

TEACHING ENGLISH ON THE BANK OF THE SUTLEJ RIVER: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ELT TEACHERS IN LODHRAN

Muhammad Khalil MPhil Scholar, Department of English Linguistics,
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan
Email: Khalilsyalhsp@gmail.com

Dr. Riaz Hussain
Associate Professor, Department of English Linguistics,
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur,
Pakistan Email: dr.riazhussain@iub.edu.pk

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the challenges ELT teachers face in rural areas of District Lodhran and examine potential solutions and opportunities for improving English education in these areas. A quantitative research design was employed, with data collected through a questionnaire adapted specifically for this purpose. The questionnaire's reliability was tested using the Cronbach alpha test. The population for the study included government and private schools from rural areas, with a sample of 60 schools selected from TEF, PEF, private, and government institutions. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 26. The findings highlighted significant challenges for teachers. Students faced issues related to language acquisition, low motivation, limited parental involvement, and inactivity in class. The primary challenges for the teachers included limited IT knowledge, lack of technique expertise, and insufficient training opportunities. Additionally, infrastructural issues like inadequate school buildings and the absence of essential facilities such as computers were major concerns. The findings show that 48.3% of ELT teachers in District Lodhran report a lack of access to professional development and students' attitude and educational background, while 50% believe educational authorities do not provide enough support. Additionally, 50% of the teachers find large class sizes limiting, and 53.4% acknowledge the shortage of teaching materials as a significant issue. The study concluded that addressing these challenges requires equipping teachers with better skills and training to effectively handle the difficulties of teaching in rural settings. Opportunities exist to enhance ELT through teacher development and better resource allocation. This research offers valuable insights into the complexities of teaching English in rural Lodhran and suggests areas for further study and improvement.

Keywords; Rural Education, ELT Challenges, Teaching Opportunities

Introduction

English is the de jure language of instruction in the vast majority of Pakistani schools, especially those at the university level, and the country's official language (Akram et al., 2020). Even though English is the medium of teaching in Pakistani schools, colleges, and universities, some students still struggle to pronounce simple words correctly (Bilal, Rashid, Adnan, & Abbas, 2013; Chen & Ramzan, 2024). In Pakistani institution students totally ignored the speaking skills and merely work for writing good and reading (Ramzan et al., 2025, 2023; Li & Akram, 2023, 2024). That's why Pakistani students have on the verge of unbreakable stability of language speaking in English.

English in Pakistan has claimed its importance for many decades. English has become an international language and the language of science and technology around the globe (Akram et al., 2021, 2022; Akram & Abdelrady, 2023, 2025; Ma et al., 2024). In Pakistan, English is taught and learned as a foreign language. Because English is an official language of Pakistan. All the notices, governmental letters and orders are issued in English language. This fact that superior language has great influence on the dominant language or the native language. This study is about the district Lodhran, province of Punjab, Pakistan. In this study the challenges and opportunities which are faced by ELT English teachers in the rural areas of Lodhran.

For educators, English Language Teaching (ELT) in District Lodhran, Pakistan, presents a unique blend of challenges. The socioeconomic and educational landscape of the district,

while posing barriers, also offers potential avenues for the growth of English language instruction.

In the district of Lodhran, there are a lot of little villages. It is located on the Sutlej River's bank, and this region has numerous rural places. The district enjoys an excellent and extensive educational system, including colleges, technical schools, and schools. In these institutions, which are located in both rural and urban regions, English is a required subject. To teach English as a second language in these places, teachers face several difficulties.

It is challenging for English language teachers to teach English to ESL or EFL learners. In addition to the problems mentioned, teaching English to ESL or EFL students presents a number of difficulties and challenges. When it comes to teaching English in rural areas where there are so many other enormous challenges, the difficulties are much more significant. Some of the major problems associated with teaching English in rural locations including a lack of amenities and facilities, students' unfavorable attitudes toward learning English, and parents' ignorance of the significance of learning English (Febriana et al., 2018).

Statement of Problem

English language teaching (ELT) in rural Pakistan, particularly in areas like Lodhran, faces numerous challenges. With Urdu as the primary language, English is rarely used in daily life, leading to poor proficiency, especially in rural regions. Students often struggle with public exams, and many pass through rote memorization rather than mastering the four language skills. Additionally, rural schools, mostly government and private PEEF institutions, lack proper resources and trained teachers, resulting in a low level of education and student disengagement. This combination of factors makes effective ELT a significant challenge in these areas.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the challenges encountered by ELT teachers in teaching English in rural areas of District Lodhran.

Research Questions

1. What are the challenges faced by the ELT teachers in teaching English in rural areas of District Lodhran?

Research Setting

There was time when the Sutlej River flowed through the lands of Bahawalpur. The land was rich in agricultural produce. Naqvi (March 24, 2025) writes:

The Sutlej was once the lifeline of Bahawalpur. During the British era, the Sutlej Valley Project turned vast stretches of barren land into fertile fields, making Bahawalpur one of the wealthiest regions in the subcontinent. The bounty of these lands was so abundant that when Pakistan struggled in its early days, the Nawab of Bahawalpur provided financial assistance to keep the fledgling state afloat. But Bahawalpur had no gold mines, no oil reserves—its wealth lay in its soil, and that soil was fed by the Sutlej (para 2) .

Thus, the decline in the available waters of the river brought decline in economic and living conditions of the people. Situated on the northern side of the River Sutlej, Lohdran, Pakistan, is home to a variety of local languages, such as Punjabi, Pashto, Sariki, and Rangri, and there is a large number of Urdu speakers studying in the public sector schools in Lohdran city and rural regions. This multilingualism suggests that Lohdran's second language instructors encounter several challenges, whether they work in public or private institutions.



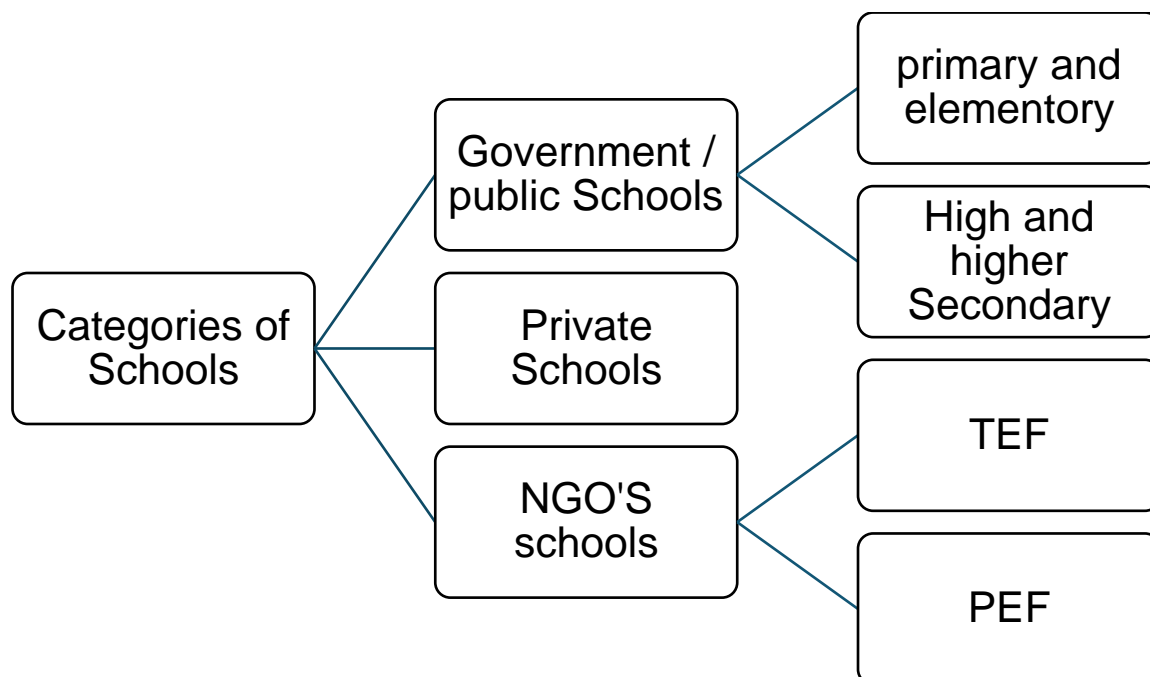


Figure 2. Categories of schools

Source: (*District profile*, 2023)

Figure 2 shows the different categories of schools in district Lohdhan. It includes public, private and NGO's schools in this region.

The figure shows that there are public, private and NGO schools in Lodhran. The public schools are run by the government. Private schools are run by individual owners and NGO schools are run by TEF and PEF organizations. The linguistic landscape in Lodhran is multilingual. There are now 65 spoken languages in Pakistan (Rahman, 2006). In Pakistan, English is recognized as an official language and is used as the primary language of teaching in the majority of educational institutions, notably in higher education. Even though English is the medium of teaching in Pakistani schools, colleges, and universities, some students still struggle to pronounce simple words correctly (Bilal, Rashid, Adnan, & Abbas, 2013). In these schools, the speaking abilities of pupils are really entirely disregarded while teaching English (Kannan, 2009).

Literature Review

Michael West first used the term fifty years ago 'teaching in difficult circumstances', referring to the importance of considering classes which consist of over 30 pupils (more usually 40 or even 50), congested on benches ill-graded, with a teacher who perhaps does not speak English very well working in a hot climate. (West 1960: 1)

In their 2013 study, Salauddin Khan and Rahman sought to understand how teachers in English classrooms roll call, checked homework, proceeded with a GTM-based lesson, and concluded with home assignments. The teachers claimed that they did not instruct their kids using any other methods.

The challenges in English language teaching (ELT) in rural Pakistan include a lack of exposure to English in daily life, especially in areas like Lohdhan, where Urdu dominates. Students often struggle with low proficiency, relying on memorization rather than mastering language skills. Rural schools face inadequate resources, untrained teachers, and a poor learning environment, leading to disengaged students who are often below grade level. These factors make effective ELT in these areas particularly difficult (Ahmed, 2020).

In state rural primary schools in the province of Punjab, Akhtar (2017) has investigated effectiveness of English Language Teaching strategies. The result of this study

revealed that most teaching methods that teachers used within the classroom were traditional, and there was absence of innovative pedagogical methods particularly on students' English language proficiency.

Hameed (2018) investigates the function of teacher training programs in rural areas with a specific attribute to District Lodhran. Results from the research showed that one of the major reasons for the poor quality of English language teaching in these areas was a lack of consistent and up to date opportunities for training.

According to Iqbal (2019), rural students faced challenges of learning English as the English environment beyond classroom and the school, where they were exposed to try the English language. The study found that students in rural areas struggled learning English, because they had little English language environments and support at home.

Naz (2020) took a look on the effect of cultural and social norms on English language teaching in rural places. However, the research revealed that traditional beliefs in English as a foreign language also prevented it from being accepted in rural areas, in particular, of older generations.

Research by Ali (2021) centered around the opportunities that community based English programs offer to rural districts. The study showed that such programs, coupled with local government and NGOs support, can far more effectively improve English learning in rural areas by offering resources and involvement in the community.

Rizwan (2022) examines the effects of English language curriculum changes on rural schools of southern Punjab. The findings in this research showed that while the updated curriculum was more in line with the current practices of ELT, the fact remained, if these materials and teacher training were not provided, these tools would not be effectively implemented.

To study the professional development needs of ELT teachers in rural areas and specifically in District Lodhran, Hussain (2023) carried out a study. Findings were that many teachers felt unprepared to teach English in rural settings and therefore they pointed to a need for continuous professional development programs.

Research Methodology

This quantitative research focuses on analyzing patterns, trends, and relationships through numerical data collected from 60 ELT teachers in rural areas of Lodhran District, Pakistan. The study uses structured tools, such as a questionnaire, to gather data from teachers in various schools, including boys' and girls' schools, 10 PEF schools, 16 TEF schools, and government schools. A convenience sampling method was employed due to the specific population size. The institutions were personally visited for data collection. Statistical methods were used to evaluate the data, ensuring objective and reliable results that would contribute to generalizable conclusions.

Analysis

Table 4. 1 A major problem is the lack of access to professional development opportunities.

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Agreed	12	20.0	2.85	1.400
Agreed	17	28.3		
Neutral	9	15.0		
Disagreed	12	20.0		
Strongly Disagreed	10	16.7		
Total	60	100.0		

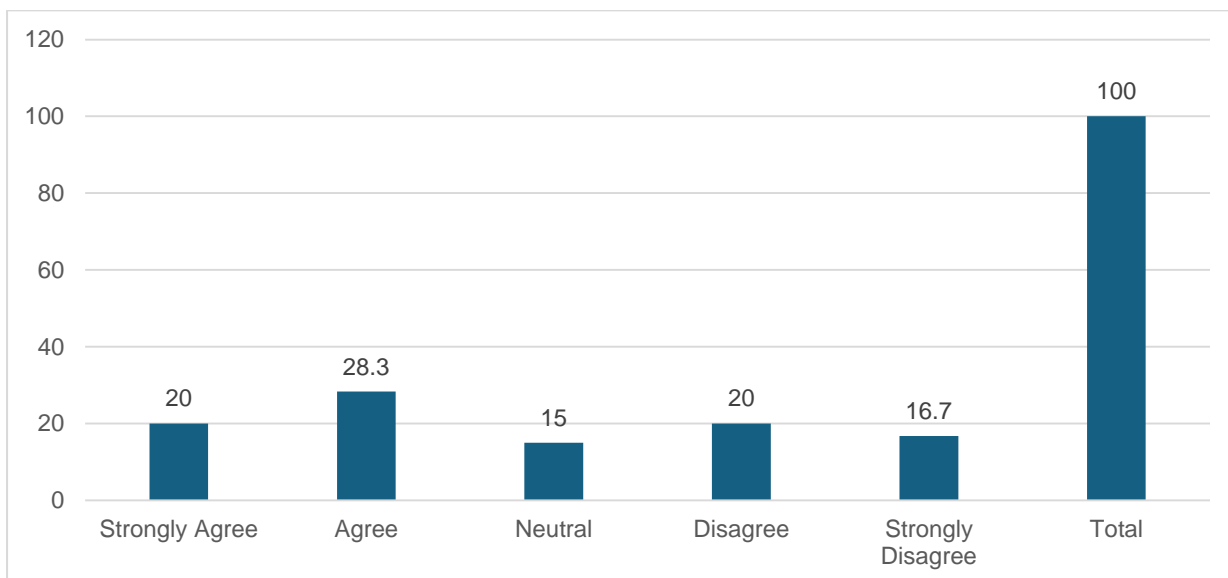


Figure 4. 1 A major problem is the lack of access to professional development opportunities. Table 4.1 highlights participants' views on the lack of access to professional development opportunities as a major problem. A combined 28.3% agreed, and 20% strongly agreed, indicating that many respondents recognize this issue as significant. However, an equal 20% disagreed, and 16.7% strongly disagreed, suggesting that some participants do not perceive a lack of access to professional development as a critical problem. Additionally, 15% remained neutral, reflecting uncertainty or mixed feelings about the extent of this issue in their professional context.

Table 4. 2 My teaching efforts are hampered by the inadequate assistance from educational authorities.

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Agreed	8	13.3	2.62	1.027
Agreed	22	36.7		
Neutral	16	26.7		
Disagreed	13	21.7		
Strongly Disagreed	1	1.7		
Total	60	100.0		

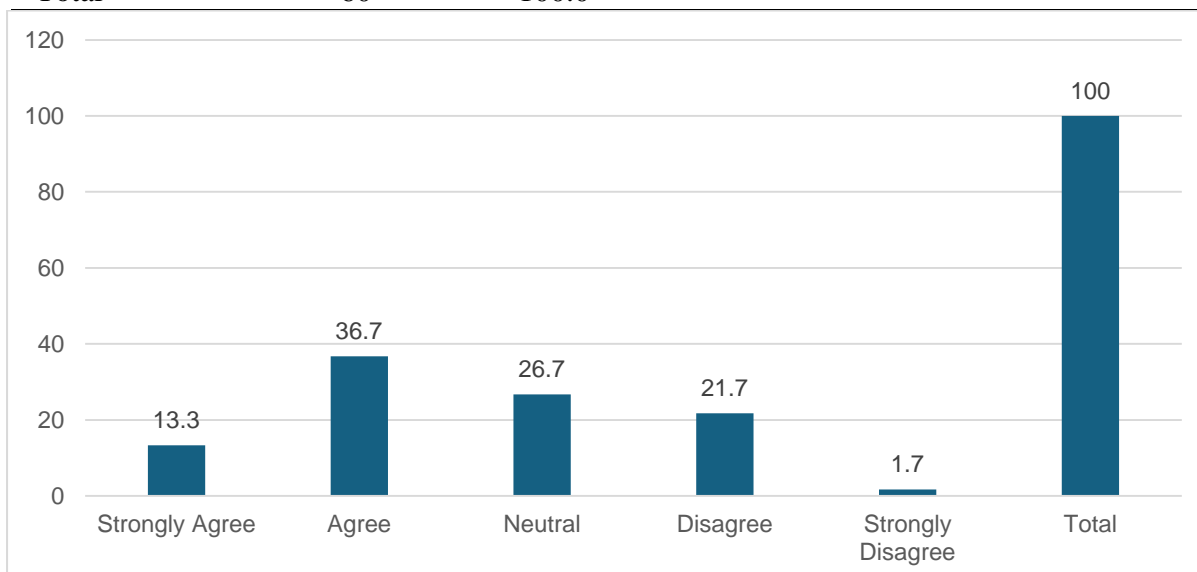


Figure 4. 2My teaching efforts are hampered by the inadequate assistance from educational authorities.

Table 4.12 shows the distribution of responses regarding the statement "My teaching efforts are hampered by the inadequate assistance from educational authorities." The results indicate that a significant proportion of respondents agreed with this statement, with 36.7% agreeing and 13.3% strongly agreeing, suggesting that many educators feel unsupported by educational authorities. Meanwhile, 26.7% remained neutral, showing no strong opinion on the matter. On the other hand, 21.7% disagreed and only 1.7% strongly disagreed, implying that a smaller portion of the respondents felt adequately supported.

Table 4. 3It is difficult to provide each student individualized attention in overcrowded classes.

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Agreed	11	18.3	2.78	1.290
Agreed	19	31.7		
Neutral	7	11.7		
Disagreed	18	30.0		
Strongly Disagreed	5	8.3		
Total	60	100.0		

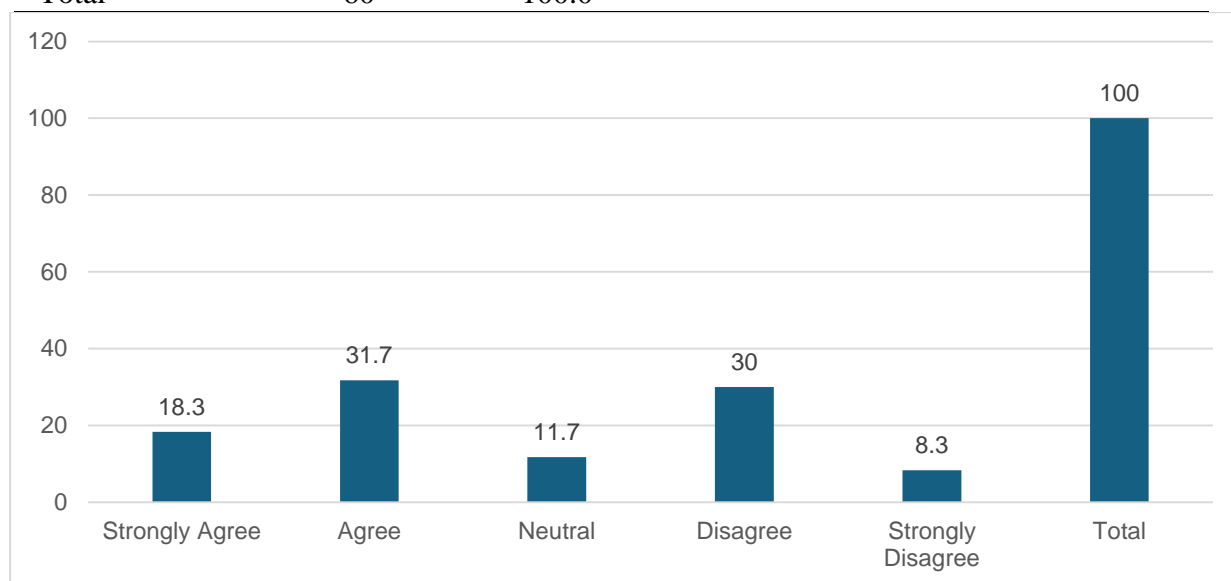


Figure 4. 3It is difficult to provide each student individualized attention in overcrowded classes.

Table 4.3 shows the distribution of responses to the statement, "It is difficult to provide each student individualized attention in overcrowded classes." The results reveal that 31.7% of the respondents agreed and 18.3% strongly agreed, indicating that many educators find it challenging to offer personalized attention in such conditions. However, 30.0% disagreed, and 8.3% strongly disagreed, suggesting a significant portion of respondents believe it is not as difficult. Additionally, 11.7% remained neutral, showing no strong opinion on the issue.

Table 4. 4A major problem is a lack of resources and appropriate teaching materials.

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Agreed	13	21.7	2.72	1.329
Agreed	19	31.7		
Neutral	5	8.3		

Disagreed	18	30.0
Strongly Disagreed	5	8.3
Total	60	100.0

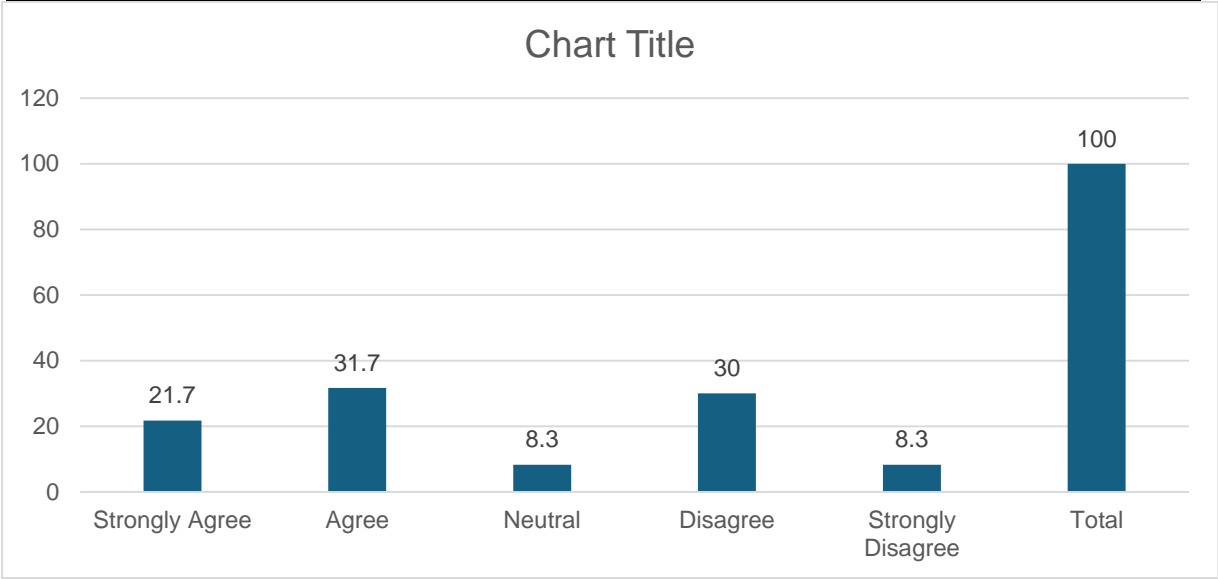


Figure 4. 4A major problem is a lack of resources and appropriate teaching materials. Table 4.4 presents the responses to the statement, "A major problem is a lack of resources and appropriate teaching materials." The results show that 31.7% of respondents agreed and 21.7% strongly agreed, indicating that over half of the educators view this issue as a significant challenge. In contrast, 30.0% disagreed and 8.3% strongly disagreed, suggesting that a notable portion of respondents do not see this as a major problem. Additionally, 8.3% remained neutral, showing no strong opinion on the matter.

Table 4. 5 English Language barriers between the teachers and students affect effective communication.

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Agreed	11	18.3	2.63	1.149
Agreed	20	33.3		
Neutral	10	16.7		
Disagreed	18	30.0		
Strongly Disagreed	1	1.7		
Total	60	100.0		

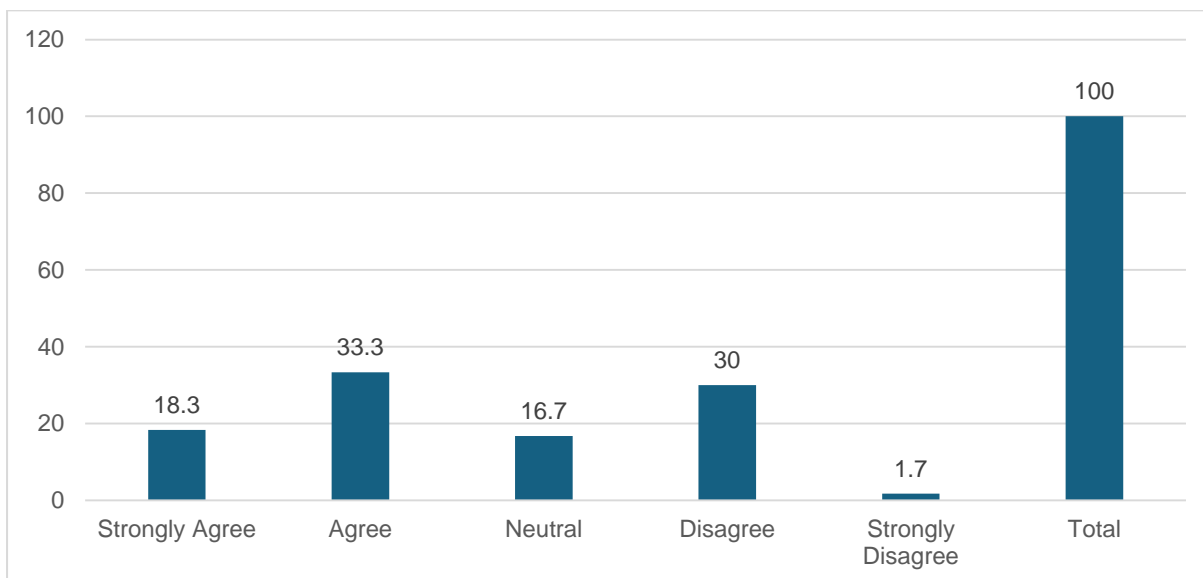


Figure 4. 5English Language barriers between the teachers and students affect effective communication

Table 4.5 shows the responses to the statement, "English Language barriers between the teachers and students affect effective communication." The data indicates that 33.3% of respondents agreed and 18.3% strongly agreed, suggesting that a significant number of educators see language barriers as a challenge to effective communication. On the other hand, 30.0% disagreed, and 1.7% strongly disagreed, implying that a considerable portion of respondents do not view this as a major issue. Additionally, 16.7% remained neutral, indicating no strong stance on the matter.

Table 4. 6When English Literature and Grammar are taught at the same time, it is difficult for me to deliver high-quality instruction.

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Agreed	6	10.0	2.65	.988
Agreed	25	41.7		
Neutral	13	21.7		
Disagreed	16	26.7		
Strongly Disagreed	0	0		
Total	60	100.0		

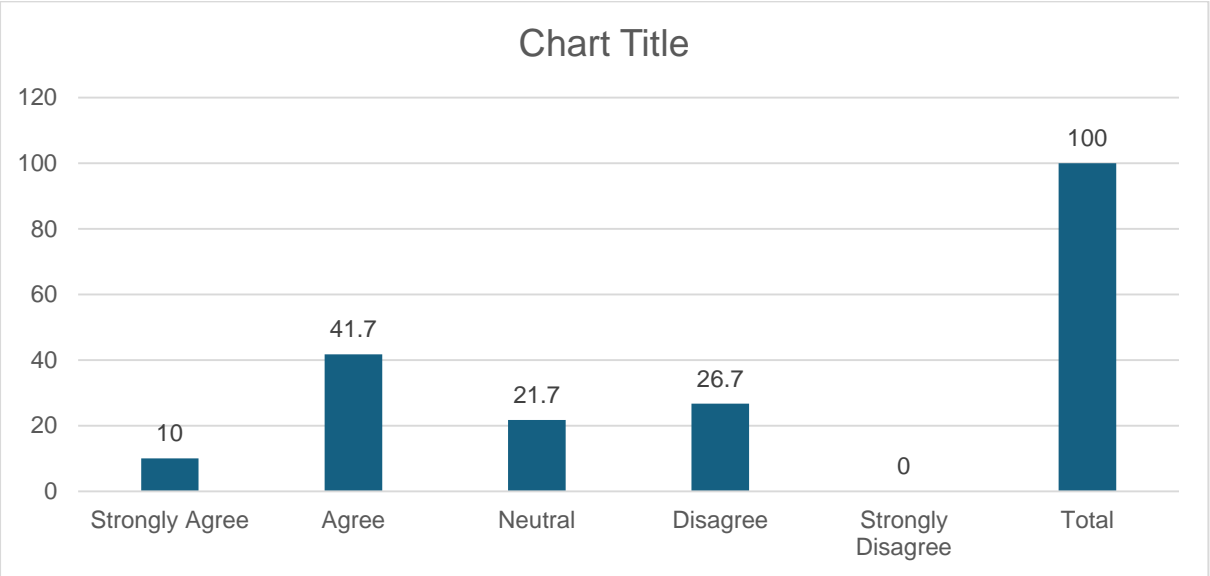


Figure 4. 6When English (Literature and Grammar) is taught at the same time, it is difficult for me to deliver high-quality instruction

Table 4.6 presents the responses to the statement, "When English (Literature and Grammar) is taught at the same time, it is difficult for me to deliver high-quality instruction." The results show that 41.7% of respondents agreed and 10.0% strongly agreed, indicating that a majority of educators find it challenging to provide high-quality instruction when both subjects are taught simultaneously. Meanwhile, 26.7% disagreed, with no respondents strongly disagreeing. Additionally, 21.7% remained neutral, reflecting no strong opinion on the issue.

Table 4. 7 A major issue is the low level of parental participation in students' education.

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Agreed	19	31.7	2.57	1.395
Agreed	14	23.3		
Neutral	6	10.0		
Disagreed	16	26.7		
Strongly Disagreed	5	8.3		
Total	60	100.0		

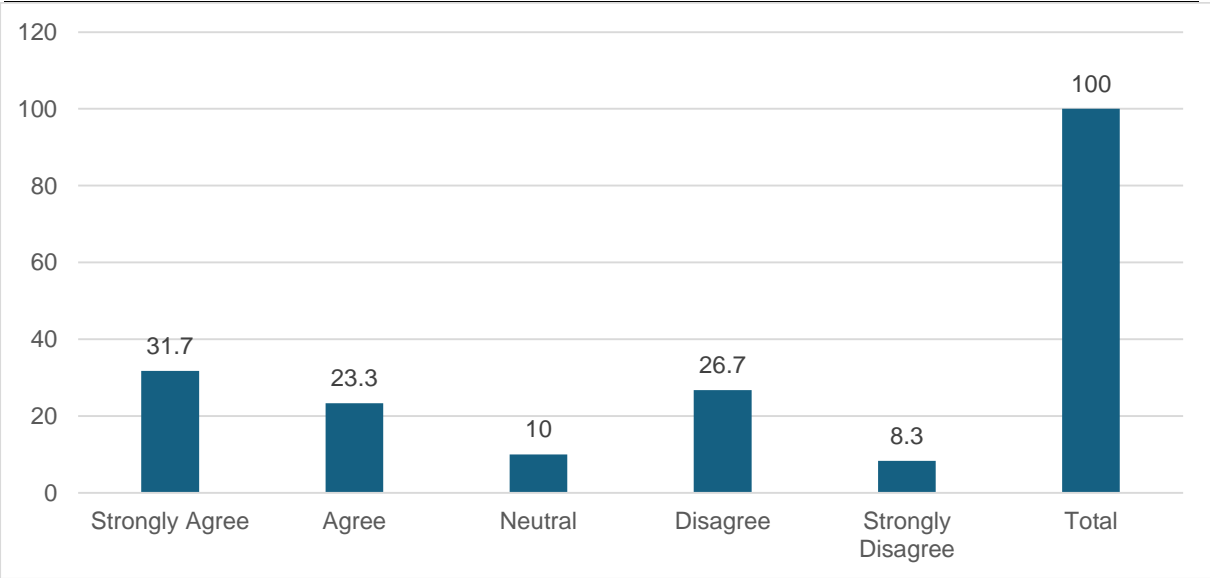


Figure 4. 7A major issue is the low level of parental participation in students' education. Table 4.7 illustrates the responses to the statement, "A major issue is the low level of parental participation in students' education." The data shows that 31.7% of respondents strongly agreed, and 23.3% agreed, indicating that more than half of the educators perceive low parental involvement as a significant problem. In contrast, 26.7% disagreed, and 8.3% strongly disagreed, suggesting that a considerable portion of respondents do not view this as a major issue. Additionally, 10.0% remained neutral, reflecting no strong opinion on the matter.

Table 4. 8 Single curriculum is significant challenge for instructor.

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Agreed	8	13.3	2.67	1.100
Agreed	22	36.7		
Neutral	15	25.0		
Disagreed	12	20.0		
Strongly Disagreed	3	5.0		
Total	60	100.0		

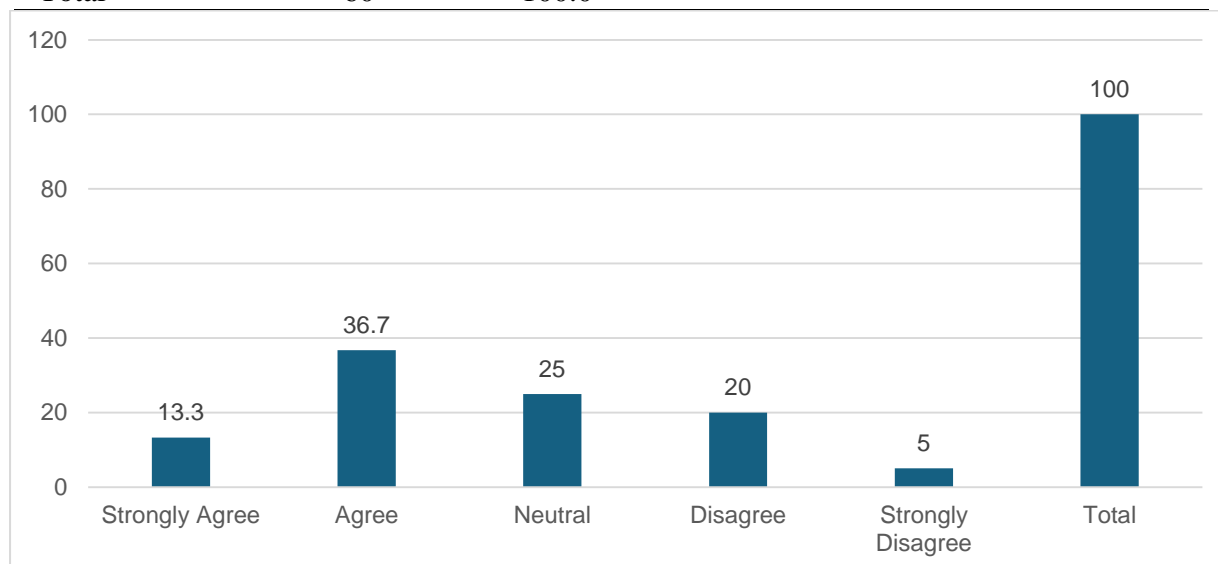


Figure 4. 8Single curriculum is significant challenge for instructor. Table 4.8 presents the responses to the statement, "Single curriculum is a significant challenge for instructors." The results indicate that 36.7% of respondents agreed and 13.3% strongly agreed, suggesting that a considerable portion of educators view the single curriculum as a major challenge. On the other hand, 20.0% disagreed, and 5.0% strongly disagreed, implying that some educators do not see it as a significant issue. Additionally, 25.0% of respondents were neutral, indicating no strong opinion on the matter.

Table 4. 9 A big challenge is overcoming community or student opposition to learning English.

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Agreed	6	10.0	2.83	1.044
Agreed	20	33.3		
Neutral	12	20.0		
Disagreed	22	36.7		

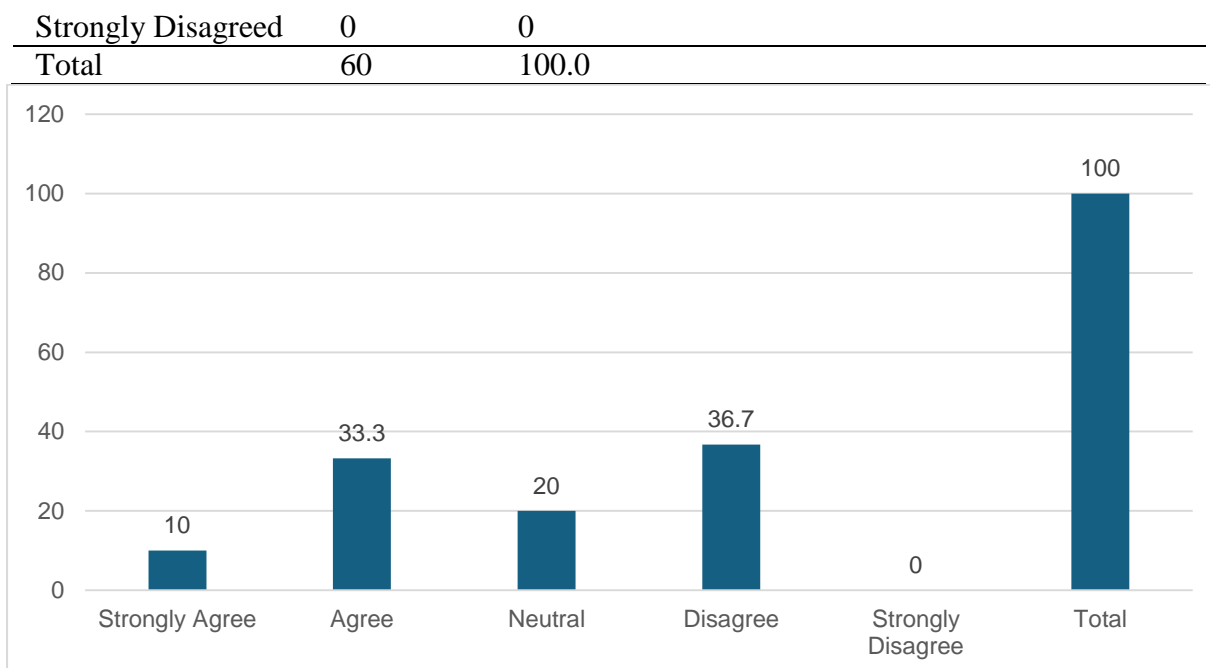


Figure 4. 9A big challenge is overcoming community or student opposition to learning English.

Table 4.9 shows the responses to the statement, "A big challenge is overcoming community or student opposition to learning English." The results reveal that 33.3% of respondents agreed, and 10.0% strongly agreed, indicating that a portion of educators face challenges due to opposition to learning English. However, 36.7% disagreed, with no respondents strongly disagreeing, suggesting that a larger group of educators do not consider this a significant issue. Additionally, 20.0% remained neutral, showing no strong opinion on the matter.

Table 4. 10 The effectiveness of teaching is reduced by limited access to the internet and digital resources.

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Agreed	8	13.3	2.77	1.125
Agreed	20	33.3		
Neutral	12	20.0		
Disagreed	18	30.0		
Strongly Disagreed	2	3.3		
Total	60	100.0		

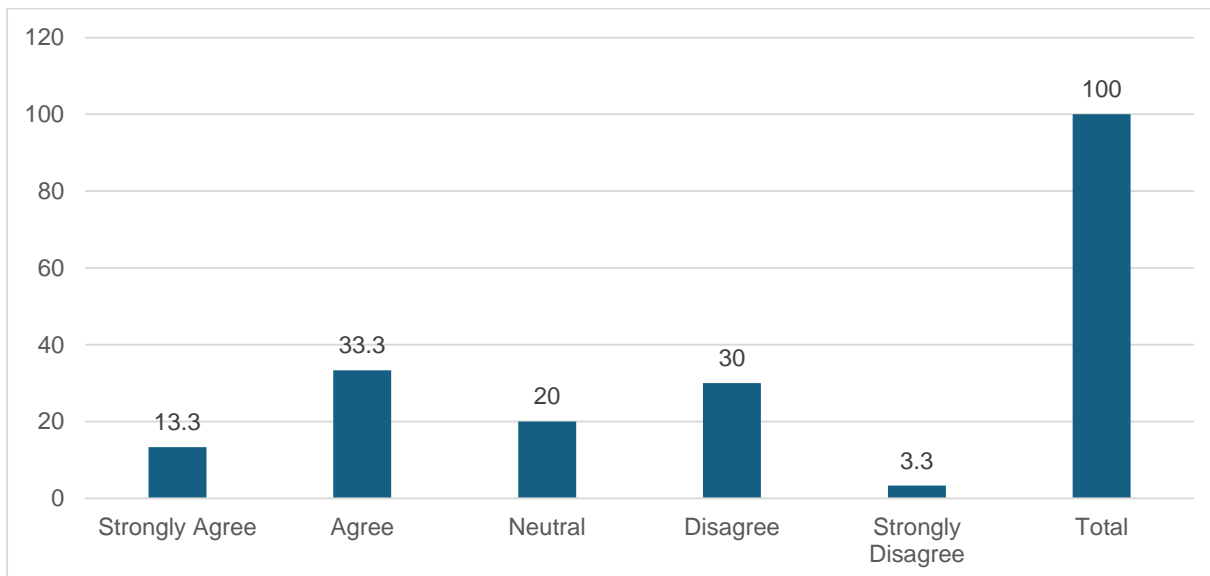


Figure 4. 10The effectiveness of teaching is reduced by limited access to the internet and digital resources.

Table 4.10 presents the responses to the statement, "The effectiveness of teaching is reduced by limited access to the internet and digital resources." The data shows that 33.3% of respondents agreed and 13.3% strongly agreed, indicating that a significant portion of educators believe limited digital access hampers teaching effectiveness. On the other hand, 30.0% disagreed, and 3.3% strongly disagreed, suggesting that many educators do not see this as a major issue. Additionally, 20.0% were neutral, reflecting no strong opinion on the matter.

Results and Discussion

The data shows that the majority of ELT teachers in the rural locality of District Lodhran face different hurdles in teaching English. An overwhelming number of respondents, 48.3%, agreed, and 36.7% disagreed, with a mixed reaction, but overall, with a feeling of neutrality, to the issue of the lack of access to professional development opportunities. In addition, 50% of respondents believe that educational authorities do not provide sufficient assistance to them for doing their work, and 23.4% disagreed.

In fact, overcrowded classrooms do not allow teachers to do a good job when it comes to giving personal attention, especially 50%, agreed and 38.3 %, did not agree. This indicates a neutral opinion. Furthermore, 53.4% acknowledged that the absence of resources and teaching materials was a big problem, and 38.3% disagreed. Another discovery was that language barriers between teachers and students worked to hinder effective communication, 51.6% of respondents agreed and 31.7% disagreed.

Ahmed (2010) and Kannan (2009) highlight that a major challenge faced by ELT teachers in rural areas is the lack of adequate teaching resources, including textbooks, technological aids, and classroom facilities. Similarly, Akhtar (2017) emphasizes the issue of insufficient teacher training and professional development, which limits instructors' ability to adopt modern teaching methodologies. Derakhshan (2015) and Hameed (2018) further assert that students' low English proficiency and lack of exposure to the language outside the classroom create additional hurdles for the teachers, making it difficult to engage learners effectively. These findings suggest that ELT teachers in District Lodhran face multifaceted challenges that hinder the effectiveness of English language teaching.

These findings yield challenges on the resources for English Language Teaching (ELT) in District Lodhran. Key issues with teachers also include a lack of essential equipment, for

example, computers and projectors in the classrooms but some teachers do not think that is an issue. On the other hand, the availability of libraries or resource centers in schools is also a concern with the finding that some teachers say that the libraries or resource centers are absent while others think that there are available libraries or resource centers. The value of audio-visual tools for the improvement of English learning also receives mixed opinions of the teachers, some believe that it would help to ease understanding of complex linguistic structures while others profess doubt. Regarding the class sizes, rural schools were considered to have numbers that were manageable and that supported more personalized instruction. In spite of this, there is a view of neutrality with regards to the adoption of technology in classrooms, as it is agreed that the teachers are trained with respect to technology. This indicates that more investment in infrastructure and professional development is required. Much research has been pointed to the value of continuous teacher training, community involvement, government backing and usage of low-cost technology as to overcoming the challenges. Consequently, eliminating ELT obstacles in this district will be achieved through collective efforts of the teachers, policymakers, and the government authorities.

Conclusion

The ELT Teachers in District Lodhran encounter various obstacles because they lack access to technology and have no centralized resources and maintain conflicting perspectives about audio-visual learning materials. Rural teaching arenas present possibilities for improved education delivery because small class populations allow teachers to provide individualized instruction. The research indicates that educational institutions gradually use technology for teaching purposes even though substantial work needs to be done to upgrade teacher training initiatives and infrastructure systems. Various educational resources like computers together with projectors and libraries remain inaccessible on a consistent basis making it difficult for teachers to provide excellent English instruction. The findings support the observations presented by Derakhshan (2015) and Ahmed (2010) that teachers should participate in ongoing professional development through innovative instructional approaches that work best for rural learning environments.

The findings reveal that the majority of ELT teachers in the rural locality of District Lodhran face significant challenges in teaching English. A substantial 48.3% of respondents agreed that there was a lack of access to professional development opportunities, while 36.7% disagreed, suggesting a mixed response. Additionally, 50% of the teachers feel that educational authorities do not provide enough support, with 23.4% disagreeing. Overcrowded classrooms, insufficient resources and students educational background further hindered effective teaching, as 50% of the teachers agreed that large class sizes hindered their ability to provide personal attention, while 53.4% of the respondents acknowledged the lack of teaching materials as a major issue.

This research presents multiple strategies to enhance the educational delivery of English language teaching in the particular region. The educational researcher Hameed (2018) asserts that student achievement depends on active community involvement because parental backing boosts both students' interest and learning performance. Akhtar (2017) recommends that the government should increase its support for educational infrastructure and financial aid to elementary schools. Kannan (2009) argues that low-cost mobile-assisted language learning solutions would effectively reduce resource differences in remote areas. The educational challenges of English language education will receive proper solutions through a teamwork model involving teachers and policymakers supported by community involvement which will create better educational conditions for students in District Lodhran.

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Appendix Questionnaire

Challenges for Teachers

Select one from the following boxes as instructed; 1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree 3= Neutral 4= Disagree 5= Strongly Disagree

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	A major problem is the lack of access to professional development opportunities.					
2	My teaching efforts are hampered by the inadequate assistance from educational authorities.					
3	It is difficult to provide each student individualized attention in					

	overcrowded classes.					
4	A major problem is a lack of resources and appropriate teaching materials.					
5	English Language barriers between the teachers and students affect effective communication.					
6	When English Literature and Grammar is taught at the same time, it is difficult for me to deliver high-quality instruction.					
7	A major issue is the low level of parental participation in students' education.					
8	Single curriculum is significant challenge for instructor.					
9	A big challenge is overcoming community or student opposition to learning English.					
10	The effectiveness of teaching is reduced by limited access to the internet and digital resources.					