

Challenges of Teaching English in Rural Kazakhstan Schools

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Annotation

This paper explores the obstacles faced in teaching English at rural schools in Kazakhstan, emphasizing a variety of factors that diminish the effectiveness of language education. It identifies primary issues such as the lack of qualified instructors, insufficient resources, outdated facilities, and the challenge of accommodating the diverse language proficiency levels among students in the same classroom. The paper also examines cultural and societal influences, particularly the significance of local language and culture in rural settings, which may diminish students' enthusiasm for learning English. Several recommendations are proposed to address these challenges, including organizing specialized training programs for teachers, enhancing internet and technological resources, engaging parents effectively, and adapting teaching approaches to reflect local cultural contexts. The paper underscores the necessity of advancing English language education in rural regions for the future growth of Kazakhstan and the international competitiveness of its

students.

Keywords: teaching English, rural schools, Kazakhstan, teacher shortage, language proficiency, resources, cultural barriers, student motivation, internet access, local culture

Introduction

Currently, proficiency in English in Kazakhstan unlocks opportunities for global engagement, international knowledge sharing, and economic competitiveness. As the primary language of global communication, science, technology, and business, English language education holds significant importance within the country's educational system. The ability for the new generation to achieve fluency in English is crucial for the nation's future. However, disparities between urban and rural areas complicate this endeavor. Urban education systems are generally more developed, featuring a greater number of teachers, resources, and teaching materials. In contrast, rural areas continue to face significant challenges. Students in rural schools often possess a weaker command of English than their urban counterparts, primarily due to a lack of qualified instructors and accessible educational materials.

Teaching English in rural contexts presents unique difficulties. The scarcity of teachers, low student motivation, and resource limitations exacerbate the challenges. Furthermore, perspectives toward learning English can differ in these areas, as many students and their parents may not fully recognize the language's importance, given its minimal use in everyday life.

Shortage of teachers. A major challenge is the insufficient number of English language teachers in rural schools compared to urban institutions. Despite a high demand for educators in rural settings, attracting them remains difficult due to the social and economic conditions prevalent in these areas, including inadequate school infrastructure and lower living standards. Issues related to providing competitive salaries and social benefits for rural teachers further compound this problem. Consequently, the number of English teachers in rural schools is significantly lower than in urban schools, posing substantial

obstacles to delivering quality education. Teachers often find themselves instructing multiple subjects, which limits the time available for each subject area.

The challenge of not being able to divide classes with fewer than 24 students into smaller groups. Rural schools often lack the flexibility to divide classes with fewer than 24 students into smaller groups. This inflexibility poses a considerable challenge, as students exhibit varying language proficiency levels. A single class may include both students with advanced language skills and those who are just beginning to learn English, compelling teachers to present the same material to all. This approach diminishes the learning experience and hampers the progress of some students. Teaching a diverse group of 20 students with different proficiency levels requires significant effort. Uniform tasks hinder teachers from addressing individual learning needs, as each student's pace and comprehension vary. Grouping students by proficiency levels would enable tailored instruction and foster a more effective and engaging learning atmosphere.

Deteriorating school conditions. Another critical issue in rural education is the poor state of school facilities. Many rural schools occupy aging buildings that have not undergone renovation for years. Such environments hinder the creation of a conducive atmosphere for modern education. Poor heating, inadequate water and electrical systems, and substandard sanitation create further complications. Outdated facilities also restrict the use of contemporary technological tools, as schools often lack computers, multimedia devices, and other educational technologies. Consequently, the limited availability of electronic resources and online platforms—essential for teaching English—negatively impacts students' learning experiences. Additionally, cramped classrooms can create uncomfortable learning conditions, further detracting from the educational process. It is essential to enhance school infrastructure to meet modern educational standards.

Resource limitations. The scarcity or poor quality of textbooks and learning materials is another significant challenge in rural schools. In the contemporary educational landscape, the effectiveness of English language teaching is

closely linked to the quality and relevance of learning materials. However, many rural schools face inaccessibility to updated and engaging educational resources, leading to a reliance on outdated and inferior materials that significantly diminish the effectiveness of English instruction. Moreover, information technology and internet connectivity are often limited in these schools, making it difficult to utilize online platforms and interactive tools, which are vital for effective education. The absence of technical resources and internet access hampers students' engagement with educational materials.

Cultural priorities. The lack of interest in learning English is not solely a student issue; it reflects broader cultural tendencies that prioritize native languages and cultural heritage. In many rural areas of Kazakhstan, the Kazakh language and national culture are highly valued. For residents, maintaining ties to their native language and culture is crucial, and learning English may not align with these values, leading to diminished student interest. This sentiment is particularly prominent in rural settings where the advantages of international connections and English proficiency are not readily apparent. Families often express skepticism about the necessity of English, considering their local language and culture to be of greater importance.

Family and societal influences. The attitudes of families and the community toward English also significantly shape students' motivation. Many rural parents exhibit limited interest in their children's English education, viewing it as unnecessary for future career opportunities. They tend to prioritize other subjects over English, believing that it holds little relevance in their children's futures. Conversely, in urban areas, English is often viewed as an essential skill for global communication and career advancement. In rural communities, however, English is frequently seen as relevant only for tourism or foreign engagement. Therefore, shifting societal perceptions regarding the importance of learning English is vital for fostering motivation among students.

Language learning barriers. Students frequently encounter challenges related to grammar and vocabulary acquisition. The grammatical structures and rules of English can differ significantly from those of their native language (Kazakh), complicating correct usage. Many learners face difficulties with

vocabulary expansion and applying grammatical rules accurately, particularly concerning sentence structure and tense usage. These obstacles are prevalent in the English learning process.

Variability in student proficiency levels. In rural schools, the presence of students with varying proficiency levels within the same class poses a considerable challenge for teachers. Each student's level of English proficiency differs, complicating the teacher's ability to tailor instruction to individual needs. Classes may contain both students who are proficient in English and those who are just beginning their studies. This situation complicates equitable teaching practices, as lower-level students require additional support while higher-level students seek more challenging tasks. It is challenging for teachers to address the diverse needs of all students simultaneously, and methods such as Lesson Study, which could help, are not widely implemented in rural schools.

Lack of individualized instruction. The absence of individualized teaching methods remains a pressing concern. Each student possesses unique characteristics and learns at a different pace, necessitating instructional approaches that cater to their specific needs. However, in rural schools, the limited number of teachers and the high student-to-teacher ratio often hinder the implementation of personalized instruction. This situation restricts the opportunity to provide tailored support that takes into account each student's individual learning needs. Individualized teaching strategies, such as pacing instruction to match students' abilities or designing tasks based on their interests, are not sufficiently utilized in rural schools. Additionally, adapting teaching approaches to accommodate various learning styles and language proficiencies presents significant challenges.

Solutions and suggestions. To enhance the quality of English instruction in rural schools, it is essential to establish specialized training programs and courses for teachers. These programs should focus on modern methodologies, innovative teaching approaches, and effective techniques for English education. Such initiatives would enable educators to refine their skills and adopt creative strategies in their teaching practices. Moreover, providing

opportunities for teachers to participate in international training programs and conferences aimed at improving language and cultural literacy would further enhance their professional development. As teachers' qualifications and motivation rise, their capacity to deliver quality education will also improve. Enhancing internet access and technical resources in rural schools can substantially expand students' English learning opportunities. Making educational materials available in digital formats would increase accessibility and convenience for students. By gaining access to e-books and online platforms, students could engage with supplementary resources both at home and in school. Additionally, creating dedicated online platforms with interactive tasks, videos, exercises, and assessments would facilitate language learning at an individualized pace. Engaging parents actively is also crucial. It is necessary to communicate the importance of English to parents and illustrate its significance for their children's future professional and personal development. Providing concrete examples of the benefits of learning English would encourage parents to support their children's education at home. Schools should organize meetings and seminars to inform parents about the vital role of English and ways they can contribute to their children's learning journey.

Organizing public activities and events is essential for increasing students' motivation to learn English. Competitions, exhibitions, debates, theatrical performances, and other cultural events conducted in English can heighten students' interest in the language. Furthermore, social and cultural activities centered around English will motivate students to engage more deeply with the language and enhance their academic performance. Teaching methods for English should be updated to reflect local cultural contexts. Incorporating materials and tasks related to each student's native culture and traditions will make the learning experience both engaging and effective. For example, when teaching English in rural settings, integrating tasks that explore intercultural topics while respecting local customs and linguistic traditions can enhance student engagement. Students are more likely to resonate with learning English when it connects to familiar cultural elements, making the process more enjoyable and effective while upholding cultural continuity. This approach not only boosts student interest but also strengthens the overall learning

experience.

Conclusion. Teaching English in rural schools currently faces numerous significant challenges, including teacher shortages, resource inadequacies, limited internet and technical support, and disparities in students' language proficiency levels. Additionally, low motivation to learn English and cultural barriers further complicate the educational landscape. These obstacles hinder students' ability to master the language and achieve international competitiveness. However, targeted measures and suggestions can effectively address these challenges. Enhancing teachers' professional development, improving internet and technical resources, engaging parents actively, and fostering interest in the language through public events are all viable strategies to overcome these issues. Furthermore, updating teaching methodologies to consider local cultural contexts will facilitate more engaging and effective English learning experiences for students. The future of English education is promising, as it serves not only as a tool for international communication but also plays a critical role in the advancement of the country's education system and economy. Students who achieve proficiency in English will be well-positioned to navigate the global educational landscape, access new information and technologies, and become competitive in the job market. Efforts to improve English language education are crucial, as it represents a key factor in shaping Kazakhstan's future and its standing on the global stage. Consequently, it is imperative to invest all necessary resources in enhancing the quality of English language education in rural schools.

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