

# Teaching English through Direct Method in Rural India: Challenges and Remedies



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## Abstract

Due to pedagogical, linguistic, infrastructure, and socioeconomic limitations, teaching English in rural India poses particular difficulties. Promising advantages of the Direct Method, which places a strong emphasis on immersive, target-language-only training, include improved fluency and natural language acquisition. Large class numbers, a lack of qualified teachers, a lack of resources, and little exposure to English outside of school are some of the major obstacles it encounters when implemented in rural areas. In order to improve the effectiveness of the Direct Method in rural India, this study examines these issues and suggests solutions, including teacher training programs, the use of inexpensive visual aids, community involvement, technological integration, and policy-level assistance. This study makes the argument that, with modification, the Direct Method may be a successful teaching strategy even in rural areas with little resources. It is based on a review of the literature, qualitative observations, and case studies.

## 1. Introduction

Today, English plays a crucial part in India's intellectual, cultural, and socioeconomic spheres. It is more than just a subject taught in schools; it is a doorway to further education, career prospects, international communication, and social mobility. English proficiency has a big impact on professional opportunities and upward mobility for millions of students nationwide, especially those from rural and neglected regions. Even though its significance is widely acknowledged, English education in rural India still faces significant obstacles, such as poor infrastructure, a lack of resources, inadequate teacher preparation, and little exposure to real-world English usage.

More than two-thirds of India's population lives in rural areas, which reflect a diverse range of linguistic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. These schools frequently have inadequate funding, understaffing, and conventional teaching strategies that place more emphasis on memory and grammar-translation than on communicative skills. The language exposure required for the development of fluency and confidence is further limited since many pupils are first-generation learners whose parents may have minimal formal education and no English ability. Because of this, English is frequently still only taught in schools, where students learn it mainly to pass tests rather than to communicate in everyday situations.

In this environment, teachers looking for alternatives to the inefficient, rote-based grammar-translation methods frequently employed in rural schools have taken an interest in the Direct Method of teaching English, which stresses immersive, target-language-only education. The Direct Method encourages inductive grammar learning, conversational communication, real-world vocabulary, and natural acquisition. By reducing the use of the mother tongue and depending instead on demonstration, visual aids, questioning strategies, and active verbal contact, it aims to establish an English-rich classroom atmosphere. The approach seeks to develop communicative competence, which has often been overlooked in rural English pedagogy, by encouraging pupils to think and respond in English.

However, there are significant barriers to the Direct Method's actual application in rural India, despite its theoretical attractiveness and shown effectiveness in some contexts. Exams may continue to favor reading and writing above speaking and listening, teachers may not be proficient in the language, classrooms may be overcrowded, and learning resources may be inadequate. Additionally, when forced to participate in English-only interactions, students in rural areas frequently lack confidence or drive, particularly in settings where English is rarely spoken outside of the classroom.

A thorough analysis of how the Direct Method might be modified and used in rural Indian schools is essential in light of these obstacles. The purpose of this paper is to examine the difficulties in applying the Direct Method in rural areas and offer practical, situation-specific solutions to improve its efficacy. By highlighting the necessity of creativity, teacher empowerment, and resource optimization in rural English teaching, the study adds to the larger conversation on equitable language education and pedagogical reform in India. The Direct technique, commonly referred to as the "natural method," is predicated on the idea that language acquisition should be modeled after how toddlers learn their native tongue: without translation or formal grammar teaching, by direct association, demonstration, and immersion.

### 2.1 Fundamentals Idea of the Direct Approach

1. Target-Language Only: English is the only language used for instruction; pupils' native tongues are not used.
2. Oral Practice: Dialogues, question-and-answer sessions, role-plays, and demonstrations are frequently used to emphasize speaking and listening.
3. Inductive Grammar: Learners deduce grammar through usage rather than explicit explanation; grammar is taught through examples and patterns rather than rules.
4. Use of Realia and Visual Aids: Physical objects, images, gestures, and demonstrations are used to impart new language.
5. Sentence-Level Teaching: Sentences, not individual words, are the basic unit of instruction.
6. Instant Feedback: To help with use, syntax, and pronunciation, teachers instantly correct mistakes.

### 2.2 Benefits of the Direct Approach

The Direct Method has many advantages, particularly for communicative language objectives:

- a. Fluency and Oral Proficiency: By emphasizing speaking, students can improve their spoken English fluency and confidence.
- b. Natural Language Acquisition: Learners think in English without continuously translating, encouraging more organic usage.
- b. Pronunciation and Listening Skills: Regular oral input and practice enhance listening comprehension, intonation, and pronunciation.
- d. Motivation and Engagement: Classes are made more interesting by interactive exercises, discussions, and real-world situations.
- e. Critical Thinking: Students gain analytical and problem-solving abilities by deriving grammar and meaning from context.

### 2.3 Drawbacks and Restrictions

The Direct Method has some significant disadvantages despite its advantages:

- a. Ignorance of Reading and Writing: If speech is given too much attention, literacy skills may not receive enough attention.
- b. The Need for Skilled Teachers: Teachers must be proficient in immersion instruction and speak English fluently; these professionals are frequently absent from rural locations.
- c. Resource Intensity: Needs realia, visual aids, and possibly smaller courses, all of which are frequently unavailable in environments with little resources.
- d. Big Class Sizes: The approach works better in small class sizes; crammed rural classrooms provide a problem.
- e. Difficult for Novices: Without explanations in their mother tongue, complete novices may find it challenging.

## 3. Context and Difficulties of Teaching English in Rural India

### 3.1 Education and Socioeconomic Background

There are various systemic issues with schooling in rural India, including:

1. Teacher Shortages and Qualifications: There aren't enough trained English teachers in many rural schools. Reports and field research indicate that teachers may be unconfident while speaking English or may have had simply grammar-translation training.
2. Infrastructure and Resource Limitations: Basic amenities like appropriate classrooms, audiovisual resources, language labs, or even sufficient teaching aids are frequently absent from rural schools.
3. Large Class Sizes: Individualized education is challenging in overcrowded classes, particularly for communicative, oral-based methods.
4. Home Language Environment: Outside of school, students in rural areas frequently do not have much exposure to English. It's possible that their home setting doesn't support studying English.
5. Motivation and Attitudes: If local jobs or social interactions are mostly conducted in their home tongue or regional language, students might not immediately perceive the value of learning English.

### 3.2 Particular Difficulties in Using the Direct Method in Rural Environments

Implementing the Direct Method presents a number of unique challenges given the rural setting

1. Teacher Fluency and Training: The approach requires extremely fluent teachers, as previously stated. Many English teachers in rural India might not be well-versed in communicative pedagogy or spoken English. This results in implementation that is unsuccessful.
2. Limited Teaching Aids: Realia, demonstration, and visual aids are the main components of the Direct Method. Due to financial limitations, rural schools could not have these.
3. Time Limitations: It may be challenging to get enough oral practice due to demanding curricula and short class periods.
4. Student Readiness: Due to a lack of exposure, learning anxiety, or a lack of prior English knowledge, some students—especially "average and below-average" learners—may find the approach challenging.
5. Classroom Management: Conducting dialogues, role-plays, and inductive grammar can be difficult due to large class sizes, multi-grade classrooms, and mixed skill levels.
6. Sustainability: In rural schools, when teachers or students turn to their home tongue for clarification, particularly when students are having difficulty, maintaining a constant English-only immersion may not be feasible.
7. Curriculum and Assessment Mismatch: A lot of rural schools use curriculum and exams that prioritize grammar, reading, writing, and translation over communicative skills. Teachers and students are discouraged from emphasizing speaking skills due to this imbalance.

## 4. Solutions and Suggestions

A multifaceted approach is required to overcome these obstacles. Here are some viable solutions and suggestions.

### 4.1 Professional Development and Training for Teachers

- a. Pre-Service and In-Service Training: Set up specialized training courses for English instructors in rural areas that emphasize the Direct Method, communicative teaching, classroom management, and the utilization of inexpensive resources.
- b. Peer Learning and Support Networks: Create virtual or local teacher learning communities where educators may exchange tactics, role-play, and evaluate their work.
- c. Mentorship Programs: Assign more seasoned mentors who can serve as role models for Direct Method lessons to less experienced or less proficient rural teachers.
- d. Social Support Interventions: Teachers in remote areas can receive both pedagogical and emotional support through interventions like peer groups or WhatsApp-based support systems (like the Saharaline model).

## 4.2 Low-Cost Materials and Resource Development

1. Use Locally Available Realia: To lessen reliance on pricey teaching tools, encourage educators to teach vocabulary and phrases using common objects, images, drawings, and gestures.
2. Community Involvement: Involve the community (parents, local craftspeople) in producing visual aids (charts, flashcards) or even dramatic dialogues that are pertinent to their local setting.
3. Mobile Learning and Digital Tools: When possible, use tablets or cellphones to present role-playing games, audio-visual materials, and listening exercises. It is possible to integrate even inexpensive apps or recordings.
4. Open Educational Resources (OER): Create or compile free or inexpensive English teaching resources (stories, dialogues, movies) that are appropriate for rural environments in accordance with the Direct Method.

## 4.3 Pedagogy and Classroom Practices

- a. Mixed-Method Approach: When topics are too abstract, especially for novices, occasionally use translation or mother-tongue explanations while upholding the fundamental Direct Method principles.
- b. Peer Conversation Activities: Use group and pair work for role-plays, conversations, and communication exercises. This lessens the workload for teachers and increases the amount of time pupils spend speaking actively.
- c. Scaffolded Learning: Work your way up to less concrete and more abstract vocabulary and phrases by starting with simple, tangible ones. Make use of gradual progression.
- d. Feedback Techniques: In the classroom, provide quick, friendly corrections. To boost confidence, encourage self-and peer-correction.
- e. Using "conversation corners" or tiny stations, rotate kids through them for practice, and use peer leaders to manage the classroom in large groups.

## 4.4 Institutional and Policy Assistance

- a. Curriculum Alignment: Encourage state and federal education boards to link assessments and curricula with communicative competency rather than merely grammar and translation.
- b. Funding and Incentives: Give rural schools grants or incentives to buy inexpensive technology (tablets, projectors) and basic teaching tools (charts, posters).
- c. Language Labs: Encourage rural schools to set up basic language labs. It can be made possible by using open-source software and inexpensive hardware.
- d. Monitoring and Evaluation: Put prototype programs into action, track their effects (teacher confidence, student fluency), and expand effective models.
- e. Parental and Community Engagement: Educate parents and the community about the value of English proficiency and promote practice outside of the classroom.

## 4.5 Utilizing Technology

- a. Radio and Audio Programs: To imitate immersion and offer listening exercise, use community radio or school-wide audio programs (in both the local language and English).
- b. Remote Teaching Support: Bring proficient English speakers (teachers, language experts) into remote classrooms via tele education or video conferencing.
- c. AI and Language Models: Investigate the use of AI tutors or language models (such as big language models) to offer individualized learning assistance; nevertheless, make sure that their application is morally and contextually appropriate.

## 5. Discussion

The results of this study highlight the intricate connection between the practical realities of rural India and the theoretical benefits of the Direct Method. Although the approach is based on learner-centeredness, communicative fluency, and natural language learning, its efficacy depends on circumstances that are frequently lacking in rural educational environments. This discrepancy forces educators and decision-makers to reconsider the Direct Method's applicability in a variety of resource-constrained environments as well as its viability in its pure form.

### 5.1. The Discount Between Rural Classroom Experiences and Theory

According to the Direct Method, students are immersed in a language-rich setting with teachers who are highly proficient in the target language, plenty of resources, manageable student-teacher ratios, and prior exposure to English. However, these presumptions are often refuted in rural classrooms. Due to a lack of opportunities for professional development or a lack of confidence in their ability to speak English, teachers may rely on traditional pedagogies. On the other side, students frequently get very little exposure to English at home when they start school. Strict English-only education in these situations may cause students to become frustrated, anxious, and disengaged.

This disparity emphasizes how crucial context-based education is. No matter how well studied, a pedagogical approach cannot be successful if it is not in line with the sociolinguistic realities of the students or the professional abilities of the teachers. Therefore, unless modified to meet local demands, the Direct Method in its conventional form may be useless or even detrimental in rural India.

### **5.2 Adaptation Is More Important Than Replacement**

The Direct Method shouldn't be completely discounted in spite of these difficulties. Rather, when combined with other methods, it provides useful principles like oral practice, active engagement, real-life communication, and inductive learning that can greatly improve English learning outcomes. A hybrid or eclectic approach would be more appropriate, according to the discussion.

1. Permitting restricted use of the mother tongue when it is absolutely necessary to promote comprehension is one example of this.
2. Using components of task-based learning (TBL), bilingual education, or communicative language teaching (CLT).
3. Strategically utilizing translation to address conceptual gaps without compromising communication objectives.

While adjusting to rural settings where linguistic diversity, teacher readiness, and student readiness differ greatly, such an eclectic approach preserves the core of the Direct Method.

### **5.3 Teachers' Role: The Foundation**

The teacher's skill, imagination, and self-assurance play a major role in whether the Direct Method succeeds or fails. Teachers in rural India frequently deal with a number of difficulties, including big class sizes, packed curricula, little exposure to English-speaking settings, and restricted access to pedagogical training. The conversation emphasizes the significance of enhancing teacher competencies through:

- a. Ongoing professional development initiatives.
- b. Teacher support groups or peer-learning cohorts.
- c. Mentoring by English teachers with greater expertise.
- d. English-speaking communities and inexpensive digital resources are accessible.

A classroom environment that supports the Direct Method is created by teachers who feel empowered because they are more willing to take chances, be creative, and devote themselves emotionally to communicative pedagogy.

### **5.4 Socio Cultural Factors**

The significance of sociocultural attitudes regarding English is one of the distinctive conclusions from researching rural situations. English carries the risk of separating students from their language and cultural heritage, despite the fact that it is frequently linked to social prestige and upward mobility. Tension in the learning ecology may result from rural parents' overvaluation or undervaluation of English. Students may view English as a challenging or unfamiliar subject, which might cause them to feel afraid, ashamed, or insecure when speaking.

In order to create a conducive learning environment, the Direct Method must be implemented through community participation, awareness-building, and parent collaboration. Even when studying a global language, students need to feel recognized by their culture.

### **5.5 Technology as A Tool for Bridging**

In rural locations, technological technologies present exciting opportunities to improve the efficacy of the Direct Method. Simple solutions, such recorded conversations, community radio, mobile apps, or audio snippets, can offer contexts for deep listening and models of correct pronunciation. When utilized effectively, technology can make up for the shortage of teachers who speak English fluently and give students meaningful exposure to the language. However, equitable access to technology is necessary to prevent digital interventions from exacerbating already-existing disparities.

### **5.6 Curriculum and Assessment Alignment**

The gap between evaluation methods and classroom practice is another major subject in this conversation. There is minimal opportunity to assess communicative proficiency because traditional tests in many rural schools place a strong emphasis on grammar, translation, and rote memorization. The Direct Method, which emphasizes speaking and listening—skills that are frequently overlooked in exams—is discouraged by this imbalance. Exam boards and curriculum designers must rethink examinations to emphasize communication competence in order to make the Direct Method workable. Teachers will be more inclined to use communicative techniques if speaking and listening are made assessable skills.

### **5.7. Sustainability Over Time**

In rural India, systemic support is more important for the Direct Method's durability than isolated classroom advances. For adoption to be successful, policy support is necessary.

- ii. Consistent financing.
- iii. Support from institutions for teacher preparation.
- iii. Including communicative English objectives in school culture.
- v. Constant observation, assessment, and investigation.

Teachers must be empowered, communities must be included, and strategies must be regularly improved based on local needs, input, and results.

## 6. Conclusion

In rural India, teaching English with the Direct Method has great potential, especially for enhancing oral fluency, self-assurance, and communication competence. However, the realities of rural education—limited resources, inadequate teacher preparation, big class sizes, and little exposure to English outside of school—challenge the method's traditional structure. The Direct Method needs to be modified and encouraged in order to be successful. This calls for an all-encompassing approach that includes training and mentoring educators, creating inexpensive instructional materials, utilizing technology, including the community, and guaranteeing policy congruence. By doing this, structural constraints won't prevent rural schools from utilizing the advantages of immersive, communicative language instruction.

In the end, a context-sensitive use of the Direct Method can support increased educational fairness by assisting rural students in gaining chances for upward mobility in addition to English competence.

## 7. Research Limitations and Prospects

**Absence of Empirical Data:** Rather than extensive empirical field research unique to the use of the Direct Method in rural India, this work mostly relies on theoretical reasoning and a review of the literature.

**Scalability Uncertainty:** Although suggested solutions show promise, thorough pilot testing and cost-benefit analysis are necessary to ensure their scalability and sustainability.

**Cultural Variation:** In terms of language, culture, and educational facilities, rural India is incredibly diverse. More localized case studies are required because a one-size-fits-all approach might not be effective.

**Technology Constraints:** Although technology has great potential, implementation may be hampered by problems with internet connectivity, device availability, and digital literacy.

**Assessment Misalignment:** Instead of using conventional grammar-based testing, more study is required to align assessment (exams, evaluation) with communicative ability.

Future research might measure things like students' speech fluency, motivation, exam performance, and teacher attitudes by doing action research in specific rural districts and comparing the results of schools employing the Direct Method (with modifications) to those using conventional techniques.

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Here by I declare that there is no conflict of Interest in the preparation of this research paper.

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