



ISSN: 2230-7850  
IMPACT FACTOR : 5.1651 (UIF)  
VOLUME - 10 | ISSUE - 12 | JANUARY - 2021

## TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TO RURAL-BASED MARATHI-MEDIUM STUDENTS AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

**Dr. Deepak Nilkanthrao Morande**  
Assistant Professor, Department of English,  
G. W. College, Nagbhid. Dist. Chandrapur (Maharashtra).

### ABSTRACT:

English has acquired a central position in Indian higher education as a language of knowledge, employment, and global interaction. At the undergraduate level, English is often a compulsory subject, irrespective of students' socio-linguistic backgrounds. Rural-based Marathi-medium students, however, face multiple difficulties in learning English due to limited exposure, inadequate schooling practices, and socio-cultural constraints. This research paper examines the challenges involved in teaching English to such students at the UG level and proposes practical, learner-centred pedagogical strategies. The study highlights the importance of contextual teaching, use of the mother tongue as support, communicative approaches, and institutional intervention. It argues that effective English language teaching in rural colleges must be inclusive, sensitive, and skill-oriented to empower students academically and professionally without undermining their linguistic identity.



**KEYWORDS :** English Language Teaching, Rural Education, Marathi Medium, Undergraduate Students, India, Second Language Learning.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

English language teaching in India operates within a complex multilingual and multicultural context. While English enjoys high prestige as a language of power, opportunity, and upward mobility, access to effective English education remains uneven. One of the most affected groups is rural-based students who have completed their schooling in regional languages, particularly Marathi in Maharashtra.

At the undergraduate (UG) level, English becomes unavoidable. Students are expected to read academic texts, write examinations, understand lectures, and sometimes participate in seminars or interviews in English. For rural Marathi-medium students, this shift of academic journey often proves overwhelming. Their earlier objectives of teaching-learning English language at school level are limited, mechanical, and examination-oriented. The result is they enter college with weak language skills and English phobia.

Teaching English to these learners requires a deep understanding of their background, needs, and limitations. Traditional methods of teaching English, which focus on literary analysis or grammatical accuracy, often fail to address their real problems. This paper seeks to explore the challenges faced by rural Marathi-medium UG students in learning English and suggests practical and inclusive pedagogical solutions.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Several scholars have discussed the problems of English language teaching in rural India. Krashen (1982) emphasizes the role of meaningful input and a low-anxiety environment in second language acquisition. However, rural classrooms in India are often dominated by fear, and pressure of learning for examination purpose only.

Crystal (2003) points out that English functions as a global language but warns against its unequal accessibility. In the Indian context, this inequality is visible in the urban-rural divide. Rao (2019) highlights that rural learners face linguistic, psychological, and infrastructural barriers that limit their English proficiency.

Indian education policies, including the National Curriculum Framework (2005), recommend learner-centred and skill-based approaches. However, their implementation in rural colleges remains limited. Most studies suggest that the problem is not the learners' ability but the method of teaching and the lack of supportive learning environments.

This paper builds upon existing research while focusing specifically on rural Marathi-medium undergraduate students, a group that remains underrepresented in academic discussions.

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study aims to examine the socio-linguistic background of rural Marathi-medium UG students, identify major challenges faced by these students in learning English, analyze the role of mother tongue in English language learning, suggest effective teaching-learning practices suitable for rural UG classrooms and highlight the role of teachers and institutions in improving English proficiency.

## 4. SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF RURAL MARATHI-MEDIUM STUDENTS

Rural Marathi-medium students generally come from farming, labour, or lower-middle-class families. English is rarely used at home or in daily communication. Their social environment does not provide natural exposure to English through conversation, media, or reading.

In many rural schools, English is treated as a subject to be memorized rather than a language to be used. Teaching often focuses on grammar rules, word meanings, and textbook questions. Listening and speaking skills receive very little attention. Teachers themselves may not be fully confident in spoken English, which further limits classroom interaction.

By the time students reach the UG level, they have studied English for several years, yet they struggle to form basic sentences. This gap between years of study and actual language ability creates frustration and fear, affecting their academic performance and self-esteem.

## 5. CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AT UG LEVEL

Marathi and English belong to different language families, leading to several linguistic difficulties listed below:

- Pronunciation problems due to unfamiliar English sounds
- Mother tongue interference in sentence structure
- Incorrect use of articles, prepositions, and tenses
- Limited vocabulary and weak comprehension skills
- These issues make students hesitant to speak and write in English.

### 5.2 Psychological Challenges

Fear of English is one of the biggest obstacles. Many students believe that English is meant only for urban or English-medium learners. Past failures, fear of ridicule, and low self-confidence prevent them from participating actively in class.

### 5.3 Challenges in Teaching-Learning

Most UG English syllabi are literature-oriented. While literature is important, excessive focus on literary criticism does not help students improve basic language skills. Teachers are under pressure to complete the syllabus, leaving little time for language practice. The language and grammar syllabi is mostly in traditional form having more focus on rules without required back up of demonstrations.

#### **5.4 Institutional Challenges**

The factors that challenge effective teaching-learning of English include lack of well qualified teachers, limited teaching hours, lack of language laboratories and poor access to technology. These factors restrict individual attention and skill-based learning.

### **6. ROLE OF MOTHER TONGUE IN ENGLISH LEARNING**

The use of mother tongue in English language teaching has been debated for decades. In the rural Marathi-medium context, the complete exclusion of Marathi often creates confusion and fear. Judicious use of Marathi can be beneficial in several ways:

- Clarifying difficult concepts
- Explaining grammar through comparison
- Building confidence among learners
- Creating a supportive learning environment

### **7. PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES FOR RURAL UG CLASSROOMS**

#### **7.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

The primary goal of language learning should be communication. CLT encourages students to use English for real purposes rather than focusing only on correctness. Activities such as role plays, discussions, interviews, and presentations help students overcome fear and develop fluency.

#### **7.2 Contextual and Functional Teaching**

English teaching should be connected to students' real life. Topics related to rural life, agriculture, local issues, festivals, and daily routines make learning meaningful. Functional English skills like writing applications, resumes, emails, and interview responses should be prioritized.

#### **7.3 Gradual Skill Development**

Teachers should follow a step-by-step approach. Learn to listen and listen to learn is a great principle to be adopted in teaching-learning any new discourse. Audios and videos with English captions can be a more bearable and also interesting way to gradually develop listening skills.

Prescribing simple texts based on the interest of students are very helpful in keeping the learners absorbed in the study and eventually helps in improving their comprehension and reading skills. English interviews of their living idols certainly put them into habit of reading and also introduce them to speaking skills. Specifically prepared texts consisting of short conversations based on day to day situations can be employed to develop their understanding about proper use of tenses, prepositions, articles etc. Short and structured written assignments introduce them to writing skills.

#### **7.4 Activity-Based Learning**

Language games, storytelling, pair work, group tasks, and projects promote active learning. These activities encourage peer support and reduce the fear of making mistakes.

#### **7.5 Use of Technology**

Even basic technology can be effective. Mobile phones, recorded lectures, English news clips, and subtitles help improve listening and pronunciation. Teachers can recommend free online resources suitable for beginners.

### **8. ROLE OF THE TEACHER**

The teacher plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitude towards English. For rural Marathi-medium students, the teacher must act as:

- A facilitator rather than an authority
- A motivator who builds confidence
- A guide who respects students' background

Teachers should create a non-threatening environment where mistakes are treated as part of learning. Encouragement, patience, and empathy are essential qualities.

## 9. ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS AND CURRICULUM DESIGN

Colleges serving rural students must provide institutional support by:

- Conducting bridge courses in English
- Establishing language labs and English clubs
- Organizing workshops, seminars, and spoken English programs
- Encouraging extracurricular activities in English

Curriculum designers should balance literature and language skills. Skill-based assessment should be included along with theory exams.

## 10. IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

English teaching in rural UG colleges should aim at functional competence rather than native-like accuracy. Students should be able to understand lectures, express ideas, and perform basic academic and professional tasks in English.

English should be presented as a useful tool, not a symbol of superiority. Respect for Marathi and local culture is essential to make English learning inclusive and empowering.

## 11. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research can focus on:

- Action research in rural classrooms
- Impact of technology-based learning
- Teacher training programs for rural ELT
- Student attitudes towards bilingual teaching

Such studies can further improve English teaching practices in rural India.

## 12. CONCLUSION

Teaching English to rural-based Marathi-medium undergraduate students is a challenging but necessary task. Linguistic difficulties, psychological barriers, and institutional limitations often hinder effective learning. However, with learner-centred methods, supportive use of mother tongue, communicative activities, and institutional support, these challenges can be overcome.

English education should aim at empowerment rather than exclusion. When taught sensitively and practically, English can open new academic and professional opportunities for rural students while allowing them to retain their linguistic and cultural identity.

## REFERENCES

1. Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge University Press.
2. Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Pergamon Press.
3. National Curriculum Framework. (2005). NCERT, New Delhi.
4. Rao, Z. (2019). Teaching English in rural India: Challenges and solutions. *ELT Journal*, 73(2).
5. Widdowson, H. (1990). *Aspects of Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press.