



CHALLENGES FACED BY RURAL STUDENTS IN LEARNING TO SPEAK ENGLISH

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Abstract:

This paper addresses the predicament encountered by rural students in their efforts to learn English, which focuses on socio-economic, pedagogical, and institutional aspects of learning that inhibit oral skills. The main aim will be to detect and examine the variables which influence the acquisition of spoken English among rural learners and suggest ways of improving the process. The study will synthesize the results of the peer-reviewed journals, educational reports, and policy documents published between 2020 and 2025, using a qualitative research design and secondary data sources. Data review relied on thematic analysis which was centred on the major themes of teacher competence, availability of resources, socio-cultural factors and students' motivation. The research indicates that the challenges faced by the rural students include mainly the olden times grammar-based instructions, lack of exposure to English communication, low socio-economic status, and psychological reasons such as fear and lack of confidence. These problems are further exacerbated by institutional constraints such as poor/lack of teacher training and proper implementation of language policies. The research concludes that to enhance English speaking among rural learners, a communicative, learner-centred model, facilitated by trained teachers, technology and inclusive educational policies need to be used.

Keywords: Rural, English Language, Teachers, Students.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context and Background of the Study

English has become a lingua franca or common language in the world, and it is a crucial point of education, work, and social advancement. In bilingual or multilingual countries, the ability to speak English is frequently a precondition to higher education and a professional career. Although the policy has focused on the competency in the English language, as well as regional languages, there still exists a persistent gap between urban and rural learners (Coady, 2020). Rural students tend to have problems in learning spoken English because they lack exposure to it, the teachers are not qualified to teach them, there is poor infrastructure and socio-cultural barriers.

The English language needs to be practiced regularly and in a setting that would support oral communication. The gap between the design of the curriculum and the implementation in the classroom increases the linguistic gap between the students of rural and urban regions. Hence, having an impact on their confidence, academic performance, and marketability.

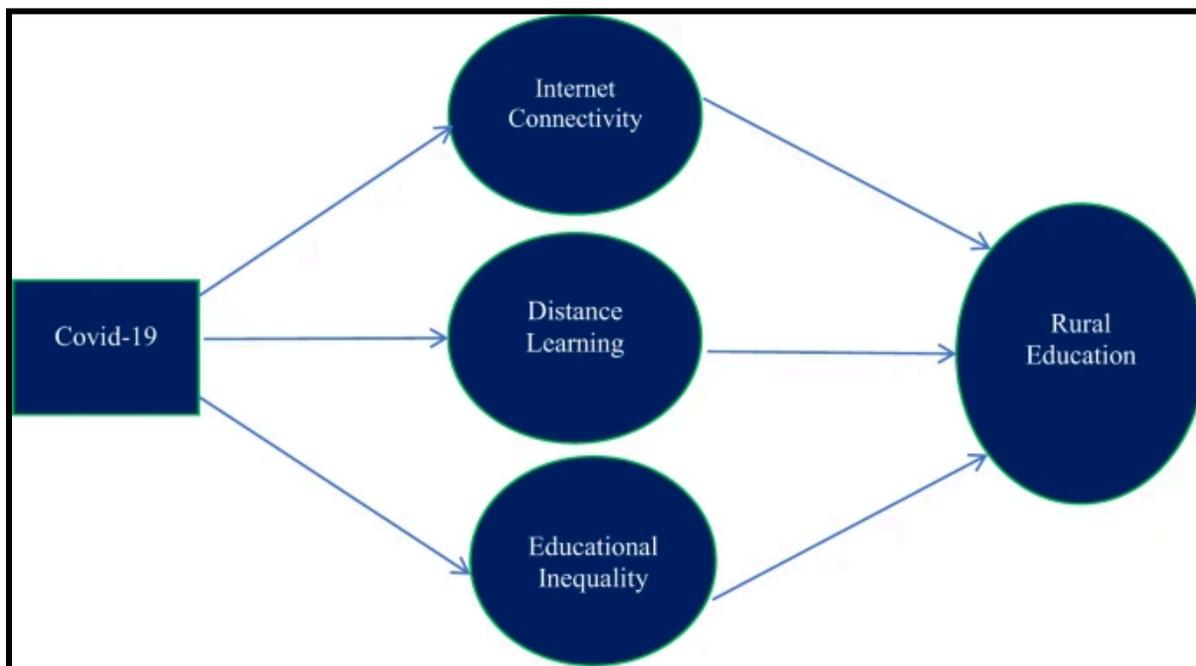


Figure 1: Rural English Learning

(Source: As inspired by Coady, 2020)

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The overall problem being researched is the number of problems rural students experience when learning to speak English well. Though most schools in the rural areas teach

English as a subject, students do not even acquire fluency and communication skills (Shan & Aziz, 2022). Systemic, pedagogical and socio-economic factors are also a problem in that they impede the acquisition of oral language. The research will attempt to address these issues by presenting thematic analysis of the secondary data based on scholarly articles, educational reports and policy documents.

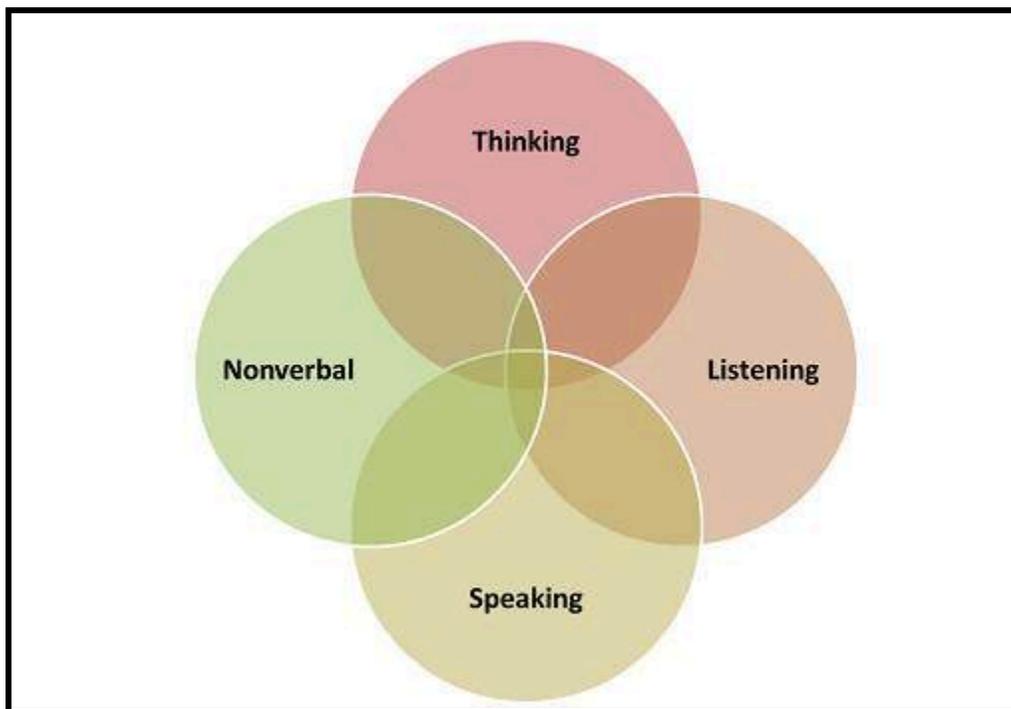


Figure 2: Communication Skills

(Source: As inspired by Shan & Aziz, 2022)

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To establish the primary challenges confronting rural students in learning to speak the English language.
- To examine socio-cultural, institutional and pedagogical influences on acquisition of spoken English.
- To determine the contributions of teachers, curriculum and the environment of the community in the development of the communicative abilities of students.
- To propose possible strategies and interventions to enhance the English-speaking skills of the rural learners.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The results of this research are important to teachers, policy makers and scholars to minimize lingual disparity in schooling. Knowing the unique difficulties of rural learners, the stakeholders can formulate inclusive language policy and particular teacher training models. Furthermore, the research is a part of the increasing literature on the topic of educational equity, language pedagogy, and rural development (Tang, Ren & Zhao, 2024). Improving the level of English-speaking skills of rural students can ensure social inclusion, improve their employability and national development through the provision of a more linguistically competent manpower.

1.5 Brief Review of Relevant Literature

A number of research reports have identified the language difficulties of country learners. Rural students from underdeveloped countries tend to view English as an elitist language, which has an impact on their motivation and self-efficacy (Sah & Karki, 2023). Equally, the rural students fail to use English in real-life contexts due to poor exposure to English-speaking surroundings (Samosir, 2022). The grammar-translation method that is widely used in rural schools discourages communicative competence since students are more concerned with memorization than oral fluency (Spahiu & Kryeziu, 2021).

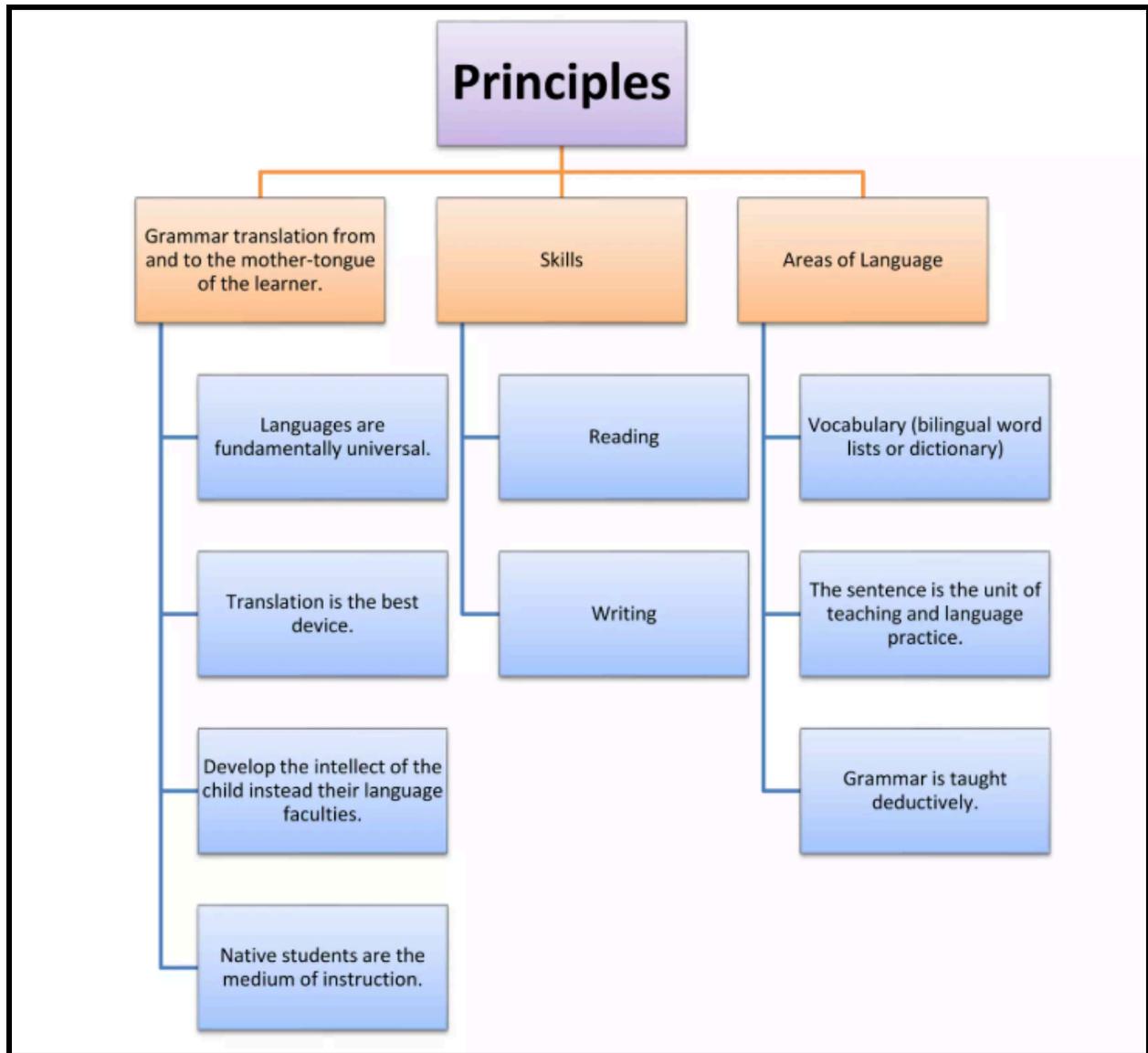


Figure 3: Grammar-Translation Method

(Source: As inspired by Spahiu & Kryeziu, 2021)

A decisive role is also played by the socio-economic factors. Poor families usually do not have access to books, online resources, or parental support when it comes to studying English (Kukulaska-Hulme *et al.* 2023). More so, the problem is worsened by ineffective teacher training and a big class size in rural schools. Even rural teachers themselves have rather weak English language skills, which limits their possibilities to develop interactional language-learning strategies (Calafato, 2021).

Governmental programs like the National Curriculum and the English as an Additional Language (EAL) support programmes have attempted to increase the opportunities of language learning

(Oxley & De Cat, 2021). Nonetheless, implementation issues are still present, and literature indicates that rural underage learners in the UK have English-speaking problems, which are caused by structural inequalities, pedagogical constraints, and socio-cultural issues.

1.6 Research Questions

The research will be qualitative in nature since the study questions will be guiding as opposed to formal hypothesis:

1. What are the major difficulties that rural students encounter when learning the English language?
2. What is the role of social, institutional, and personal factors on the spoken English proficiency of rural students?
3. Which tactics can be used to enhance English speaking ability in rural schools?

2. Methodology

2.1 Description of the Research Design and Methods Used

The study will have a qualitative research design which will involve secondary data gathering. It will utilize thematic analysis to reveal patterns and common themes in the existing scholarly research, education policy documents, and reports of the institutions (Christou, 2022). The method is relevant to researching such intricate socio-educational phenomena as the barriers to learning a language because it provides an opportunity to comprehend lived experiences and situational aspects.

2.2 Sample Selection and Data Collection Procedures

The research will use a purposive sampling method to access suitable secondary sources in accordance with the aims of the research. The peer-reviewed institutional reports, publications, and conference papers, newsletters, and journal articles that will be included are those found in Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore, ScienceDirect, and other quality scholarly databases. The inclusion criteria will include the number of works that should be published in 2020-2025 and deal with English language learning and speaking skills in rural educational settings. The data will be collected with the help of systematic reading and note taking and having in focus recurring issues like competence of the teacher, socio-economic barriers, learning environments, and student motivation (Mazhar *et al.* 2021). The data that will be extracted will be then systematized and thematized to aid in a detailed qualitative study of the problems detected.

2.3 Tools and Instruments Used

There will be no direct instruments like surveys and interviews since the study is grounded in the secondary data. On the contrary, a data extraction sheet will be drawn up to gather and systematize data on the chosen sources. Some of the important areas that will be incorporated in this sheet are teaching methods, socio-economic factors, learning environment, and motivational issues.

2.4 Data Analysis Methods

The thematic analysis will be used to analyse the data collected in the study. Here we can read all the sources thoroughly and single out the similar ideas, and we can divide them into major themes. These themes will indicate the key obstacles that the rural students have in learning to speak English (Christou, 2022). This information will be then interpreted to show how various forces, including teachers, resources and culture influence the development of spoken English among the students.

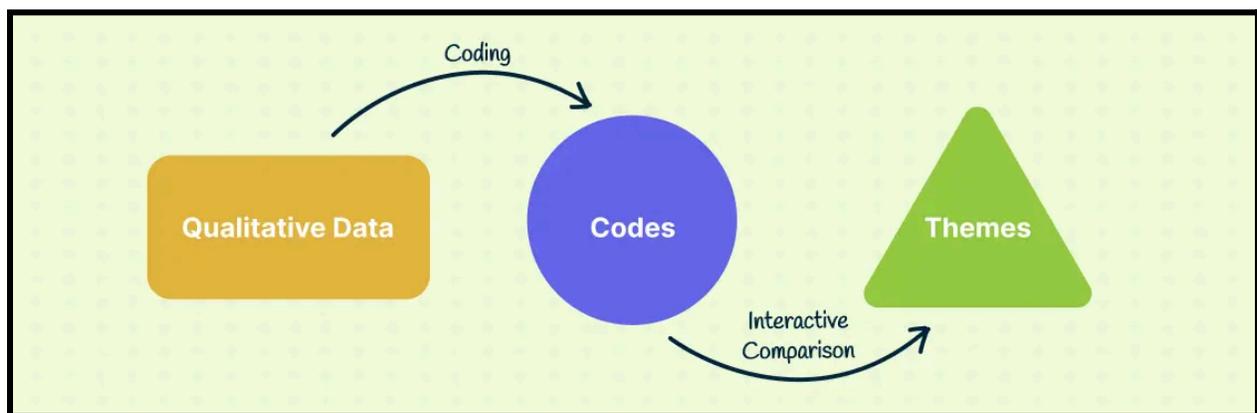


Figure 4: Thematic Analysis Method

(Source: As influenced by Christou, 2022)

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Even though the secondary data shall be utilized in the study, the ethical integrity shall be observed through proper citation of all sources and plagiarism will be avoided. No personal or sensitive data will be gathered. Analysis will not infringe the intellectual property rights of original authors and will be scholarly in interpretation (Hasan *et al.* 2021).

3. Results

Thematic analysis on the secondary data identified four key themes that summarize issues of rural students in learning to speak English, namely (1) Pedagogical and Resource Barriers, (2)

Socio-Economic and Cultural Constraints, (3) Psychological and Motivational Factors, and (4) Institutional and Policy Limitations.

3.1 Theme 1: Pedagogical and Resource Barriers

In most of the rural schools, the instruction continues to be based on traditional grammar with emphasis on reading and writing rather than speaking. The teachers are not usually trained to use communicative language teaching (CLT) strategies. The teachers in poor countries who teach in rural areas utilize interactive speaking exercises (Teh, 2021). In addition, lack of adequate resources like language laboratories, multimedia aids and updated textbooks minimizes the exposure to natural use of the English language.

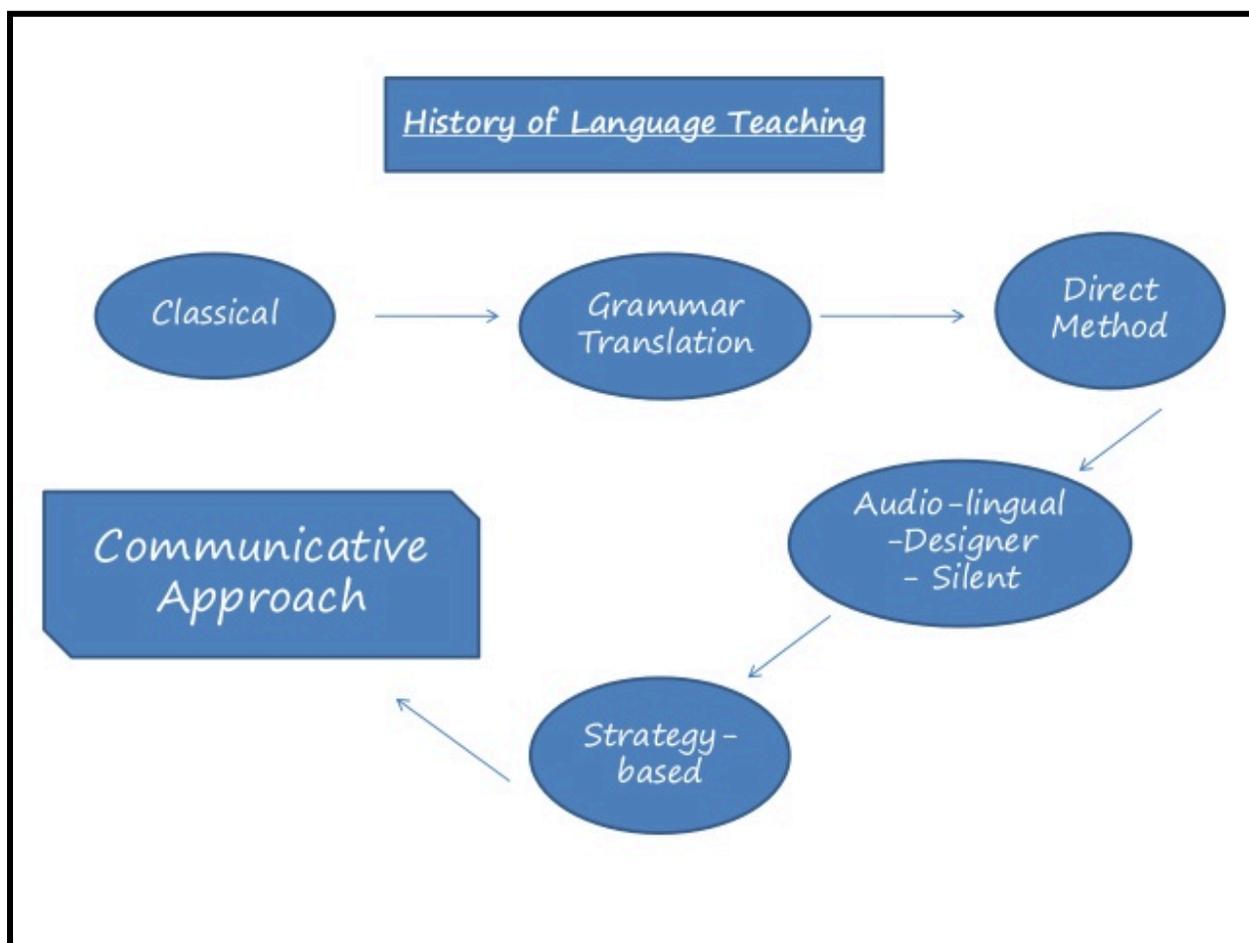


Figure 5: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

(Source: As influenced by Teh, 2021)

3.2 Theme 2: Socio-Economic and Cultural Constraints

Rural students are usually low-income families, which restrict their digital media, English books, and individual coaching. The home environment is not always conducive to English speaking, because parents and peers only speak local languages. This is linguistic isolation which limits exposure and confidence. Attitude towards culture is also a factor whereby English is regarded as a foreign language or elitist language and therefore it is not used in day-to-day use (Sah & Karki, 20230).

3.3 Theme 3: Psychological and Motivational Factors

Emotional barriers that are eminent include fear of error and social embarrassment. Research indicates that rural students tend to have language anxiety, which makes them avoid speaking activities. The lack of positive reinforcement and low self-esteem makes them less willing to engage in the class discussions (Ahmad, 2021). Also, learners often view English as an academic, not a communication skill and this reduces the intrinsic motivation.

3.4 Theme 4: Institutional and Policy Limitations

The grassroots implementation is still poor, despite the policy efforts. The problem of teacher shortages, massive student population in the classroom, and unequal assessment procedures hamper effective language acquisition. There can be no structured co-curricular activities in schools like debates or language clubs that will encourage speaking.

4. Discussion

4.1 Interpretation of Results

The results point to the fact that challenges encountered by rural students when it comes to speaking English are multi-dimensional, and they constitute an interconnected set of pedagogical, socio-economic, and psychological factors. There is little exposure to real-life English-speaking situations, and the students are dependent on the textbook language which is not used in the real world. This lack of learning is further enhanced by the lack of teacher training in contemporary methodologies.

4.2 Comparison with Previous Studies

The outcomes agree with the previous research findings. Similar conclusions were drawn and outlined inefficient teacher skill and outmoded teaching practices as some of the biggest impediments. Moreover, the socio-cultural beliefs of English as an elite language are also consistent with the present analysis (Parajuli, 2021). But this paper goes further by putting these

factors together in a synthesized framework that demonstrates the accumulating effect of cultural context and institutional inefficiencies that hinders the development of English speaking.

4.3 Explanation of Unexpected Findings

Some unforeseen conclusions about the data include the degree to which the psychological barriers including anxiety and lack of confidence are more substantial than the infrastructural constraints. The students who had supportive teachers and interactive learning conditions were more motivated and showed improved speaking skills even in rural schools that have humble facilities. This indicates that material shortcomings can be ameliorated at times through an attitude and pedagogy.

4.4 Implications for Theory, Practice, and Further Research

The study highlights the need to adopt a socio-constructivist approach to rural language education in which emphasis is made on interaction and communal involvement. As practice, communicative methods and pronunciation lessons should be introduced to teacher training programs. Digital tools i.e., the use of mobile language applications or inexpensive audiovisual tools should be integrated by educational authorities to reduce gaps in exposure (Procel *et al.* 2024). In the case of research, further investigations can be done through comparative studies in the rural schools and semi-urban schools to estimate the effectiveness of various teaching interventions. Longitudinal studies could also be done to determine the impact of early exposure to spoken English on subsequent scholastic performance.

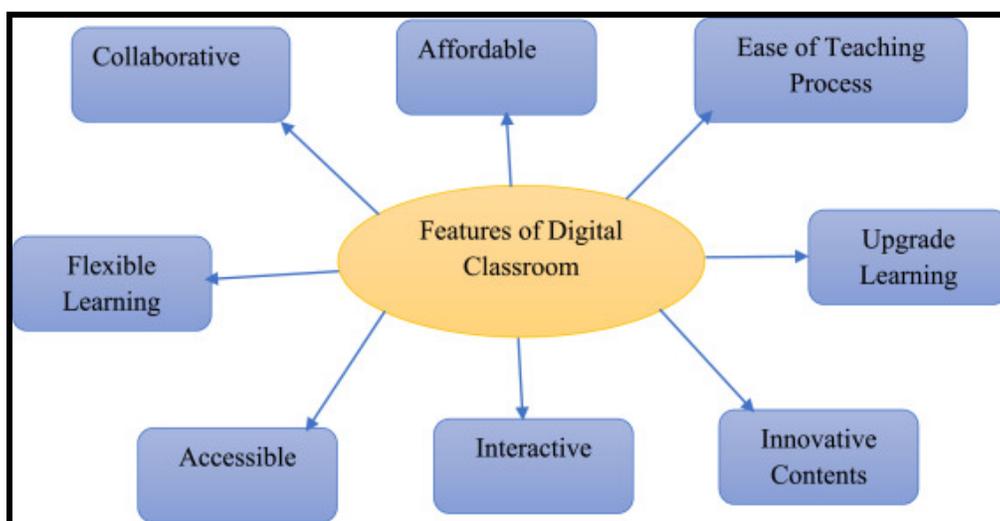


Figure 6: Digital Classroom & Learning

(Source: As influenced by Procel *et al.* 2024)

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This research finds that rural students are faced with significant challenges on attaining proficiency in speaking English. They are old pedagogy, socio-economic deprivation, exposure, teacher inadequacy and low self-confidence. Thematic analysis of secondary sources indicates that these issues require systemic changes, instructional practices in context, and instructional support to transcend them.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

The research is based only on secondary data and does not allow the direct confirmation of the results based on the field observation or interviews. Also, emphasis on the rural settings can limit the external validity to other areas. However, the analysis offers useful theoretical information of common themes in various sources of data.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Mixed-method research that integrates classroom observations with interviews with learners should also be included in the future research that would support the qualitative results. Studies of intervention-based efficacy testing on the effectiveness of communicative language teaching or digital English programs in the rural schools could enhance action evidence to policymakers. Finally, language equity in educational settings should not only be guaranteed by means of curriculum reform but also through community involvement, the incorporation of technologies, and empowering of teachers.

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