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## Voices from the Classroom: Exploring Challenges in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Delhi's Municipal Primary Schools- A Teachers' Perspective.

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### ABSTRACT

India's colonial past has made English a second language. English is also a language of official use in India. With the increasing use of English as a global language and language of technology, almost all the schools in India teach English alongside various native languages. Since English is not a native language in India, teaching it in schools, especially primary schools, is a very challenging task. Most students in these schools have little to no exposure to English at home. Lack of infrastructural facilities, first-generation learners, poverty of parents, etc., further make this process more complex and challenging. The present study focused on exploring the pedagogical challenges faced by teachers teaching English as a second language in municipal primary schools of Delhi. The study was conducted with 84 teachers teaching English in primary schools of the municipal corporation. Data was collected using a self-developed questionnaire focusing on various pedagogical aspects of English language teaching in Indian classrooms. The study reveals that teaching English language in municipal corporation schools is a complex and challenging task. Teachers face numerous challenges, including limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, lack of student interest, and language barriers. Despite these challenges, teachers use innovative teaching strategies to engage students and promote learning. The study highlighted the need for comprehensive and frequent training, adequate

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resources, and support to address the challenges faced by s teachers in teaching English language.

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**“The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”**

**Ludwing Wittgenstein**

English is a global language. It is also a language of technology. With advancements in technology in every sphere of life, our dependence on English has grown exponentially. In the modern educational landscape, English plays a pivotal role. India is a multilingual and multicultural country with over twenty-two official languages recognised by the Indian constitution. It has a long and complex history of the English language associated with its colonial past. Long back in Indian history, Britishers introduced English as a language of trade and commerce. But soon, Britishers started teaching English in schools. With the implementation of Macaulay's minutes between 1835 and 1837, English became the medium of instruction in all government schools and colleges. After independence, English continued to be a medium of instruction in many government and private schools.

In the modern era, English is not only a useful skill to be used in various aspects of day-to-day life but also a pathway to a better life. It is considered as a status symbol and believed to have transformative powers. With the increase in the use of English in day-to-day life, more and more people all over the world are interested in learning English. In a multilingual country like India, English as a language occupies an important place. In most of the municipal corporation schools of Delhi, English is introduced as a second language, and Hindi occupies the place of the first language. But being the capital city of the country, people from all over India reside in Delhi. As municipal corporation schools are the primary schools that cater to the needs of below-socioeconomic families who mainly live in slums and work as labourers in different sectors, in most cases, Hindi is not their mother tongue. In such cases, children studying in Municipal Corporation schools of Delhi usually struggle with three languages at a time. In such cases, when English is not their mother tongue and they hardly get any exposure to English in their environment, learning English as a language is a big challenge for them as well as for the teachers teaching in these schools.

Teaching English to students studying in municipal corporation schools presents significant challenges. Lack of adequate training and professional development opportunities limit teachers' proficiency in English and their teaching methodologies( Sharma;2020). Large class size and diverse student backgrounds make it difficult to cater to individual learning needs (Gupta; 2021). Many schools lack in essential teaching materials such as textbooks and visual aids (Singh;2023), infrastructure in schools is



often inadequate (Mehta; 2022). Insufficient use of technology (V.R.V.,Vardhanapu & Dalala; 2023); and lack of appropriate training of teachers in the field of technology (Nkengbeza et al.; 2022) further complicates the situation. Many teachers rely on traditional rote learning methods, which do not foster communicative competence in students (Rani; 2021). Limited exposure to English outside the classroom leads to lack of confidence among students, which in turn affects their participation and engagement levels (Verma;2022). Teachers employ conventional assessment methods such as written test, which do not assess students' language proficiency accurately (Bhatia; 2024). Formative assessment techniques like peer assessment and self-evaluation are under utilized by teachers (Singh and Gupta; 2023). Teachers in rural areas face unique challenges, including a lack of competent and trained English teachers; insufficient facilities; and limited time (Risnawati et al. 2022). In addition to this, minimum parental involvement in students' learning along with the low value attached to education by rural parents resulted in low enrolment and a high dropout rate, which then compromised the quality of learning (Shikalepo; 2020, Haufiku; 2022). Students in government schools often struggle with pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension (Shan & Abdul Aziz, 2022). Use of effective teaching techniques and strategies to engage students and promote language learning are also a few other challenges teachers encounter in English language classrooms (Deocampo; 2020). Teachers teaching English in Indian school classrooms struggle with creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment, managing classroom behaviour, and assessing students' progress.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023 emphasise learner-centered and communicative approaches to teaching English. Implementing these methods without adequate support, resources, and training is a challenge. The Indian government has launched the NIPUN (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) Bharat mission to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary schools by 2026-27. According to World Bank's Learning Poverty Index 55% of school-going children can't read and understand a short, age-appropriate text by class 5. This situation is even worse in a few schools. Most of the students studying in primary school can't read or write short sentences in Hindi and forget about English. The investigator herself has observed the status of English in MC primary schools. During Mission Buniyad or NIPUN Bharat Mission (FLN), the focus is more on the development of basic competencies of students in the Hindi language. Almost no stress is given to make students proficient in using basic competencies of English. This again poses a significant challenge for English language teachers to develop basic competencies in English among students.



Hence, it can be inferred that teaching a foreign language has some potential challenges. Inevitably, these challenges should be uncovered to find solutions for the improvement of the situation. It is the basic duty of researchers working in the field of English language teaching to observe, find, identify, and determine these challenges. With this purpose in mind, this study seeks to delve into some of the major current challenges in teaching English in MC primary schools in Delhi. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the ground realities of MC primary schools and inform policymakers about the kind of support primary teachers require to teach English effectively in MC schools.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To identify the key challenges faced by teachers in English Language Teaching (ELT) in municipal corporation schools.
- To evaluate the adequacy of resources and support for English language teaching in municipal corporation schools.
- To examine the various teaching strategies and methods used by teachers to overcome these challenges.
- To understand the impact of language barriers on English language teaching in municipal corporation schools.
- To evaluate students' engagement and assessment in English language classrooms.

### **Research Questions**

- What are the key challenges faced by teachers in teaching English as a second language in municipal corporation schools?
- How adequate are the resources and support provided for English language teaching in MC primary schools?
- What are the teaching strategies and methods employed by teachers for teaching English language?
- How do language barriers such as limited exposure to English impact English language teaching in municipal corporation schools?
- What is the status of students' engagement and assessment in English language classrooms?



## **Methodology**

The survey method was used to study the challenges faced by primary school teachers in teaching English as a second language.

## **Tool Used**

For this study, the investigator used a self-developed questionnaire consisting of 32 multiple-choice questions (MCQs). The questionnaire was divided into five parts. Each part contained 6-7 questions addressing the key challenges faced by teachers, the adequacy of resources and support, various teaching strategies and methods used by teachers, the impact of language barriers, students' engagement and assessment in English language classrooms.

## **Development of Tool**

Based on the literature available in the field, various pedagogical challenges faced by teachers while teaching English as a second language were identified by the investigator. Based on identified challenges, various objective types questions were framed. These questions were further divided into five parts; each part consisted of 8 to 10 statements.

The questionnaire was reviewed by six experts in the field to ensure content validity. Based on suggestions, necessary changes were made. The final form of the questionnaire thus developed consists of 32 multiple-choice questions.

## **Sample**

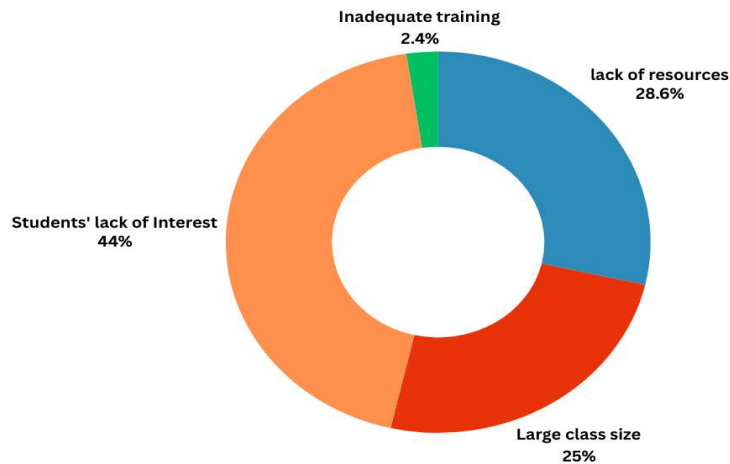
The sample of the present study comprises of 84 primary teachers (selected randomly) teaching English in municipal corporation schools of Delhi.

## **Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

Objective-wise analysis and interpretation of data has been done.

### **Objective 1: Key challenges faced by teachers in English Language Teaching (ELT) in primary schools.**

As per the data revealed by the study, the key challenges faced by municipal cooperation school teachers in teaching the English language are as follows:



**fig. 1 Challenges faced by Primary Teachers in Teaching English**

- Figure-1 revealed that the key challenges faced by primary teachers teaching English as a second language in Delhi's municipal corporation schools include students' lack of interest (44%), lack of resources (28.6%), and large class size (25%). Further, teachers identified lack of student engagement (47.6%) and insufficient teaching material (32.1%) are the most significant barriers to effective English language instruction in their classrooms.
- The study also highlights that the lack of relevance of the English language in students' lives (51.2%) is the primary reason for students' lack of interest in learning English. Additionally, the diverse proficiency level of students (56%) and lack of standardised tests (16.7%) create the biggest challenge in assessing students' English proficiency.
- Lack of student practice (39.3%) and complexity of grammar rules (36.9%) make it difficult for students to learn grammar. Lack of proficiency in grammar and syntax formation (35.7%) and inappropriate vocabulary (27.4%) pose significant challenges in teaching writing skills.
- Limited access to multimedia resources by both students and teachers (36.9%) further complicates the situation. Students' unfamiliarity with multimedia (42.9%) restricts the use of technology in teaching English.

Overall, the study suggests that teachers in MC primary schools of Delhi face several challenges, including students' lack of interest, lack of practice by students, and limited access to technology by students and teachers. Students do not find any relevance in learning English in their day-to-day life. All these findings are related to each other. As students don't find relevance of English in their lives, they are



not interested in learning this language and hardly practice it or try to put any effort in learning it. Lack of practice makes learning grammar rules and vocabulary difficult for them. Large pupil-teacher ratio refrain teachers to provide individualised attention and engage them effectively. Students' and teachers' limited access to resources and multimedia further makes the situation complicated and more challenging.

**Objective 2: Resources and support available for English Language Teaching (ELT) in primary schools.**

Data revealed a concerning situation regarding resources and support available for English language teaching in primary schools.

- It was found that a significant percentage of the teachers (67.9%) teaching English in municipal corporation schools of Delhi attended in-service professional development training only once a year and 10.7 percent have never attended any in-service training. This is a concerning finding, as in-service training updates teachers with the latest methodologies, technologies, and best practices in teaching. Sharma (2020) also highlighted that the lack of adequate training and professional development opportunities limits teachers' proficiency in English and their teaching methodologies. The fact that a significant percentage of teachers have never received any in-service training is alarming, as it highlights a lack of opportunities for professional development.
- Lack of resources is also a major issue, with only 41.7% of teachers finding the availability of English teaching resources to be 'quite good' in their school, and the majority (52.4%) believed it to be only 'fair.'. This suggests that there is a shortage of teaching-learning resources in MC primary schools of Delhi. This finding aligns with findings of Singh; 2023 who also finds that many schools in India lack in essential teaching materials such as textbooks and visual aids. Lack of resources itself can also be a challenge for teaching English in these schools.

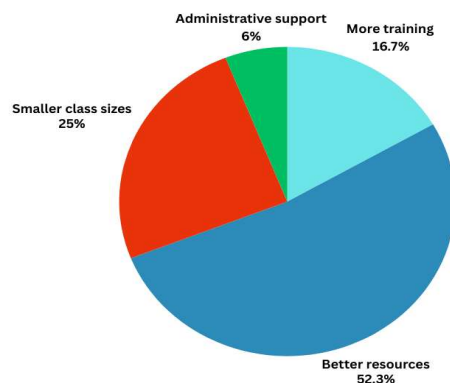


Fig.2- Support Required by Primary Teachers for Teaching English



- Figure-2 show that teachers feel that they need better resources (52.3%) and training (16.7%) the most to improve their English teaching. This reveals that teachers are aware of a lacuna in their knowledge and are seeking support to improve their teaching practice.
- A significant percentage of teachers (25%) also believed that reducing class size would improve their ability to teach English effectively. This is not surprising, as overcrowded classrooms make individual attention and support difficult (Gupta; 2021).

Overall, the study suggests that there is a significant gap in the resources and support available in municipal corporation schools. The finding that most of the teachers receive in-service training only once a year further strengthens this issue, as the lack of teaching-learning resources can be easily overcome by teachers through need-based, comprehensive, and frequent training. This finding is also aligns with NEP, 2020 which proposes at least 50 hours of continuous professional development for teachers every year.

Further, the lack of resources is also related to overcrowded classrooms. As the classrooms in MC primary schools are overcrowded, all the resources and support material provided by the government may remain insufficient, exacerbating the problem of inadequate resources.

### **Objective 3: Teaching Strategies and Methods Used by Teachers to Overcome Challenges.**

The data provide a detailed insight into teaching strategies used by primary teachers to engage students and promote learning.

- Most of the teachers (59.5%) used group activities to ensure the participation of all students. This shows that teachers are aware of the importance of collaborative learning and are also using it as a tool to teach students in overcrowded classrooms effectively and efficiently.
- A significant percentage of teachers (47.6%) use technology to support their teaching. This indicates that these primary teachers have recognised the potential of technology to enhance students learning and reduce the impact of overcrowded classrooms.
- The majority of teachers (61.9%) try to relate lessons to students' daily lives. This suggests that teachers are aware of contextualised learning to make it more relevant and meaningful for students.

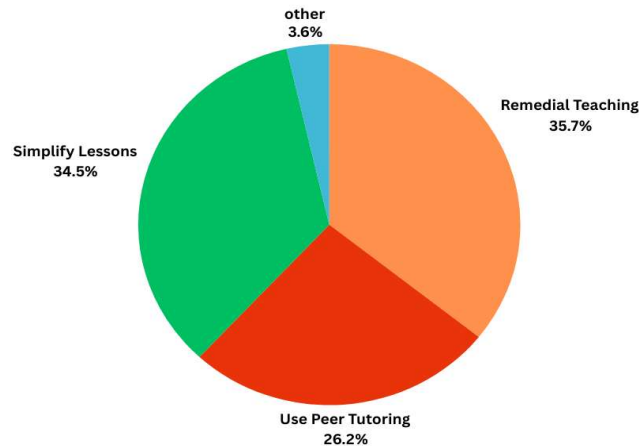


Fig. 3 Strategies used by Teachers for students struggling with the English language

- Figure-3 shows that teachers provide extra help to students struggling with the English language through remedial teaching (35.7%), simplifying their lessons (34.5%), and using peer tutoring (26.2%). This means that the teachers are aware of the diverse needs of their learners and are making every possible effort to provide targeted support.
- The majority of teachers use games and activities (59.5%) and group discussions (46.4%) to enhance their students' listening and speaking skills. This shows that teachers are aware of experiential learning and try to engage students in meaningful conversations and discussions.
- Teachers incorporate real-life examples (47.6%) and multimedia resources, such as videos (64.3%) to contextualise students' learning. This also suggests that teachers are recognising the importance of real-life examples and multimedia in making learning relevant and engaging for primary students.

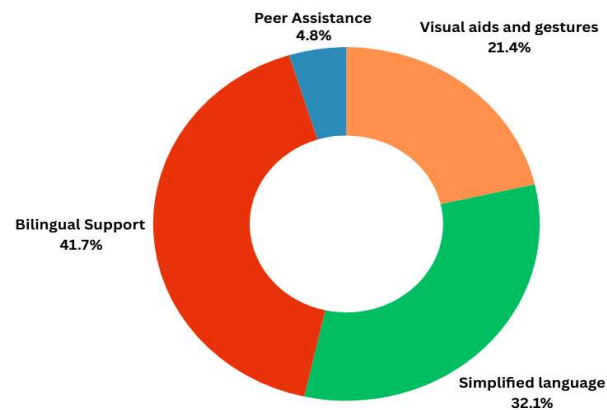
Overall, findings suggest that teachers are using a range of strategies to engage students and promote learning. They are working hard despite the challenges posed by overcrowded classrooms. They are recognising the importance of collaborative learning, technology, and real-life experiences in making learning relevant for students. They provide targeted support and use interactive games and activities to make learning more fun and enjoyable.

#### **Objective 4: Impact of Language Barriers on English Language Teaching in Primary Schools.**

The present study reveals that teachers encounter language barriers in teaching English to students with limited language proficiency.



- The study highlights that teachers (45.2%) often encounter difficulties in teaching English due to students' limited proficiency in the language. This suggests that the language barrier is a significant challenge faced by teachers teaching English in MC primary schools.
- As English is not even a second language for most of the students, language barriers significantly (32.1%) and moderately (44%) affect students' participation and engagement in English lessons. This indicates that students who are not proficient in English struggle to participate in English lessons.
- Teachers (59.5%) find it most challenging to maintain students' interest in the classroom. This means even after using a variety of teaching strategies and methods, teachers still struggle to keep students engaged and motivated in English lessons.



**Fig.4- Strategies Used by Teachers to Overcome Language Barriers**

- Figure 4 shows that teachers use various strategies to overcome language barriers which include- bilingual support (41.7%), simplified language (32.1%), visual aids and gestures (21.4%), and peer assistance (4.8%).
- They use regular assessments (29.8%), observations, and feedback (58.3%) to assess the impact of language barriers on students' academic performance.

Overall, the study highlights that the language barrier is a significant challenge faced by teachers in teaching English to students with limited proficiency. Language barriers negatively affect students' participation in the classroom. Teachers use innovative strategies to overcome language barriers and engage students in English lessons.

**Objective 5: Students' Engagement and Assessment in the English Language Classroom.**

The study provides a detailed insight into practices used by teachers in English language classrooms.

- It was found that the majority of the teachers (77.4%) are confident in their ability to teach English language, indicating a high level of self-efficacy among teachers.
- Teachers assess their students' performance in English language regularly, with 59.5% assessing weekly, 32.1% monthly, and 8.3% quarterly. This shows that teachers prioritize continuous evaluation of their students' progress.

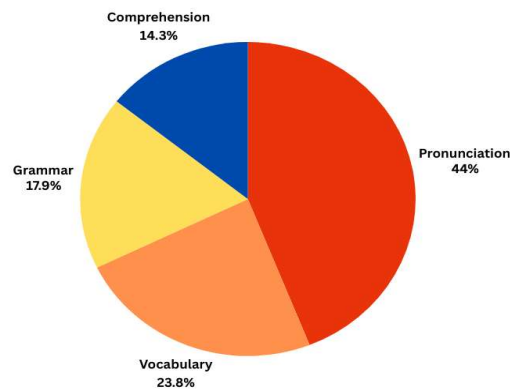


Fig.5- challenges students face in learning English language

- Figure-5 revealed that the most common challenges students face in learning the English language are pronunciation (44%), vocabulary (23.8%), grammar (17.9%), and comprehension (14.3%). This indicates that teachers are attentive of students' learning need and are likely tailoring their teaching methods to address these issues.
- Teachers believe that the most effective techniques in improving students' English language skills are self-assessment (35.7%), oral feedback (31%), written feedback (21.4%), and peer feedback (11.9%).
- Teachers perceived that students' confidence (46.4%), their enthusiasm for learning (33.3%), and their progress (17.9%) are the most rewarding aspects of teaching English for them.

Overall, findings revealed that teachers are confident in their ability to teach the English language, indicating a high level of self-efficacy among teachers. They use a range of feedback strategies to support students' learning and have identified several challenges that students face in learning English. They find it rewarding to see students becoming more confident, enthusiastic, and proficient in the English language.



**Conclusion:** The study highlights the complex and challenging nature of teaching English in Delhi's Municipal Corporation schools. Teachers face numerous challenges, including students' lack of interest, limited access to technology, inadequate resources, and overcrowded classrooms. Despite these many challenges, teachers use a wide range of strategies to provide targeted support and make learning more fun and enjoyable for learners. However, the language barrier remains a significant challenge affecting students' participation negatively in classroom activities. Teachers use a range of feedback strategies to support students' learning and to identify the challenges that students face in learning English. Teachers find it rewarding to see students become confident, enthusiastic, and proficient learners.

### Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, here are a few suggestions for addressing the challenges faced by teachers teaching the English language in municipal corporation schools of Delhi.

**1. Develop a curriculum that is more relevant to students' need:** Teachers and policymakers should collaborate to make the English language curriculum more relevant for young learners who are studying English as a second or third language. This can be achieved by:

- **Integrating real-life contexts**—Students in municipal corporation schools often fail to see relevance of learning English in their daily lives. Teachers need to integrate English with students' daily lives. This approach can make learning more relevant, engaging, and effective by enabling students to consider the practical aspects of language (Cummins, 2019).
- **Following a functional approach to teach English-** teachers need to highlight the importance of English to students in their day-to-day activities. Teachers should introduce functional aspects of language rather than just focusing on academic aspects which usually remain limited to textbooks and completion of syllabus.
- **Focusing equally on the development of four basic skills of a language:** The English language curriculum needs to focus on development of four basic skills of language, i.e., L (listening), S (speaking), R (reading), and W (writing) equally. It has been observed that teaching in English classrooms focuses more on reading and writing than on listening and speaking. Learning any language always follows an order of LSRW. As teachers put more focus on reading and writing and almost ignore listening and speaking, English remains an alien language for students with little or no relevance at all. Exposure to listening and speaking activities along with reading and writing should be a mandatory part of the curriculum.



- **English Language Lab**—Just like science labs in many schools for hands-on practice of science concepts, English language labs must be developed in each school to give exposure to English language to students. English labs would not only provide exposure to various aspects of language but also enable learners to experiment with language and hence would increase its relevance for students.

1. **Strengthen both in-service and pre-service teachers' training**—training enhances teachers' skills by updating their knowledge with the latest advancements in the field. Frequent, need-based training should be provided to teachers, focusing on—

- **English language pedagogy**—teachers training needs to provide specialized training in teaching English as a second language to first-generation learners with no exposure to English as a language in their immediate surroundings. Specialized techniques for teaching pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary building, or any other hard sport identified by teachers should be the focus of training. This training may also aim to promote peer learning and collaboration among teachers by sharing their best practices and innovative strategies.
- **Integration of technology in teaching**—along with English language pedagogy teacher training should equip teachers in the use and integration of technology in their language classroom. Knowledge of various digital platforms, AI tools, the latest advancements in technology, and how to use these resources ethically and judiciously should be the part of training.
- **Strategies for handling overcrowded classrooms**—various strategies to handle overcrowded classrooms like mentoring, group work, collaboration, etc. should be part of the teachers training to equip them to handle practical situations effectively and smartly.
- **Blended mode of training**—teachers' training should be provided in blended mode (online and offline) and should provide autonomy to teachers to choose programs or activities according to their interests, needs, and conveyance (NCERT, 2022).

1. **Improve resource allocation**— government needs to improve resource allocation for teaching of the English language in primary schools to make it more effective and less challenging for teachers as well as students. This could be done by

- **Improved classroom infrastructure**—Infrastructure supporting technology integration and a large pupil-teacher ratio should be developed in each school.



- **Adequate teaching materials:** government needs to provide adequate learning materials, including textbooks, storybooks, some stationery for conducting activities, etc., in every classroom.
- **Multimedia resources**—multimedia resources in the form of a projector, smart board, and language learning apps—should be provided to teachers.

1. **Address language barrier**—teachers need to address the language barrier in English language classrooms. It could be done by

- **Multilingual Teaching Approach**—incorporating students' native languages and cultures into English lessons can make English language learning more relevant and engaging for students. The use of a native language can bridge the gap, especially in the initial stages.
- **Language support programs and culturally responsive teaching:** Teachers can use language support programs, such as English language clubs or tutoring programs, to provide additional support to students who are struggling with English.

1. **Community and parental involvement**—parents and the community need to be involved in students learning by

- **Using parents as resources-** educated parents or community members from nearby areas could use a resource by asking them to volunteer to conduct various language learning activities, especially in overcrowded classrooms. Moreover, parents and community members can also help in providing resources hence, meeting the challenge of scarcity of resources.
- **Awareness campaign**—teachers with community members can spread awareness among first-generation students' parents about the need and importance of the English language and hence, can motivate them to encourage their children to learn the English language.
- **Home-based Kits**—A few home-based kits can be developed by experts in the form of a few picture books, audio, video, etc., that can be used by parents to support the English language learning of their children at home.

1. **Monitoring and Evaluation process**—a sound proof monitoring system to track progress and identify challenges needs to be developed by

- **Using standardized tests-** Standardized tests for diagnosing the hard sports of students should be developed by experts and made available to teachers for their regular use.



- **Feedback mechanism:** A system of feedback by teachers on curriculum, textbooks, activities, and policy decisions should be developed by the government.

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