



## Contours Of English Pedagogy

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# Contours of English Pedagogy: An Empirical Investigation Into Curriculum, Classroom Practices, Learner Challenges, and Stakeholder Perspectives Influencing English Language Learning Across Schools in Jammu and Kashmir

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**Abstract-** English language education in India functions as both an academic prerequisite and a powerful instrument of socioeconomic advancement. This study undertakes an empirical exploration of teaching and learning practices in ten schools across Jammu and Kashmir, employing a mixed-methods framework that integrates surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. The findings reveal that English is profoundly valued by students, teachers, and parents; however, pedagogical implementation is beset by persistent challenges. These include an over-reliance on rote-based instruction, limited exposure to authentic conversational practice, intense social pressures to perform flawlessly, and recurrent learner difficulties such as grammatical inaccuracy, pronunciation impediments, and deficient fluency. The study underscores the imperative of communicative pedagogy, learner-centered approaches, and supportive classroom ecologies to mitigate both affective and structural barriers. It further argues that fostering English proficiency must be delicately balanced with respect for local languages and cultural identity, thereby facilitating holistic linguistic development in an increasingly interconnected world.

**Keywords:** English education, pedagogical practices, learner challenges, communicative competence, social pressure, Jammu and Kashmir, curriculum, language acquisition.

## I. Introduction

English has attained a pivotal status in India, serving simultaneously as a medium of instruction and as a conduit for socioeconomic mobility (National Council of Educational Research and Training [NCERT], 2017; Government of India, 2020). Beyond its academic function, it is associated with cultural capital, global engagement, and cognitive sophistication. In Jammu and Kashmir—an ethnolinguistically diverse and politically sensitive region—English education is both aspirational and instrumental, bridging local schooling systems with national and international opportunities (Agnihotri & Khanna, 1994).

Despite its prominence, the actualization of English pedagogy remains inconsistent. Students frequently experience anxiety, minimal exposure to genuine communication, and a rigidly examination-oriented culture, while teachers grapple with overcrowded classrooms and limited resources (Kumar, 2005). Parental expectations further amplify this pressure, often emphasizing impeccably correct performance. This study investigates how English is taught, learned, and perceived in ten selected schools,



focusing on curriculum design, classroom practices, social pressures, learner obstacles, and multifaceted stakeholder perspectives.

## II. Methodology

The study adopts a mixed-methods design to capture both quantitative patterns and qualitative nuances. Ten schools—six government and four private institutions—were purposively selected to reflect variations in pedagogical philosophy, resource availability, and sociocultural context.

Participants:

- 100 students (Classes VI–XII)
- 30 English teachers
- 50 parents

Data collection tools:

- Structured questionnaires for students
- Semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents
- Classroom observations focusing on the use of English, teacher–student interaction, and communicative activities

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, percentages, and standard deviations), while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Triangulation across these sources enhanced validity and provided a comprehensive, multi-layered understanding of the state of English education in the region (Field Survey Data, 2026).

## III. English in the curriculum

English occupies a central and compulsory position within the school curriculum, from foundational stages through higher secondary education. It is framed as a core competency essential for academic success, cognitive development, and global participation. The curriculum explicitly aims to develop grammatical accuracy, reading comprehension, writing proficiency, listening skills, and oral fluency.

Private schools often adopt more innovative practices, including multimedia resources, language clubs, and activity-based instruction, designed to cultivate communicative competence (Agnihotri & Khanna, 1994). Government schools, constrained by larger class sizes and limited infrastructure, tend to rely on textbook-oriented teaching. Despite these contrasts, English is universally recognized as a crucial skill for accessing higher education and professional arenas.

### **A curriculum coordinator remarked:**

> “English is not merely a subject; it is the gateway to knowledge and opportunity. Students who master it are better positioned academically and socially.”

The principal challenge lies in reconciling curricular aspirations with classroom realities. While the curriculum emphasizes holistic language development,



implementation is often hampered by teacher preparedness, students' low confidence, and infrastructural limitations (NCERT, 2017).

#### **IV. Teaching practices**

Pedagogical approaches span a spectrum from traditional, rote-based methods to more emergent communicative strategies. In government schools, instruction frequently centers on memorization of grammar rules, model essays, and examination-oriented preparation. Private institutions, by contrast, are increasingly employing role-plays, debates, group discussions, and storytelling to encourage active and meaningful language use (Kumar, 2005).

##### **A teacher observed:**

> “Encouraging students to speak, even if imperfectly, fosters confidence. Perfection is not the initial goal—functional competence is.”

Challenges include large class sizes, inadequate teaching aids, and limited opportunities for professional development. Even in private settings, some students remain reluctant to participate due to social anxiety and fear of making mistakes. As a result, hybrid approaches—combining structured input with interactive practice—have begun to emerge as particularly effective (Field Survey Data, 2026).

#### **V. Classroom talk and spoken English**

Patterns of classroom discourse vary markedly between private and government schools. Private institutions often promote an English-medium environment, with students encouraged to use English spontaneously during discussions and activities. Government schools, however, commonly employ bilingual or multilingual instruction, restricting English predominantly to reading and writing tasks.

Students report strong social pressure to perform accurately, which inhibits oral participation. Common difficulties include problems with pronunciation, tense usage, article selection, and sentence construction. A student reflected:

> “I want to speak English fluently, but I hesitate because I am afraid of making mistakes in front of peers.”

Observations indicate that supportive, error-tolerant environments significantly enhance participation. Structured activities such as presentations, debates, and group discussions create opportunities for students to practice without fear, thereby fostering both confidence and fluency (Field Survey Data, 2026).

##### **Social pressure and learner challenges**

Learners face multifaceted challenges in mastering English. Social expectations from peers, teachers, and parents to perform flawlessly generate considerable anxiety, which in turn impedes learning. Many students dread public embarrassment when they make errors, and this fear diminishes their willingness to experiment with the language.



**Typical learner difficulties include:**

- Grammatical inaccuracies, such as incorrect tense usage or subject–verb disagreement
- Pronunciation errors, particularly with unfamiliar sounds and stress patterns
- Excessive reliance on literal translation from their mother tongue
- Limited vocabulary for expressing complex or abstract ideas

An excessive emphasis on examinations often reduces English learning to mechanical memorization, curtailing opportunities for authentic language use (Government of India, 2020). Moreover, exposure to English outside the classroom is minimal for many students—especially in government schools—further constraining the development of spoken competence (Field Survey Data, 2026).

## **VI. Parental views**

Parents overwhelmingly support English education, viewing proficiency as a valuable form of social and cultural capital. They associate English skills with academic excellence, professional advancement, and global competitiveness. Many parents opt for private schools or additional tuition despite financial constraints, reflecting the aspirational value they attach to English (Agnihotri & Khanna, 1994).

**A parent stated:**

> “English is essential for our children’s future. Without it, they will be unable to compete at national or international levels.”

Parents also encourage practice at home, such as reading English materials, writing short compositions, and attempting simple conversations. Their involvement reinforces student motivation but simultaneously intensifies performance pressure, underscoring the need for balanced pedagogical and emotional support (Field Survey Data, 2026).

## **VII. Student attitudes**

Students recognize the instrumental and cognitive importance of English but also express frustration with the learning process. They find grammar rules intricate, their vocabulary limited, and the fear of making public errors deeply discouraging.

**A senior student noted:**

> “English is important for our careers and studies, but the focus on memorization and testing sometimes makes learning stressful and discouraging.”

Motivation tends to be highest when lessons are interactive, collaborative, and forgiving of errors. Peer support, teacher encouragement, and well-organized practice sessions help students overcome anxiety and gradually build linguistic confidence (Field Survey Data, 2026).



### **VIII. Teachers' perspectives**

Teachers emphasize the need to promote English without marginalizing local languages. They advocate for communicative competence, highlighting challenges related to classroom management, resource scarcity, and learner anxiety.

#### **An experienced teacher explained:**

> “English should enrich students’ linguistic repertoire, not replace their native languages. Confidence and competence must develop together.”

Professional development, exposure to innovative teaching methodologies, and institutional support are identified as critical enablers for effective pedagogy. Teachers also stress that

students’ self-confidence is as crucial as instructional quality in determining language proficiency outcomes (Kumar, 2005).

### **IX. Discussion**

The study reveals that English education in Jammu and Kashmir is both aspirational and deeply fraught with challenges. Social pressures, an exam-centric culture, and infrastructural limitations constrain effective learning, while curricular emphasis and parental expectations sustain a high demand for English (Government of India, 2020; NCERT, 2017). Students’ linguistic errors, anxiety, and limited exposure to authentic use highlight the affective and cognitive barriers embedded in the language acquisition process (Field Survey Data, 2026).

The adoption of communicative approaches, supportive classroom cultures, and systematic teacher training is essential to confront these issues. Integrating interactive techniques, fostering error-tolerant environments, and promoting authentic language use can bridge the gap between curricular objectives and learner outcomes. Simultaneously, a holistic approach—one that balances English proficiency with respect for linguistic and cultural diversity—is necessary to cultivate confident, competent, and socially grounded multilingual speakers.

### **X. Conclusion**

English education in Jammu and Kashmir exemplifies both the promise and the complexity of language learning in a diverse and rapidly changing context. While the language is widely regarded as a gateway to academic and professional advancement, learners confront intense social pressures, persistent anxiety, and recurring linguistic difficulties. Effective pedagogy demands a judicious blend of communicative practices, supportive learning environments, and robust institutional and parental backing.

By addressing these structural and affective barriers, schools can nurture students’ confidence, fluency, and practical competence. English learning should be designed to enhance cognitive, social, and global capacities without undermining local linguistic identity. A balanced, learner-centered, and culturally sensitive approach is



indispensable for producing resilient, proficient English speakers in today's interconnected world.

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