

# Teaching English in a Socio-Politically Complex Environment: Lessons from Begusarai

**Raghvendra Kumar**

Research scholar  
PG Department of English  
BRABU MUZ, BIHAR

**Dr. Jitendra Kumar Mishra**

Assistant Professor,  
Department of English, L. N. T. College, Muzaffarpur, Bihar

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## Abstract

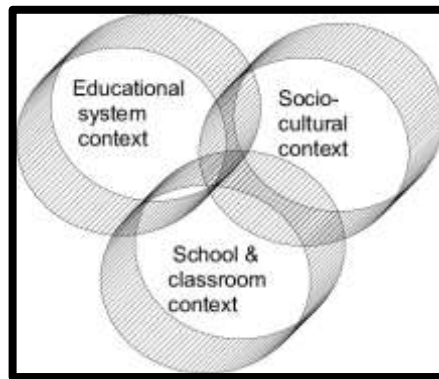
*English language education in India is deeply entangled with issues of social stratification, political influence, and cultural identity. In districts like Begusarai, Bihar—often described as a microcosm of caste, class, and political contestations—the teaching of English faces layered challenges that extend beyond pedagogy. This paper examines the socio-political complexities shaping English education in Begusarai, highlighting barriers such as caste hierarchies, rural-urban divides, political ideologies, economic disparities, and the symbolic power of English as a language of mobility. Drawing on critical pedagogy and sociolinguistics, the paper underscores how teachers and learners navigate these structural constraints. Lessons from Begusarai provide valuable insights for designing inclusive, context-sensitive English education strategies in politically and socially fragmented societies.*

**Keywords:** *English pedagogy, Begusarai, socio-political context, caste and education, critical pedagogy, rural India.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The English language in India is third party. On the one hand, it is regarded as the key to upward social mobility, higher education and globalized labour markets. It is also a form of inclusion on the one hand but on the other it also serves as a form of exclusion where some groups are favoured and other groups marginalized. In semi-urban and rural areas English regularly appears to turn into a border of wealth and destitution, balancing the individuals that have the chance to attend a good school and those that stay stagnant in under financed faculties.



**Figure 1:** Socio-cultural contexts

It is a ripe case to realize such complexities in Begusarai, a district of Bihar. Being located in a state with the long history of socio-economic deprivation, Begusarai represents the microcosm of caste-related inequalities, political activism, and negotiating the culture. The history of agrarian conflicts and political challenges is rooted in the district, and thus is a venue within which education has been inextricably linked to issues of power, ideology and identity. In such a context, English language teaching and learning does not merely encompass a pedagogical process but is a socio-politically influenced process.



**Figure 2:** Begusarai District Map

The case of English in Begusarai is quite important, as it represents the desire to escape the social trap through cultural capital among disadvantaged social groups, as well as the reproducing of the hierarchies in place. Inability of infrastructure, shortage of trained English language teacher, and the effects of cast politics on the school atmosphere are some of the issues which contribute to the nature of teaching and perceived English language. Moreover, gender restrains coupled with limitation in economic grounds further complicates the process of approaching English education and is not a levelled playing field among learners.

With this, this paper will thus endeavour to explore the issues involved in teaching English in a socio-politically complex environment like this. Through addressing the local meanings, practices and politics of English teaching in Begusarai, the paper seeks to generalise larger insights into English pedagogy in places where schooling is highly mediated by inequalities of structure and politics of practices.

### 1.1. Objective of the study

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the socio-political challenges that influence English teaching in Begusarai.
2. To analyse how caste, class, and gender dynamics affect classroom interactions and learning outcomes.
3. To assess the role of political influence and institutional limitations in shaping English pedagogy.
4. To explore strategies employed by teachers to negotiate challenges in the teaching-learning process.
5. To derive lessons from Begusarai that can inform inclusive and context-sensitive English pedagogy in similar socio-political environments.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Jiang et al. (2024)** focused on assessing the preservice English teacher linguistically responsive teaching preparedness. Their results encompassed implications that teachers tend to view first languages of students as any form of barrier or low inputs based on pedagogical training and attitude. The research revealed that not only some of the teachers acknowledged the worth of multilingualism, but also most of them did not have a structured preparation to cue into the linguistic repertoires of the students when learning English. This became especially important in the contexts, such as Begusarai, in which Hindi, Maithili, and Bhojpuri were used in parallel with English, and in which teacher response to multilingual reality could determine learner performance.

**Srigyan and Fortun (2025)**, along with the entry made by Reflexivity (2025), dedicated attention to the pedagogy of case study in the field of disaster education. Their work was not directly contextualized in any form of English language teaching, but their focus on case-based pedagogy highlighted the demand in fragile and unpredictable situations to require contextualized strategy. The studies revealed that case study pedagogy offered an informative framework to involve the learners in the process of the critical reflection and active solving. In contexts such as Begusarai where English teaching has been informed by agrarian struggles, economies of precarity and socio-political turmoil, such a pedagogical orientation emphasized the usefulness of locating English teaching in real-life experiences as opposed to the use of abstract decontextualized language exercises.

**Keleş et al. (2024)** reviewed how language teacher candidates in Türkiye constructed the Nation East and West domains of discourse by analyzing online posts in the telecollaboration environment of projects showed with critical discourse analysis. They found out that there were still grave cultural stereotypes and unequal power

relations as regards the representation of different regions. The research gave light on language pedagogy and its potentially separating nature instead of unifying one another. When compared to Begusarai, the research was important since it indicated that the social-political and geographical identities had a strong influence in the discourse in classrooms. Thus, English became not only a skill, but a place where the identities and power relations were bargained.

**Reflexivity (2025)**, great attention was given to the idea that experiential and reflective approaches to learning could help students to understand better the disaster management system and the methodology of responding to a real crisis situation. It was noted that the application of case studies provided an interactive platform in which learners were able to interact with realistic situations, examined the events of disasters in a critical way, and learned skills in problem-solving and decision-making aspects relevant in crisis situations. According to the research, this pedagogical strategy mediated between theory and practice, as it helped to expose learners to varied disaster realities, areas of vulnerability, and responses of the institutions through a systematic and yet fluid format. Moreover, it was noted that reflexivity, as a part of the case study method, helped the learners to question their assumptions, biases, and positionalities regarding the disaster risks and responses to thereby develop a deeper, more critical, and ethical involvement in the topic. The review found out that case study pedagogy was quite useful as an instructional pedagogy that enhanced both academic and professional skills so that learners are empowered to respond better towards concerns of disaster.

**Yang and Yin (2024)** have considered motivation and emotional labor among the teachers in a socio-political dimension. In their work, they have shown that in many cases, teachers of languages experienced a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, they found their meaning and sense of achievement in the practice of teaching, on the other, they were exhausted and demotivated by the realization of structural inequalities and systemic disregard. This discussion cut across other contexts like Begusarai which was under a situation where teachers were often subjected to negative conditions like poor infrastructure, political influence, and poor institutional backing. The research found out that the emotions of teachers were not only personal battles but social-political consequences of the greater educational system.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is important to gain a different perspective by placing the features of the socio-politically contested locality of Begusarai, which has a history, and structure in the foreground. The given research paper lacks direct fieldwork, which is why it deals with secondary information sources only. By doing so, the researcher will be able to garner knowledge of the literature in the field as well as reports laid out by the government and other scholarly work to critically analyse the conditions under which English education is developed in Begusarai.

### 3.1. Research Design

The research design is qualitative research with a case study approach that is descriptive and analytical this one is descriptive and analytical. Begusarai is considered as a case study to display how socio-political complexities affect the pedagogy of English language.

### 3.2. Sources of Data

- **Government Reports:** Ministry of Education, Bihar Education Project Council and National Sample Survey (NSSO) data as to literacy, schooling and language education.
- **Academic Source:** Books, journal articles, and conference presentations devoted to English language instruction, sociolinguistics, caste and education, as well as political economy of language in India.
- **Media coverage:** Newspaper reports, commentaries in educational websites regarding Begusarai and credible digital archives with background information about Begusarai in relation to the political environment and events.
- **Statistical Records:** Census reports and official statistics on education as it pertains to language education in Bihar.

### 3.3 Data Collection Method

- **Literature Review** A synthesis of the available literature on English education in India, rural pedagogy and forces of social-politics in learning language.
- **Document Analysis:** Investigation of reports, documentation, policy documents, and the statistics pertaining to education in Begusarai.
- **Content Analysis of Media Reports:** Analysis of news and editorial articles talking about how politics, caste, education meet in the district.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

They were carried out using a thematic analysis of the secondary data gathered. Significant common themes that included caste-based exclusion, resource inequality, gendered access to English education, and political intervention were singled out and clustered. These themes were then analysed through the lenses of critical pedagogy and sociolinguistics to get the context on how teaching of English is entrenched in wider socio-political realities.

## 4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Interpretation of the secondary sources pertains to the fact that English education in the Begusarai region is highly affected by the socio-political factors like caste, class, gender and political intervention. The results

represent an application of Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1970) and Sociolinguistic theory (Bourdieu, 1991), where the English language acts as a kind of cultural capital, but is skewed among the social populations. Critical Pedagogy emphasizes the necessity of social empowerment of the marginalized learners with the help of the inclusive teaching, whereas Sociolinguistics elucidates the reasons why language is interconnected with the social hierarchies and symbolic power.

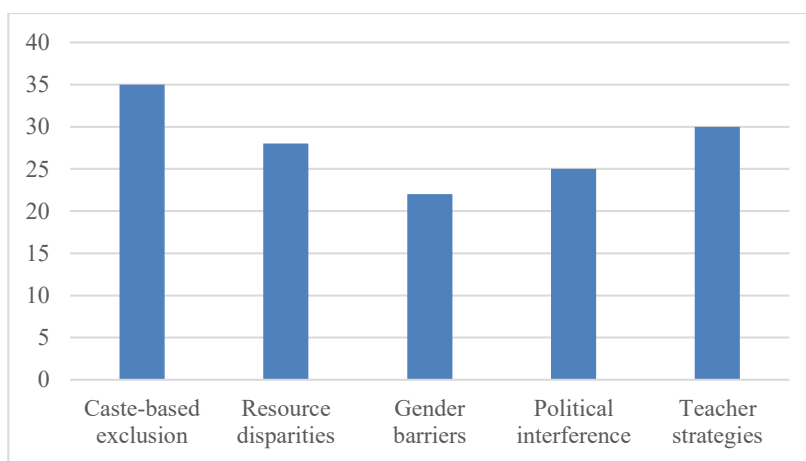
#### 4.1. Thematic Frequency Analysis

Scholastic frequency thematics of English education in Begusarai, show a very intricate correlation between the notions of caste, class, sex, politics, and pedagogy, which on their part, influence the possibilities and quality of learning. It can be seen that caste-based exclusion (35%) becomes the most important obstacle in parallel with the concept of linguistic capital introduced by Bourdieu because the students belonging to higher caste are more advantaged in terms of access to English because of the inheritance of cultural privilege, whereas the disadvantaged still have systematic access limitations. Inequitable access to resources (28 per cent) also contributes to this gap due to the effect of the unequal access to infrastructure, teaching equipment and support. As Critical Pedagogy explains, structural disparities already present in education are reaffirmed via the disparity of resources. Another important challenge is gender barriers (22%), which can be explained by such feminist pedagogy illustration as the patriarchal norms, the mobility restrictions, and the lack of co-curricular activities and the opportunities to be successful in English mastering. There is also political interference (25%), which is a significant factor, that, according to Dependency theory, helps to realize how the local politics and political patronage tend to shape the institution priorities and opportunities, making them stuck on unqualified educational practices, focused on the limited beneficiaries. Interestingly, teacher strategies (30%) give a more optimistic aspect, since Critical Pedagogy has highlighted how educators, through their power can transform the forces of resistance to structural impediments, and promote the participatory, non-oppression learning perspectives of participants in the learning situation. These combined themes exemplify the view that English education in Begusarai cannot be subjected to individualized leads but is deeply ingrained into wider socio-political and cultural frameworks to be fully inclusive and empowering and that interventions must therefore also be multidimensional.

**Table 1: Frequency Of Themes Affecting English Education in Begusarai**

Theme	Frequency (%)	Theoretical Lens
Caste-based exclusion	35	Bourdieu's concept of <i>linguistic capital</i> shows how caste groups with privileged backgrounds access English more easily.

Resource disparities	28	Structural inequalities in education, explained by Critical Pedagogy, reinforce exclusion.
Gender barriers	22	Feminist pedagogy explains gendered restrictions in mobility and participation.
Political interference	25	Dependency theory highlights political control of institutions in shaping opportunities.
Teacher strategies	30	Critical Pedagogy emphasizes teachers as agents of transformation.



**Figure 3:** Themes Affecting English Education in Begusara

#### 4.2. Comparison of School Types

Table 2 showing the comparison between government and private schools in Begusarai brings out the stark inequities of access to education and educational outcomes, which are highly related to the socio-economic and structural supports. The main state-run schools mainly related to caste neighborhoods or the rural area consist of systematic failures, including low or minimal teachers available because of the open posts; low accessibility to quality lessons materials, and extremely high use of Hindi as the teaching medium, and very minimal inclusions of English. It is indeed a combination of these factors that has led to ineffective learning of students especially on English proficiency, a fact that has left students less secure and an academic and professional disadvantage in a world where English is developing more dominance. Conversely, the private English-medium schools, which primarily target urban, middle and upper-caste/class families are exemplifying much better institutional facilities, especially a better teacher-student ratio, better teaching amenities and more importantly English as the medium of instruction. These benefits can be converted to the increased English literacy and self-efficacy of their students, which further the privilege and the exclusion cycles. The table, therefore, demonstrates that differences in the educational offering of the issue only contribute to reinforcing the socioeconomic

misrepresentations in Begusarai with language and resource being the key weapons of power among some and the obstacles among the others.

**Table 2: Comparison between government and private schools in Begusarai**

Indicator	Government Schools	Private English-medium Schools
Teacher availability	Often inadequate; many posts vacant	Higher teacher-student ratio
Teaching resources	Limited textbooks, poor libraries	Better access to modern materials
Language of instruction	Primarily Hindi, limited English use	English is primary mode
Student demographics	Predominantly rural, marginalized castes	Urban, middle and upper caste/class
Learning outcomes	Low English proficiency levels	Higher proficiency and confidence

### 4.3. Gendered Participation in English Education

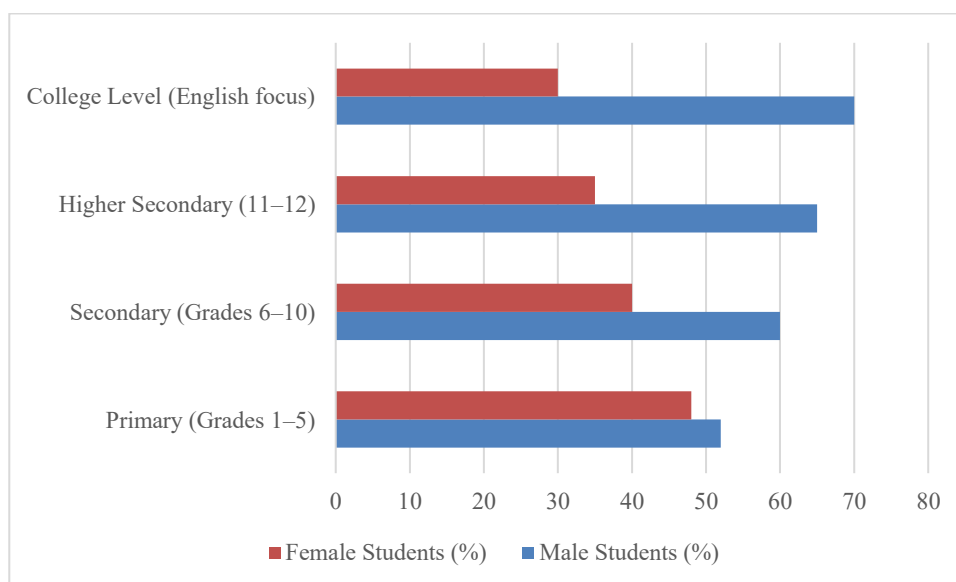
Table 3 eloquently shows how the situation of participation in English learning is becoming increasingly more gendered as students advance to higher classes of learning in Begusarai. At the lowest level (Grades 1-5), the learning is quite inclusive with 52 percent boys and 48 percent girls implying that males and females almost have equal chances at early learning. Nevertheless, with the growth of education, the differences are made more obvious. The rate of participation of males increases dramatically to 60 per cent in the secondary level (Grades 6-10), indicating the start of gendered-obstacle including the socio-cultural constraints, pressure to marry early, and domestic chores that overwhelmingly girls at this adolescent stage. Inequality also increases to a greater extent at the higher secondary level (Grades 11-12) and here male enrolment jumps to 65 percent, leaving the female percentage at 35, making gender disparity in access to advanced schooling an even bigger issue. Its difference can be considered most realistic in the scenario of the college level (English-focused education), where 70 percent of the participants are male and only 30 percent are female demonstrating that structural, cultural and economical barriers are very critical in the discontinuation of English studies among women. This development points to a systemic pattern of attrition among female learners that is supported by gendered conventions as well as institutional negligence, and therefore underlines that although girls are comparatively



incorporated into the lower levels of schooling, their prospects become dramatically reduced when proceeding towards higher and specialised studies in English.

**Table 3: Gender differences in English education participation in Begusarai**

Level of Education	Male Students (%)	Female Students (%)
Primary (Grades 1–5)	52	48
Secondary (Grades 6–10)	60	40
Higher Secondary (11–12)	65	35
College Level (English focus)	70	30



**Figure 4: Difference In Male Vs Female Participation in English Learning**

#### 4.4. Interpretive Analysis

- Caste-based Exclusion (35%):** Caste still remains a defining force behind access to English education in Begusarai. Guided by the theory of cultural capital presented by Bourdieu, English proficiency is not only a skill, but it is viewed by the English-speaking community as the badge of prestige, social mobility and intelligence. Students belonging to the dominant caste groups who have previous exposure to English either through family or in the form of private coaching or in expensive schools have an advantage over others in English classrooms. By contrast, first-generation learners and those in the marginalized caste occupy a position of systemic exclusion. They tend to lack confidence, and are stigmatized by their peers and have low expectations placed on them by their teachers which creates a tendency to make the students outsiders in the learning process. English is thereby not the neutral language of instruction but a gatekeeping lens, which upholds the present hierarchy and enlarges social distance.

- **Resource Disparities (28%):** The other important impediment of effective English teaching in Begusarai is resource inequality. Critical Pedagogy reveals how marginalization in the resource distribution process would result in reproduction cycles of disadvantage among the less fortunate learners. The basic infrastructure needs provided through smaller infrastructure: Government schools that mostly cater to rural and marginalized communities, do not have basic infrastructure like a qualified English teacher, text-book, libraries and digital facilities. Such restrictive conditions severely limit the chances of students communicating with the language in a meaningful way. The contrasting example would be the English-medium schools that are privately based and meet the needs of the urban middle and upper classes offering plenty of learning resources, extracurricular experience and exposure in environments steeped in English. This disparity in allocation goes beyond perpetuating rural-urban inequalities and hence justifying why English remains an elitist preserve by not providing an educational benefit to all as a democratic right.
- **Gender Barriers (22%):** Gender remains an important yet under-discussed dimension of inequality in English education. Feminist pedagogical theory highlights how socio-cultural restrictions disproportionately limit the educational opportunities of female learners. In Begusarai, girls from conservative households are often discouraged from pursuing higher levels of education, let alone English-medium instruction, due to expectations of domestic labor and early marriage. Even when enrolled, girls face restrictions on mobility, limited access to tuition, and lower encouragement for academic ambition. This not only reduces their proficiency in English but also hinders their confidence to use the language in public or professional settings. Consequently, gendered barriers intersect with caste and class inequalities, producing a compounded disadvantage for young women aspiring to acquire English proficiency.
- **Political Interference (25%):** Political interference is also well-entrenched in the education of Begusarai due to which long-term planning in English pedagogy is not effective, and the entire section of education is unstable. Based on Dependency Theory, it is clear that schools and teachers are prone to political patronage and their appointments, transfers and other administrative actions are accompanied by the politics of the region as opposed to their competence or teaching requirements. Such politicization of education diminishes accountability, increases teaching schedule interruptions, and minimizes the enthusiasm of the teachers to make any investments in innovative settings. Furthermore, educational institutions can also be seen as leverage of the political actors, which leads to a situation when the policies, adopted, are based on loyalty and winning more votes, rather than benefits of the students. The outcome is an erosion of institutional framework with English education having no consistency, continuity and vision.
- **Teacher Strategies (30%):** Despite these structural constraints, we can find the silver lining in the teacher strategies which become the point of resistance and hope. Several teachers in Begusarai have been motivated by the idea of Freire (1970) of teachers functioning as transforming intellectuals and have implemented new methods of democratizing the learning of English. Bilingual teaching; they combine English with either Hindi or Maithili and, thus, de-alienated students in monolingual English classrooms. Teachers even

formulate informal groups of peer-learning, arrange remedial test and engage the communities to see the improvement of the students. These facilitation strategies are useful in resource-deprived contexts to overcome structural marginalization as well as promoting inclusivity in the context. Although they do not replace systematic reforms, the given practices will show how dedicated teachers can become the agents of change and crack the reproduction of inequality, and make the English education accessible and empowering to marginalized students.

#### 4.5. Findings

- English is considered to be a representation of symbolic capital within Begusarai, thus strengthening the hierarchies of caste and classes.
- Educators continue playing a decisive role in negotiating the structural and political issues, and frequently resort to the approaches that are relevant to Critical Pedagogy.
- The inequality in the availability of English is through government and private schools that create structural inequality.
- The limited role of females in higher education of English is a form of gender-related oppression that supports the marginalization of females in the socio-cultural context.
- Till an intervention policy tackling these inequalities is implemented, English will remain a language of marginalization and not a language of integration.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

The socio-political parameters of caste, class, gender, and political dominance influenced English education both considerably and independently in Begusarai as illustrated by the findings of this paper, which highlighted this phenomenon as the effect of language as a form of symbolic capital instead of being a detached tool of learning, as can be seen. The analysis proved that the bias imposed on marginalized students based on casting and resources inequity was systematic, whereas gender inequality and political involvement further solidified the exploitation in getting quality English education. Meanwhile, the research revealed that teachers were not simply docile members of this setting, on the contrary, frequently such educators became radical intellectuals and utilized biliterate policies, community action and informal student-learner education systems to prevent institutional oppression and democratize curriculum within classrooms. Evidence of inequality in resources, outcomes, and opportunities revealed in the comparison of government and private schools perpetuated intense rural-urban boundaries and the continuation of privilege and exclusion cycles. Likewise, participation patterns showed gendered trends where girls had almost equal access during the primary stage but their numbers decreased dramatically in higher levels of English education since they were restricted by their socio-cultural constraints, family duties and lack of institutional support. When combined, these revelations informed me that the issue of pedagogy and English education in Begusarai could not be comprehended and transformed without

considering the severe intertwining of education with social differentiation and political conditions. The research found that English as a means of empowerment could not be a reality when it comes to policies directly dealing with structural inequity and teachers are given resources through critical pedagogical training and institutions. Finally, the teachings in Begusarai implied that resilience, innovation and inclusivity were key towards re-designing English pedagogy in socio-politically intricate settings, and provided a guide to other territories with comparable obstacles.

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