COMPARISON OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN URBAN AND RURAL SCHOOLS OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This article explores the differences in English Language Teaching (ELT) between urban and rural schools in Uzbekistan. The study focuses on the number of teachers, the quality of teaching materials, classroom conditions, and students' motivation. The research shows that urban schools have better facilities, modern resources, and more qualified teachers, while rural schools face a shortage of teachers, outdated textbooks, and poor classroom conditions. The paper highlights how these differences affect students' learning outcomes and suggests ways to improve education quality in rural areas.

Keywords: English language teaching, urban education, rural education, teacher shortage, student motivation, Uzbekistan.

Introduction. Education plays a central role in the development of any nation. In Uzbekistan, English is considered one of the most important subjects, as it provides access to global knowledge, communication, and job opportunities. However, there are still large differences in how English is taught in urban and rural schools. Urban schools are located in cities and have better facilities, more teachers, and modern technology. In contrast, rural schools are often under-resourced, with limited teaching materials and a small number of teachers. These inequalities create barriers to equal education for all students. The aim of this research is to compare English teaching in urban and rural schools, identify key challenges, and offer practical recommendations to improve the situation in rural areas. According to Richards and Rodgers (Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching (3rd ed.2014), successful English language learning requires student-centered methods, communicative activities, and access to learning tools such as audio-visual materials [8, 45]. Unfortunately, such resources are often available only in urban schools.

Literature Review. Scholars have long discussed the issue of inequality in education. Akbari and Allvar found that urban teachers have more access to professional development and teaching resources, which improves lesson quality. [1, 1–12] Azimova showed that rural teachers often work alone, have little collaboration, and lack access to training [2, 47].
According to UNESCO (2015), educational differences between rural and urban schools exist in almost every developing country. The main causes are teacher shortages, poor infrastructure, and low salaries [10, 114]. Similarly, Horn and Akiba stated that rural students often have less motivation due to limited opportunities for using English in daily life [5, 15–16]. These studies confirm that social, economic, and geographical factors directly affect English language learning outcomes. In Uzbekistan, the same challenges are present, and this research aims to describe them in a local context.

Methodology. This study uses a comparative qualitative research method. Data was collected from two secondary schools in the Syrdarya region:

- School No. 5 (Gulistan city) – representing an urban area.
- School No. 4 (Gulistan district) – representing a rural area

The research included classroom observation, teacher interviews, and document analysis. Each school's facilities, teacher numbers, and student attitudes were compared. Urban schools had access to modern technology, internet connection, and visual materials, while rural schools relied mainly on traditional teaching methods and textbooks [3, 45–46].

Results and Discussion. 1. Teacher Availability. One of the biggest differences found was in teacher numbers. Urban School No. 5 had more than 10 English teachers who shared responsibilities and organized speaking clubs and competitions. This division of work allowed for smaller classes and more attention to individual students. In contrast, the rural school had only one English teacher for all grades. This teacher had to prepare lessons for multiple levels, handle administrative duties, and teach large mixed-ability classes. As Azimova (2018) mentions, such conditions reduce teaching quality and limit innovation in lessons [2, 47].

2. Learning Environment and Resources. The physical and educational environment also differed significantly. Urban schools were equipped with whiteboards, posters, and multimedia tools such as projectors. Students could borrow English books from the library or use online resources for extra practice. Rural schools, however, had only basic blackboards and outdated textbooks. Internet access was rare, and teachers had no materials to organize group work or interactive activities [1, 6]. Students learned English mostly by memorizing grammar rules, which made lessons less interesting. Akbari and Allvar emphasize that

exposure to authentic materials-such as songs, films, and dialogues-greatly improves learners' language skills [1, 9]. Lack of such materials in rural schools slows down students' progress.

3. Student Motivation. Motivation plays an important role in language learning. Urban students are often more motivated because they see English as a valuable skill for future careers or study abroad. They participate in contests, debates, and English clubs, which boost their confidence. In rural schools, students rarely have such opportunities. Most of them study English only to pass exams. Without exposure to English media or communication with fluent speakers, they find it difficult to stay motivated. Lamont also explains that the learning environment strongly shapes students' attitude toward knowledge; without encouragement, learners tend to lose interest [6, 584–622].

4. Gender and Social Factors. An additional factor found during the research was gender and family influence. In rural areas, some parents believe English is not necessary for everyday life, especially for girls. This social attitude reduces the number of students who aim to continue English learning at higher levels. Meanwhile, in urban families, parents often support their children's education, paying for private English courses or online lessons. This parental involvement has a strong positive effect on student achievement.

5. Summary of Findings.

Aspect Urban Schools vs Rural Schools

Aspect	**Urban school**	**Rural school**
Teachers	10+ qualified teachers	Only one teacher for all grades
Resources	Posters, computers, library, internet	Only textbooks
Class size	Small and divided groups	Large mixed-level group
Motivation	High, supported by clubs	Low, exam-focused
Parental support	Strong	Limited

Conclusion. The findings clearly show that there is a strong urban–rural gap in English teaching conditions in Uzbekistan. Urban schools enjoy better facilities, sufficient teachers, and higher motivation, while rural schools face continuous challenges. To reduce this gap, the following actions are recommended:

1. Provide professional development and training for rural teachers.
2. Increase teacher salaries and incentives to work in remote areas.
3. Ensure equal access to digital tools, books, and modern teaching materials.
4. Encourage community involvement in supporting education.

Improving rural education will not only raise English proficiency but also help build a more equal and educated society. Equal opportunities for all learners are essential for the progress of Uzbekistan's education system.

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