



The Rural Learning Environment and Pupils' Learning of the English Language

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines encouraging and discouraging factors in developing an English language learning environment for rural pupils with Asian backgrounds. This is achieved by first establishing a theoretical background to govern the research exploration. This research utilized social cognitive theory of learning as guidance in the current research explorations. Specifically, the study sample is drawn from six rural schools in Sabah, Malaysia (Southeast Asia). The study utilizes a mixed-method approach whereby findings are triangulated through interviews, observations, and questionnaires. The study reveals that majority of the schools visited lacked the necessary resources indicating a serious problem that hinders learning of the English language in rural schools. Conclusions consider the impact of certain environmental drawbacks on pupils' English language proficiency and the verdict that the existing environment has a negative impact on Asian rural pupils' language development. Further, it is emphasized that environmental issues in Asia require a deep grasp of the subject as well as various multi-disciplinary approaches, whose perspectives provide the basis for the functions of different environmental aspects.

Keywords: Rural pupils, English language, learning environment, achievement

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INTRODUCTION

Though 70 percent of the world's population resides in rural regions, where hunger, literacy, and low school achievement are widespread, rural pupils have received minimal attention in comprehensive educational reform plans (Kam *et al.*, 2006; Rigg & Ritchie, 2002). Those plans are targeted to upgrade the literacy level in rural areas, which in turn increases the