

A Study of English Language Learning Difficulties among Higher Secondary Students in Eastern Rajasthan

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Abstract:

English language proficiency is recognized globally as an essential prerequisite for higher education, career progression, and participation in the digital economy. Within the Indian educational framework, English functions as a foundational Second Language (L2), yet significant disparities persist in its acquisition between urban centers and rural or semi-urban regions. This study examines the multi-faceted challenges encountered by higher secondary school students in Eastern Rajasthan, with a particular focus on the Karauli district.

Drawing on contemporary Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories and a mixed-methods empirical approach involving student questionnaires, diagnostic tests, structured classroom observations, and interviews, this research isolates the variables underlying deficits in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (LSRW). The empirical corpus demonstrates that acute mother tongue interference (L1 transfer from Hindi and local dialects), restrictive socio-economic backgrounds, teacher-centered examination-focused pedagogy, severe vocabulary limitations, and an absolute lack of a target language ecosystem collectively impede communicative competence.

By analyzing these local findings against macroeconomic educational policies and empirical advancements up to 2018, this paper contextualizes the regional obstacles within broader systemic deficiencies. Finally, actionable pedagogical shifts are articulated, calling for the implementation of learner-centered communicative practices, automated and technology-mediated corrective feedback, early immersive listening intervention, and structural overhauls of examination patterns to prioritize pragmatic language mastery over rote memorization.

1. Introduction

Language functions as the primary vehicle through which human beings encode cognitive processes, convey complex emotional internalities, and transmit cultural paradigms across successive generations. In the contemporary global landscape, the English language has transcended its original socio-geographic borders to establish itself as the undisputed global lingua franca, underpinning international commerce, academic discourse, technological innovation, and digital communication. Within the socio-political and educational ecosystem of India, a country characterized by extreme linguistic plurality, English operates as an official associate language and serves as a vital bridging mechanism across diverse regional populations. It represents far more than an academic curriculum option; it functions as a definitive marker of social mobility, an instrument for knowledge acquisition, and a prerequisite for high-value employment. Despite its structural integration into the Indian school system via the Three-Language Formula, a profound disconnect remains between educational aspirations and classroom realities. While students in urban, private English-medium environments develop functional bilingual fluency, their counterparts in government-funded and rural institutional networks across states like Rajasthan face systematic structural disenfranchisement. Higher secondary school students (Grades XI and XII) in Eastern Rajasthan,

specifically in semi-urban and rural areas like the Karauli district, frequently reach the end of their schooling without attaining even basic communicative competence in English. They are caught in a cycle where English is approached as an abstract, examination-oriented subject to be memorized, rather than a living tool for interactive human communication.

This pedagogical failure has severe consequences. Upon exiting the secondary education sector, these students face significant challenges when entering higher education or competitive job markets, where entrance examinations and interviews are dominated by English. This regional disparity deepens existing socio-economic divides, leaving rural youth marginalized within the broader national economy.

Understanding the nature of these learning difficulties requires an analytical approach that combines empirical regional data with classical and contemporary SLA frameworks. This study provides a comprehensive investigation into the specific linguistic, cognitive, and socio-environmental factors that shape the English language learning process for higher secondary students in Eastern Rajasthan. By examining the micro-level realities of classrooms in Karauli alongside established theoretical models, this paper identifies the barriers to language acquisition and proposes structured, modern pedagogical reforms.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1. Defining L1 and L2 within Post-Colonial Pedagogy

To evaluate language learning within the Indian public education sector, it is necessary to establish precise theoretical definitions for First Language (L1) and Second Language (L2). From a developmental perspective, a language is classified as 'first' if no other linguistic system was acquired prior to it; any subsequent language system is designated as an L2 or target language. Pedagogically, within the standard frameworks of the Indian Ministry of Education, the first language is introduced as a primary medium of instruction and social communication from Grades I through X, typically matching the student's mother tongue or dominant regional dialect.

Conversely, the second language is structurally introduced to expand societal participation and secondary socialization, providing the learner with access to broader national and institutional frameworks. In regions like Eastern Rajasthan, Hindi and its regional variations (such as Braj Bhasha or Dhundhari) function as the L1, while English is formally introduced as the L2. However, because English lacks an active communicative presence in the daily lives of these rural communities, its instruction often takes on the characteristics of a foreign language. It is taught primarily through formal instruction without organic reinforcement outside the school environment, which limits the developmental pathways usually associated with natural L2 acquisition.

2.2. Classical SLA Paradigms: Krashen, Chomsky, and Ellis

The tension between rule-driven English classrooms and communicative incompetence can be analyzed through Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis and his distinction between acquisition and learning. Krashen (1981) describes acquisition as a subconscious, natural process that occurs through exposure to comprehensible input ($i+1$) in an environment focused entirely on meaning rather than explicit syntax. Learning, by contrast, is a conscious, structured process centered on explicit rule instruction and formal grammar, which activates an internal "Monitor" that edits and restricts spontaneous speech production.

In rural Rajasthani government schools, English education is heavily skewed toward conscious learning. Students memorize explicit grammatical rules to pass written assessments, but they are rarely exposed to the subconscious, immersive input necessary to build authentic communicative competence. Consequently, they may develop a degree of formal grammatical awareness but struggle to produce fluent, contextually appropriate spoken language.

This issue is further clarified by Noam Chomsky's concepts of competence (the internalized, underlying knowledge of a language system) and performance (the actual production and comprehension of language in real-world use). Chomsky's generative grammar asserts that human beings are innately endowed with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) and Universal Grammar (UG) principles. The learner's task is to scan external linguistic input to configure the language-specific parameters of the target system.

However, as Rod Ellis (1985, 1994) points out, for the LAD to configure these parameters effectively, the input must be clear and interactive. Ellis categorizes cognitive learner processes into three distinct types: Learning Strategies: Methods used to internalize new target language knowledge.

Production Strategies: The means by which a learner utilizes their existing L2 knowledge base.

Communication Strategies: Compensatory mechanisms employed when there is a gap between the learner's communicative intent and their available linguistic resources.

When the classroom environment fails to provide meaningful communicative opportunities, students are unable to transition their formal knowledge into active production strategies, leaving their structural understanding isolated from real-world performance.

2.3. Spontaneous vs. Guided Learning Environments

Wolfgang Klein (1986) provides a useful framework for this analysis by distinguishing between spontaneous learning and guided learning. Spontaneous learning occurs naturally through daily communication in social settings, completely free from structured instructional design. Guided learning, by contrast, relies on systematic, intentional instruction within a formal school curriculum.

In a similar vein, Henri Hawkins (2001) argues that the nature of classroom input shapes how learners process language. He notes that while some classrooms focus heavily on explicit grammar instruction, translation, and mechanical drills, others emphasize communicative language use, where the primary goal is conveying meaning rather than analyzing structural properties.

In the schools of Eastern Rajasthan, English education is almost exclusively restricted to a rigid, formal variant of guided learning. Because students lack opportunities for spontaneous peer interaction or exposure to English-language media outside school hours, their language development depends entirely on classroom instruction. When this instruction remains limited to reading texts aloud and completing translation exercises, it fails to foster the functional language processing skills needed for interactive communication.

2.4. Review of Empirical Research in the Indian Context

A historical review of linguistic research within India highlights a long-standing struggle with L2 proficiency across various states:

Karthiyayani (1995): Evaluated reading comprehension among higher secondary students and found that learners struggled significantly when information was scattered across a text rather than stated directly in a single sentence. She also noted that while parental income and prior academic records strongly influenced performance, gender and regional location had a smaller impact within her specific sample.

Nisha (1995): Investigated the psychological and situational barriers that hinder college-level students from acquiring communicative competence in English.

Baskaran (1996): Analyzed orthographic and spelling errors among undergraduate learners, demonstrating how persistent mother tongue phonology directly interferes with target language writing systems.

Ravi (1998): Focuses on motivational problems in teaching-learning English.

Chandran (1999): Examined the oral communication skills of first-year higher secondary students, identifying widespread hesitation, a fear of making mistakes, and severe performance anxiety during spoken tasks.

Subramanian (2002): Evaluated linguistic skills among graduate students.

While these studies highlight persistent challenges in L2 education across India, very few have focused specifically on the higher secondary student population in Eastern Rajasthan. This study addresses that gap by providing an empirical analysis of how regional socio-economic challenges, local dialects, and school infrastructure interact to shape the language learning process in Karauli.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Objectives

This study uses a descriptive, mixed-methods research design to gather both quantitative performance data and qualitative insights into student and teacher experiences. The primary objectives of this research are: To evaluate the proficiency levels of higher secondary students in Eastern Rajasthan across the four core language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW).

To analyze how mother tongue interference (L1 Hindi/regional dialects) influences phonological, lexical, and syntactic choices in the target language.

To assess the impact of socio-economic and educational variables—such as gender, rural-urban location, parent education, household income, and medium of instruction—on English learning outcomes.

To examine current classroom practices and identify systemic barriers to communicative language teaching.

3.2. Participants and Variables

The empirical corpus for this study was collected from selected schools within the Karauli district of Eastern Rajasthan. Karauli was selected primarily because it is designated as a socially, educationally, and economically backward region, making it an appropriate site for studying the challenges faced by underprivileged learners.

The sample includes 200 informants drawn from the higher secondary student population (Grades XI and XII). To analyze the data comprehensively, participants were categorized across five primary socio-demographic and educational independent variables:

Sl. No.	Independent Variable	Sub-Divisions / Categories
1	Sex	1. Male 2. Female
2	Region	1. Rural 2. Urban
3	Socio-Economic Status (SES)	1. Below Poverty Line (BPL) 2. Above Poverty Line (APL)
4	Parental Education Level	1. Illiterate / Primary Only 2. Secondary / Higher Education
5	Medium of Primary Instruction	1. Hindi Medium 2. English Medium

The dependent variables are the students' performance scores across diagnostic assessments designed to measure listening comprehension, speaking fluency, reading comprehension, and written expression.

3.3. Research Tools and Data Collection Instruments

Data collection was carried out using four distinct diagnostic instruments tailored to evaluate the components of language proficiency:

Reading Comprehension Test: Students were given a 20-minute timed test containing text passages followed by a series of structured questions. This test evaluated direct text retrieval, inferred meaning, and contextual vocabulary recognition.

Listening Comprehension Test: Administered immediately after the reading test. Standardized texts and sentence pairs were played using a tape recorder, or read aloud by the administrator when technical constraints arose. Students recorded their responses on specialized sheets, evaluating sound discrimination, recognition of minimal pairs, numbers, telephone configurations, and calendar dates.

Oral Production and Speaking Assessment: Conducted via structured individual interviews. Students were asked to complete short oral descriptions and reading-aloud tasks to assess pronunciation accuracy, phonetic transfer, and spoken fluency.

Writing Skills and Error Analysis Corpus: Students completed structured writing assignments, including sentence construction, short compositions, and letters. This corpus was used to perform an error analysis tracking orthographic, grammatical, and syntactic deviations.

3.4. Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on the learner performance, communication strategies, and immediate difficulties experienced by higher secondary students within the Karauli district. It does not include an exhaustive assessment of regional textbook design, formal teacher training certifications, or provincial funding allocations. The findings reflect the educational environment of Eastern Rajasthan and should be generalized to other socio-cultural regions with appropriate context.

4. Discussion of Language Learning Difficulties (LSRW Analysis)

Learning a language requires mastering four core skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW). These skills are divided into oracy (listening and speaking) and literacy (reading and writing), which together form a learner's overall language proficiency.

4.1. Listening Deficits and Sound Discrimination

The diagnostic listening tests revealed that students face significant difficulties with auditory discrimination and phoneme recognition in English. Because students are rarely exposed to spoken English outside of formal classroom settings, their ears are unaccustomed to the phonetic variations of the target language.

A major challenge identified during minimal pair testing was distinguishing between sibilants and fricatives that do not have direct equivalents in local dialects. For example, when presented with the pairs /s/ and /ʃ/, students frequently failed to notice the difference between words like "sip" and "ship", or "was" and "wash".

[Auditory Input: "sip" vs "ship"] ---> [L1 Phonological Filter] ---> [Perceived as Homophones]

Additionally, students struggled with decoding rapid spoken strings containing numbers, telephone listings, and specific years, often confusing phonetically similar numerical markers like "forty" and "fourteen", or "fifteen" and "fifty". These errors indicate that students process target language sounds through the phonological rules of their native language, which distorts incoming verbal information and reduces listening comprehension.

4.2. Oral Hesitation and Speaking Barriers

The speaking evaluations revealed severe limitations in communicative confidence and spoken fluency. A widespread issue among the participants was intense performance anxiety and a fear of making mistakes in front of peers or instructors. This anxiety triggers a strong internal Monitor, causing students to hesitate, stop mid-sentence, or remain silent during oral tasks.

Linguistically, students rely heavily on mental translation. Before speaking, they formulate thoughts in Hindi or a local dialect and attempt to translate them word-for-word into English. This process breaks down when dealing with English structural features like auxiliary verb placement, pronoun-gender agreement, or prepositions, resulting in awkward and grammatically incorrect spoken production.

Furthermore, the lack of interactive speaking practice within the school curriculum leaves students without functional communication strategies, meaning they are unable to adapt their vocabulary to discuss unfamiliar topics smoothly.

4.3. Reading Comprehension Challenges

The reading tests showed that while many higher secondary students can decode symbols and read English script aloud, they struggle to comprehend the meaning of the text. Students are generally capable of locating answers that are stated directly and verbatim within a text passage. However, when an answer requires connecting information across different paragraphs or inferring meaning from context, performance drops sharply.

This difficulty is compounded by a limited vocabulary. When students encounter unfamiliar words, they often guess the meaning based on surface-level orthographic similarities rather than contextual clues, leading to misinterpretations of the text.

The data also show a clear link between reading performance and the socio-economic status of the family. Students from privileged backgrounds often have access to supplemental reading materials at home, whereas students from disadvantaged environments rely entirely on school textbooks, leaving them poorly prepared for complex reading comprehension tasks.

4.4. Writing and Orthographical Errors

Writing is a highly demanding skill that requires learners to coordinate spelling accuracy, grammatical structure, vocabulary selection, and logical organization. The error analysis of the written scripts revealed frequent orthographical and syntactic deviations.

Orthographical errors are strongly influenced by the phonetic patterns of the mother tongue. Because students tend to spell words exactly as they pronounce them, local pronunciation errors are reflected in their writing. For example, confusion between voiced and unvoiced consonants at the end of words leads to spelling errors like writing "bag" instead of "back", or "rope" instead of "robe".

Syntactically, word-for-word translation from Hindi leads to persistent structural errors. Students frequently misplace tense markers, omit necessary helping verbs, and use literal translations of Hindi idioms that do not work in English. These compounding errors make written compositions difficult to read and demonstrate that students have not yet internalized the core grammatical rules of the target language.

5. Statistical and Empirical Insights from the Field Test

5.1. Impact of Socio-Demographic Variables

The data collected from the 200 informants in the Karauli district reveal significant variations in language performance across different socio-demographic factors:

Socio-Economic Status (SES): This factor showed the strongest correlation with language proficiency. Students from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households scored significantly lower across all four core language skills compared to their Above Poverty Line (APL) peers. BPL students often lack educational resources at home, have fewer opportunities to encounter English outside of school, and cannot afford supplemental tutoring, which widens the performance gap.

Geographic Region (Rural vs. Urban): Urban students consistently outperformed rural students. Urban areas provide greater exposure to English through advertisements, signs, media, and peer interactions, creating an informal learning environment. In rural Karauli, by contrast, the language environment is entirely dominated by local dialects, making the school classroom the sole source of English exposure.

Parental Literacy and Education: There was a direct relationship between parental education levels and student test scores. Students with literate parents benefit from a supportive home environment where the value of English language proficiency is recognized. Conversely, first-generation learners from households with illiterate parents face unique challenges, as they receive little to no guidance or reinforcement for their school tasks at home.

[High SES / Urban Location] -----> Rich Language Exposure -----> High L2 Performance
[Low SES / Rural Location] -----> Limited Language Exposure ----> Deficits in LSRW

5.2. Quantitative Disparities: Hindi vs. English Medium

The medium of instruction used during primary education remains a strong predictor of language proficiency at the higher secondary level. Students who transitioned from Hindi-medium primary schools into higher secondary English classes faced an acute disadvantage compared to those with an English-medium background.

Lacking a foundational vocabulary and early training in auditory discrimination, these students struggle to comprehend advanced academic lectures and textbooks. This language barrier often results in low test scores, reflecting a lack of comprehension of the instructional language rather than an inability to learn the subject matter itself. This disparity underscores the need for targeted language support during early educational transitions.

5.3. Psychological and Environmental Factors

The field observations highlight that learning outcomes are shaped by a complex interplay of psychological and environmental conditions:

Systemic Motivation: Many rural students exhibit low motivation to learn English because they do not see it used for communication within their immediate communities. Without a clear understanding of how English proficiency connects to future academic and career opportunities, they tend to view the language simply as a hurdle to be cleared for graduation.

The Affective Filter: In formal, rule-heavy classrooms, students often experience high levels of anxiety regarding grammatical accuracy. This high "affective filter" acts as a cognitive barrier, causing students to withdraw from classroom interaction and preventing the natural processing of language input.

6. Systemic and Pedagogical Challenges in Higher Secondary Schools

6.1. The Persistence of the Grammar-Translation Method

The primary systemic barrier to developing communicative competence in English across Eastern Rajasthan is the continued reliance on traditional teaching methodologies. Despite decades of educational policy recommendations advising a shift toward communicative language teaching, the Grammar-Translation method remains the dominant approach in rural secondary classrooms.

A typical lesson consists of the teacher reading a text aloud, translating it word-for-word into Hindi, and explicitly writing definitions and grammatical rules on the blackboard. While this method helps students memorize explicit rules and complete translation tasks, it provides no opportunity for authentic, interactive communication. As a result, students complete their secondary education with an abstract understanding of grammar rules but are unable to produce a single coherent sentence in spontaneous speech.

6.2. The Examination-Oriented Evaluation System

The structure of the educational evaluation system shapes classroom priorities. The high-stakes board examinations administered at the higher secondary level focus heavily on assessing rote memorization rather than functional language capability.

Test instruments consist primarily of predictable, text-based questions, standardized grammar alterations, and memorized essay prompts. Because school performance and teacher accountability are tied directly to examination pass rates, instructors structure their lessons to teach to the test.

Time spent on interactive communication, oral drills, or listening comprehension games is often viewed as counterproductive to achieving high test scores. This structure discourages the adoption of student-centered, skill-based pedagogies, trapping both teachers and students in a cycle of rote learning.

6.3. Infrastructure and Resource Deficiencies

The lack of basic institutional infrastructure hampers modern language instruction in government schools across the Karauli district. While urban private academies feature modern language laboratories, audio-visual equipment, and digital learning tools, rural government schools often struggle with fundamental resource constraints.

The complete absence of audio equipment means that students rarely hear standard English spoken by a variety of native or fluent voices. Instead, their sole phonetic model is the classroom teacher, whose own pronunciation may be influenced by regional dialects.

Furthermore, classrooms are frequently overcrowded, resulting in high student-to-teacher ratios that make individual speaking assessments and targeted feedback difficult to manage. Under these conditions, delivering personalized language instruction becomes a significant logistical challenge.

7. Global Macroeconomic Perspectives and SLA Literature up to 2018

7.1. Age, Critical Periods, and Late L2 Immersion

To fully understand the challenges faced by higher secondary students in Eastern Rajasthan, local findings must be examined alongside broader research in language acquisition. A key area of study in applied linguistics is the Critical Period Hypothesis, which explores how a learner's age affects their ultimate language attainment.

A major study by Hartshorne, Tenenbaum, and Pinker (2018) analyzed data from nearly two-thirds of a million English speakers to evaluate changes in language learning ability over time. Their findings confirmed that a highly receptive period for syntax acquisition extends much longer into youth than previously thought, showing a sharp decline only around 17 to 18 years of age.

[Early Childhood to Age 17-18] -----> Optimal Parameter Setting & Syntactic Receptivity

[Post-Age 18 Transition] -----> Sharp Decline in Ultimate Attainment Potential

This research has significant implications for higher secondary students (typically aged 16 to 18) in rural India. It indicates that these students are at a critical developmental turning point. While they still possess the cognitive capacity to internalize complex syntactic structures efficiently, the window for natural, native-like language acquisition is closing. If educational systems delay communicative, immersive interventions beyond this stage, these learners are far more likely to retain prominent regional accents and persistent grammatical errors throughout adulthood.

7.2. Multilingual Realities vs. Monolingual Curricula

A persistent challenge in Indian language education is the structural gap between the multilingual realities of the students and the monolingual focus of school curricula. While educational policies often assume a uniform learning environment, classroom observations show that multilingualism is the norm.

Research by Lightfoot et al. (2021) examined language practices in Indian school settings, revealing that teachers routinely code-switch and use regional languages to clarify complex English concepts. However, formal examinations and textbooks rarely account for this linguistic fluidity, demanding strict adherence to a standard monolingual format.

This mismatch creates a significant barrier for rural students. While their natural cognitive processing relies on code-switching between regional dialects and Hindi, the school system treats this integration as an error rather than a functional learning strategy. This disconnect makes it difficult for students to bridge the gap between their native linguistic repertoire and the target language.

7.3. Socio-Economic Status as a Structural Factor in Policy

Socio-economic factors heavily shape the outcomes of language education policy. A comprehensive report by the World Bank (2019) on Language of Instruction (LoI) policies highlighted that requiring students to learn in a language they do not speak or understand at home can lead to systemic educational disadvantages.

This challenge is particularly acute for children from households in the bottom 40 percent of the socio-economic distribution. These students are more likely to attend under-resourced schools with inappropriate language policies and lack the family resources needed to balance these institutional shortcomings.

In Eastern Rajasthan, this structural divide is clearly visible. Wealthier urban families can smooth over pedagogical gaps through private tutoring, digital learning applications, and books. For underprivileged students in regions like Karauli, however, the under-resourced government school represents the absolute limit of their English language exposure. When these schools fail to provide high-quality, communicative instruction, students face long-term academic and economic marginalization.

8. Recommendations and Strategic Reforms

To address the language learning difficulties faced by higher secondary students in Eastern Rajasthan, a coordinated effort is required to reform pedagogy, evaluation methods, and instructional infrastructure:

8.1. Implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Schools must transition away from teacher-centered, rules-focused grammar instruction and adopt student-centered Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches. Classroom activities should be redesigned around tasks that require students to use English to communicate real meaning. Teachers can implement structured role-plays, collaborative problem-solving tasks, and interactive discussions based on topics relevant to rural life.

By shifting the focus of the classroom from perfect grammatical form to successful communication, schools can lower students' performance anxiety and encourage active target language production.

8.2. Integrating Technology-Mediated Feedback and Formative Assessment

To address infrastructure gaps and a shortage of specialized language instructors, schools should leverage accessible digital tools. Research in applied linguistics has demonstrated that technology-mediated corrective feedback can significantly improve student writing accuracy and reduce error rates.

Automated Writing Correction: Implementing simple, offline automated evaluation software allows students to receive immediate feedback on sentence structure and orthography, reducing the administrative burden on teachers.

Audio-Visual Listening Interventions: Since students often lack exposure to standard spoken English, classrooms should integrate low-cost, mobile-powered audio tools. Regular use of basic pronunciation programs, phoneme discrimination games, and recorded stories can help students build essential listening comprehension and sound discrimination skills.

8.3. Overhauling Evaluation and Examination Patterns

Pedagogical practices are closely tied to evaluation structures; therefore, high-stakes board examinations must be reformed to measure functional language use. Written exams should reduce their reliance on memorized text content and expand sections dedicated to unseen reading comprehension, functional vocabulary, and practical writing tasks.

Additionally, formal oral and listening examinations must be structurally integrated into the final grading criteria. When a student's final marks depend partly on their ability to understand spoken instructions and articulate ideas clearly, schools and teachers will naturally prioritize communicative proficiency over rote memorization.

8.4. Designing Contextualized, Inclusive Learning Materials

The English curriculum should be revised to reflect the cultural and socio-geographic realities of rural learners. Rather than relying on texts set in unfamiliar urban or foreign contexts, reading materials should incorporate stories, historical accounts, and figures relevant to the Indian context.

This approach ensures that students do not face a simultaneous cultural and linguistic barrier when reading. By anchoring lessons in familiar realities, educational systems can boost student motivation and help learners focus on processing the linguistic structures of the target language.

9. Conclusion

The difficulties higher secondary students in Eastern Rajasthan face when learning English are not the result of an inability to learn; rather, they reflect systemic gaps in infrastructure, rigid pedagogical approaches, and socio-economic divides. As empirical research up to 2018 demonstrates, these students are at a critical stage where effective instruction can still lead to substantial language gains before the cognitive window for optimal syntax acquisition narrows.

Currently, the widespread reliance on the Grammar-Translation method, combined with an examination system that prioritizes rote memorization, limits students to an abstract understanding of grammar rules, leaving them unable to use the language effectively in real-world situations.

Addressing these challenges requires a structural shift toward learner-centered, communicative teaching practices, supported by accessible digital feedback systems and contextualized curricula. Reforming evaluation systems to measure actual listening and speaking proficiency can help ensure that classrooms prioritize functional communication.

By providing targeted institutional support and expanding access to high-quality language environments in rural districts like Karauli, the educational system can help narrow the urban-rural divide. This ensures that language proficiency serves as a pathway to social mobility and economic opportunity for all youth, rather than a barrier to advancement.

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