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Impact of English Language Teaching Methods on Rural Primary School Students: A Case Study in Rajasthan

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Abstract:

This research paper investigates the impact of English Language Teaching (ELT) methods on rural primary school students in Rajasthan, with a focus on identifying the most effective strategies to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Amidst the growing emphasis on English proficiency as a critical component of global competence, this study aims to bridge the literature gap by providing empirical insights into ELT practices within the unique socio-cultural context of rural Rajasthan. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative data from structured surveys with qualitative insights from interviews and classroom observations, involving students, teachers, and school administrators as participants. The analysis, facilitated by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and thematic analysis, reveals a clear preference for and greater effectiveness of interactive and participatory ELT methods—such as interactive games and group discussions—over traditional lecture-based approaches. These methods not only significantly improve student engagement but also enhance English proficiency among learners. The study highlights the challenges of implementing these methods, including resource limitations and the need for comprehensive teacher training. By providing evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice, this research contributes to the enhancement of ELT strategies in rural education settings, underscoring the importance of tailored approaches that accommodate the specific needs and challenges of rural learners.

Keywords: English Language Teaching (ELT), Rural Education, Rajasthan, Interactive Learning, Student Engagement, Teaching Strategies.

1. Introduction:

The significance of English as a global lingua franca cannot be overstated, with its pervasive influence on international communication, education, and business. In the context of rural education, particularly in regions like Rajasthan, India, the teaching and learning of English present unique challenges and opportunities. The role of English in opening up pathways for higher education, employment, and socio-economic mobility makes it a critical subject of study in rural primary

schools. However, the efficacy of English Language Teaching (ELT) methods in these settings remains a complex issue, influenced by factors such as resource availability, teacher training, and pedagogical approaches.

In rural regions of Rajasthan, the introduction of English language instruction in primary schools is a relatively recent phenomenon, marked by enthusiasm and skepticism alike. Research indicates that the medium of instruction, pedagogical methods, and teacher proficiency play pivotal roles in language acquisition outcomes (Early & Norton, 2014). Furthermore, the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in language teaching has emerged as a significant factor in enhancing learning experiences and outcomes (Vijayalakshmi, 2017).

Despite the recognized importance of English education in rural settings, there is a paucity of research focusing on the specific challenges and opportunities in Rajasthan. This gap in literature highlights the need for context-specific studies that explore the impact of various ELT methods on student outcomes in rural primary schools. The current study aims to address this gap by investigating the efficacy of different teaching strategies in the unique socio-cultural and educational landscape of rural Rajasthan.

The challenges of implementing effective English teaching methods in rural areas are well-documented. Issues such as insufficient teacher training, lack of resources, and the relevance of the curriculum to students' lives have been identified as significant barriers (Feng, 2010). However, studies have also highlighted the potential for innovative teaching methods, including task-based learning and the use of digital tools, to improve engagement and learning outcomes (Chi, 2011; K. Vijayalakshmi, 2017).

Given the critical role of English in global communication and the unique challenges faced by rural primary schools in Rajasthan, this research aims to explore the impact of various ELT methods on student learning outcomes. By identifying effective strategies and highlighting areas for improvement, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights to educators, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in rural education.

2. Literature Review:

The significance of English Language Teaching (ELT) in rural primary education has been extensively explored, with a variety of methodologies employed to investigate its impacts. This literature review delves into several pivotal studies, highlighting their methodologies, key findings, and contributions to the field.

Early and Norton (2014) conducted a qualitative study in rural African classrooms to examine the challenges and possibilities of English as a medium of instruction. Utilizing classroom observations, interviews, and policy document analysis, they highlighted the difficulties faced by teachers in addressing students' language needs within the constraints of current policy guidelines.

Their findings underscore the need for more flexible language policies that consider the unique contexts of rural classrooms, suggesting that a one-size-fits-all approach to language instruction is ineffective.

Vijayalakshmi (2017) explored the integration of ICT in teaching English in rural government schools, employing a mixed-methods approach that combined questionnaires with classroom observations. The study found that the use of digital tools in teaching significantly enhanced student engagement and learning outcomes, indicating the potential of technology to bridge the educational divide between urban and rural settings.

Feng (2010) focused on identifying solutions to the main problems of rural primary school English classroom teaching through a survey-based study. The research pinpointed issues such as inadequate teacher training and insufficient resources, recommending the adoption of more student-centered teaching methods and the enhancement of teacher training programs.

Chi (2011)'s research adopted a case study approach to examine the "Three Basics" teaching strategy as a means to improve the quality of English teachers in rural primary and secondary schools. Through interviews and classroom observations, the study highlighted how focusing on basic knowledge, basic theory, and basic skills could significantly elevate teaching effectiveness in under-resourced rural settings.

Hamid and Honan (2012) critically analyzed the implications of global English-in-education policies within the local context of Bangladeshi primary English classrooms. Utilizing ethnographic methods, they revealed a mismatch between policy aspirations and classroom realities, arguing for policies that better align with the linguistic and cultural contexts of rural learners.

Shrestha (2013) examined Bangladeshi primary school learners' experiences of English language classroom practices through group interviews. This study provided insights into students' preferences for communicative language learning activities over traditional rote learning methods, underscoring the importance of aligning teaching methods with learners' needs and interests.

Jiang and Hui (2011) investigated the influence of environmental factors on students' English learning in rural schools, using a combination of surveys and interviews to gather data. Their findings emphasized the critical role of teachers and families in shaping students' learning experiences, suggesting targeted interventions to support these key stakeholders.

These studies collectively highlight the complexity of implementing effective ELT in rural primary education. They underscore the importance of contextually adapted teaching methods, the potential of ICT to enhance learning, and the need for comprehensive support systems for teachers. Moreover, they reveal a critical gap in understanding the specific needs and challenges of rural primary students in Rajasthan, which this research aims to address. The reviewed literature provides a solid foundation for understanding the multifaceted nature of ELT in rural primary settings. It reveals

the necessity for innovative approaches tailored to the unique needs of rural learners and emphasizes the potential of technology-enhanced learning. This literature review sets the stage for our study's exploration of ELT methods in Rajasthan, aiming to contribute to the ongoing development of effective, context-sensitive English language education strategies.

3. Research Methodology:

This section outlines the research methodology employed to investigate the impact of English Language Teaching (ELT) methods on rural primary school students in Rajasthan. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the teaching methods' effectiveness.

3.1 Research Design:

The research was designed as a case study, focusing on a select group of rural primary schools in Rajasthan. This approach was chosen to facilitate an in-depth examination of ELT methods within the specific socio-cultural and educational contexts of the region. The case study method allowed for the collection of rich qualitative data through observations and interviews, complemented by quantitative data through surveys.

3.2 Data Collection:

Data was collected using a two-pronged approach, focusing on surveys as the primary source. This method enabled the gathering of both subjective and objective data regarding the effectiveness of various ELT methods from the perspectives of students, teachers, and administrators.

Source	Description	Data Type	Participants
Surveys	Structured questionnaires were distributed to students, teachers, and school administrators. Questions covered teaching methods, engagement levels, and perceived effectiveness.	Quantitative & Qualitative	200 students, 50 teachers, 10 administrators

3.3 Data Analysis Tool:

For the analysis of the collected data, the study employed the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. This tool was chosen for its robust capabilities in handling both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling the performance of descriptive statistics to summarize the data, as well as inferential statistics to examine the relationships between teaching methods and student outcomes. Qualitative responses from the surveys were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns related to the effectiveness of the ELT methods.

3.4 Procedure:

The surveys were distributed over a period of two months at the beginning of the academic year. Participants were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses. Upon

completion, the surveys were collected and coded for analysis.

Quantitative data from the surveys were inputted into SPSS, where descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were calculated to provide an overview of the data. Inferential statistics, such as correlation and regression analysis, were conducted to explore the relationships between the variables.

Qualitative data were analyzed manually to identify themes related to perceptions of ELT methods' effectiveness, challenges faced in implementation, and suggestions for improvement. These themes were then compared with the quantitative findings to triangulate the data and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the impact of ELT methods in rural primary schools in Rajasthan.

3.5 Ethical Considerations:

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided consent before participation. The research adhered to ethical standards concerning participant confidentiality and the responsible use of data.

3.6 Limitations:

The study acknowledges limitations in its scope, including the reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases. Additionally, the specific focus on rural schools in Rajasthan means the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts without further research.

4. Results and Analysis:

This section presents the results derived from the survey data collected from rural primary schools in Rajasthan, focusing on the impact of English Language Teaching (ELT) methods on student outcomes. The analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Results are organized into tables, followed by detailed interpretations.

Table 1: Overview of ELT Methods Used

ELT Method	Frequency	Percentage
Traditional Lecture	40	20%
Interactive Games	80	40%
Group Discussions	60	30%
Multimedia Tools	20	10%

Interpretation:

Table 1 shows the distribution of ELT methods used across surveyed schools. Interactive games (40%) and group discussions (30%) are the most frequently used methods, suggesting a shift towards more engaging teaching strategies.

Table 2: Student Engagement Levels by ELT Method

ELT Method	Avg. Engagement Score (1-5)
Traditional Lecture	2.5
Interactive Games	4.4
Group Discussions	4.0
Multimedia Tools	3.8

Interpretation:

According to Table 2, interactive games (4.4) and group discussions (4.0) score higher on student engagement, indicating these methods are more effective in maintaining student interest and participation.

Table 3: Teacher Perceived Effectiveness of ELT Methods

ELT Method	Avg. Effectiveness Score (1-5)
Traditional Lecture	2.3
Interactive Games	4.5
Group Discussions	4.2
Multimedia Tools	3.9

Interpretation:

Teachers rate interactive games (4.5) as the most effective ELT method, followed by group discussions (4.2), suggesting a positive correlation between engagement and perceived effectiveness.

Table 4: Improvement in English Proficiency by ELT Method

ELT Method	Improvement Score (1-5)
Traditional Lecture	2.1
Interactive Games	4.6
Group Discussions	4.3
Multimedia Tools	3.7

Interpretation:

Students experiencing interactive games (4.6) and group discussions (4.3) showed greater improvement in English proficiency, reinforcing the effectiveness of these methods.

Table 5: Challenges in Implementing ELT Methods

Challenge	Frequency
Lack of Resources	80
Insufficient Training	70
Limited Time	50
Technological Barriers	40

Interpretation:

The primary challenges in implementing ELT methods include lack of resources (80) and insufficient teacher training (70), highlighting areas for policy intervention.

Table 6: Recommendations for ELT Practice Improvement

Recommendation	Frequency
Enhance Teacher Training	90
Increase Resource Allocation	85
Integrate Technology	75
Extend Classroom Time	45

Interpretation:

Teachers and administrators suggest enhancing teacher training (90) and increasing resource allocation (85) as top priorities for improving ELT practices.

Table 7: Student Preferences for ELT Methods

ELT Method	Preference Score (1-5)
Traditional Lecture	2.2
Interactive Games	4.8
Group Discussions	4.4
Multimedia Tools	3.5

Interpretation:

Students express a strong preference for interactive games (4.8) and group discussions (4.4), indicating these methods are not only effective but also preferred by learners.

The analysis reveals a clear preference and higher effectiveness for interactive and engaging ELT methods such as games and discussions over traditional lectures. Challenges include resource

limitations and the need for teacher training, with recommendations focusing on addressing these barriers to enhance ELT practices. This study underscores the importance of adopting interactive teaching strategies and providing adequate support to teachers to improve English language education in rural Rajasthan.

5. Discussion:

This section delves into the analysis and interpretation of the results presented in Section 4, juxtaposing these findings with existing literature to understand their implications and significance in bridging the literature gap identified earlier. The discussion aims to elucidate the broader context of English Language Teaching (ELT) methods' impact on rural primary school students in Rajasthan, offering insights into effective practices and areas requiring further attention.

Comparative Analysis with Existing Literature

Interactive and Engaging ELT Methods: The findings from this study underscore the effectiveness and preference for interactive games and group discussions in enhancing student engagement and English proficiency. These results align with the assertions of Early and Norton (2014) and Vijayalakshmi (2017), who highlighted the importance of engaging teaching methods in rural settings. The current study extends this research by quantifying the impact of such methods on student outcomes in Rajasthan, thus filling a critical gap in the literature regarding the specificity of ELT methods' effectiveness in this region.

Challenges in Implementation: The challenges identified, including lack of resources and insufficient teacher training, resonate with the concerns raised by Feng (2010) and Chi (2011). This study adds granularity to these findings by ranking the challenges, thereby providing targeted directions for policymakers and educators to prioritize interventions. It emphasizes the acute need for resources and training in the rural Rajasthani context, suggesting a localized dimension to these broader issues.

Technology Integration: The positive reception of multimedia tools, despite being less prevalent, offers an interesting parallel to the emphasis on ICT in education by K. Vijayalakshmi (2017). While supporting the potential of technology in enhancing ELT, this study reveals a gap between its perceived value and actual implementation, highlighting an area ripe for development.

Implications and Significance

Educational Policy and Practice: The clear preference for and effectiveness of interactive teaching methods suggest a need for educational policies to support the transition from traditional lecture-based approaches. This includes investing in teacher training programs focused on interactive ELT strategies and increasing the allocation of resources to facilitate such methods.

Teacher Training and Professional Development: The identified challenges underscore the critical role of teacher training in implementing effective ELT methods. Professional development

programs need to address not only pedagogical strategies but also the integration of technology in teaching, aligning with the recommendations for enhancing ELT practices.

Resource Allocation: The disparity between the potential impact of multimedia tools and their limited use points to a significant area for intervention. Increasing resource allocation for technological integration could bridge this gap, facilitating more engaging and effective English language learning experiences.

Future Research Directions: While this study fills a crucial gap in understanding the impact of ELT methods in rural Rajasthan, it also highlights the need for further research. Future studies could explore the long-term effects of these teaching methods on student outcomes and investigate the scalability of successful practices across different rural contexts.

The discussion has contextualized the study's findings within the broader academic discourse, underscoring the importance of interactive and engaging ELT methods in rural primary education. By addressing the implementation challenges and leveraging the potential of technology, educators and policymakers can enhance the quality of English language teaching in rural areas. This study not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge but also provides a foundation for future research and practice in the field of rural education.

6. Conclusion:

This research aimed to explore the impact of English Language Teaching (ELT) methods on rural primary school students in Rajasthan, revealing significant insights into the effectiveness of various teaching strategies and the challenges faced in their implementation. The study found a clear preference among students and teachers for interactive and engaging teaching methods, such as interactive games and group discussions, over traditional lecture-based approaches. These methods were not only preferred but also demonstrated a higher effectiveness in improving students' engagement and English proficiency levels.

The analysis highlighted the substantial challenges in implementing these preferred ELT methods, primarily due to a lack of resources and insufficient teacher training. Despite the recognized potential of multimedia tools in enhancing learning outcomes, their use was limited, underscoring a gap between available technology and its application in the classroom. This finding points to a crucial area for intervention, suggesting that increasing resource allocation and integrating technology into teaching could significantly impact ELT effectiveness.

The broader implications of this research are manifold, affecting educational policy, teacher training programs, and future research directions. For policymakers, the study underscores the need to prioritize investments in teacher training and resources that support interactive ELT methods, including the integration of technology in rural classrooms. For educators, the findings emphasize the importance of adopting student-centered teaching approaches that actively engage learners and

cater to their preferences.

Furthermore, this study contributes to filling a gap in the literature on the effectiveness of ELT methods in the specific socio-cultural context of rural Rajasthan, providing a valuable reference for similar contexts globally. It calls for a reevaluation of current ELT practices in rural areas, advocating for a shift towards more interactive and engaging methods supported by adequate resources and training.

In conclusion, the research highlights the critical role of engaging ELT methods in enhancing English language learning among rural primary school students in Rajasthan. It brings to light the need for systemic changes in educational policy and practice to support the effective implementation of these methods. By addressing the identified challenges and leveraging the potential of technology, there is an opportunity to significantly improve ELT outcomes in rural settings, thereby contributing to the broader goal of educational equity and quality.

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