary schools there is only one or two classrooms for six classes and have no facilities of pure water, washrooms and electricity etc.

The socio economic and socio-cultural differences of the children are also main features. The rural people have no English back ground nearly all the families living in rural areas are very far from English language learning and this is a major barrier in teaching English at elementary level in rural areas.

To some extent mass media is also playing a vital role in developing the language interest in the people. In this way, presently now there is coming a tendency among people to be feeling interest in English language. So, there are many people who want to educate their children in English.

Furthermore, trainings are also conducted for elementary level teachers. During survey it is pointed out by the teachers that in training they are not properly trained for teaching English, but trainers waste most of the time for so called knowledge sharing. Teachers complain that the trainers who are invited for the trainings have no sound knowledge in their subjects but on the other hand it is also observed that some teachers are not capable of teaching English at elementary level in rural areas due to low qualification.

Conclusion

The present study concluded that elementary teachers face a numbers of difficulties while teaching English at elementary level in rural areas. It can make easier if teachers used the direct methods, in spite of the fact that traditional method is also the essence of teaching. So both methods should be applied side by side with the convenience of situation or environment. Teacher must have free in the choice of methods and resources in respect to the situation then students may show better results.

Pedagogical Implications

Teaching is an important task. A teacher must have grip on his subject. He should be of progressive mind and ambitious always be ready to learn something new mold himself according to the need of society. Try to learn more and more because knowledge has no limits. According to this research, a condition under which English is taught in Pakistan is in a critical condition. Authorities may be engaged a trained team of trainers who conduct workshops for better teaching of English.

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