

# English Language Teaching in Gujarat: Contemporary Issues and Challenges

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## Abstract

The status of English as a Global language due to the paradigmatic shift in economy, technology and other knowledge domains, has greatly impacted the teaching and learning of English not just in Gujarat but more or less, in all the states of India. With the spread and development of English around the world, English is used as a second language in a state like Gujarat and for some people the first language. It enjoys a high prestige in the state. At present the role and status of English in Gujarat is higher than ever as evidenced by its position as a key subject of curriculum. With a view to these facts, the paper deals with the contemporary issues and challenges in the field of English Language Teaching in Gujarat.

## Key Words

English Language Teaching, Global Language, Traditional Teaching

## Impact of English as a Global Language in Gujarat

This change in Global Economy and establishment of English Language as a global one, has impacted the teaching-learning of English in so many at primary level Education to Higher Education in the state. To cope up with the Global demand of business world and strengthen the roots of English as a global language, Government of Gujarat made policy to recruit the Special English Language Teachers with B. Ed. Qualification at Primary Government Schools of Gujarat. This has helped students to have benefits of trained English Language Teachers and have more exposure of accessing and learning English language. As a result, the students have started considering English as their second language and have been confident enough to access and try to learn it at their best in line with other languages and subjects.

With the status of English as a language of Global Economy and commerce, there has increased demand of English in business world. This has forced almost all the Institutes and Technological Universities imparting Professional Courses (Engineering, Management, Applied Sciences, Pharmacy, Computer Applications, Physiotherapy, Nursing etc.) in Gujarat to include the course of English Language or Communication in English or Compulsory English as a part of the curriculum in various professional degree as well as diploma programs offered across the state and the nation. This has also generated interest and attraction among people from all the strata of life and society towards acquiring communicative competence in English.

The interest towards communicative English is at peak level in the state as everybody wants to be competent in English Language. As a result of the indirect impact of the English as a Global language, the teachers of English in Gujarat (almost all the states of India) have become more focused towards the Task Based Learning of English Language as it enables their students in developing the communication skills in English and cause rapid development

of the various skills of English language. The increased awareness regarding the application of innovative techniques of teaching and learning (in order to make students globally competent) is one more crucial impact evident in the field of education. Use of authentic materials in the form of films, radio, TV and other modern tools started being used in ELT and for ELL. Now, the innovative technologies have added potential fuel to the cause of efficient teaching and learning of English language. So, it is true that these changes in Global World have proved successful in replacing the traditional teaching of English Language.

### **Skills, expectations, aspirations, that a learner brings to a classroom:**

Learner enters in English classroom with a high expectations and aspirations as he thinks that this language is going to change his life. When learner belongs to regional language background, he faces difficulty to adopt English surrounding atmosphere as he is not comfortable to express him/her self by using English Language. Let me share some of my observations as English Teacher of professional courses students. Students without English Language background have a psychological fear towards English Language. Sometime we called it inferiority complex as they think that during the interaction activities they would not be able to perform well in comparison of the students who belongs to English language background. They want to speak/share in English but logical they are not able to encode the message/thoughts/ideas from regional language to English Language. This barrier becomes hurdles for them to achieve fluency in English Language. They are more concern about communicative English and wants more activities and practice to overcome this weakness. They are always eager to learn English which will help them to perform better in recruitment process. Students with the English Language background are one step ahead as they have good command over communicative English. That makes them confident one. They are eager for discussions and group activities as they want more and more chance to speak. They want to learn how to put logical arguments properly. They are always concerned about their body language and presentation style. This impact of aspirations and expectations of learner helps in innovations of new techniques and methods of teaching English. Teacher needs to be updated with current scenario of English as a global language. He needs to be very much clear that what is required for the students and how to teach it effectively. This leads towards students' centric classroom. Students' aspirations and expectations helps teacher to gauge their level of competence and enthusiasm for learning. This in turn will also help a teacher in taking decisions about employing innovative techniques and methods of teaching English. Teacher grapple learners' needs and the ways to satisfy them and thereby, becomes more updated with current scenario of English as a global language. He becomes clearer about what is required for the students and how to teach it effectively. This leads towards student-centric classroom, where the teacher plays the role of a facilitator and try his best to satisfy the aspirations and expectations of the students. Thus, the built up expectations plays a pivotal role in motivating students, teachers, and even the classroom environment to be more productive in terms of language teaching and learning.

### **Problems in our ways of teaching English in Gujarat**

Students of the rural colleges face a number of problems. English is their second language. Learning a second language means acquiring a system of rules, but just as a very little is known about these rules, even less is known about how such rule systems are acquired. Students find themselves unable to express in English. They have no idea of proper sentence structure. They do not know proper pronunciation, spellings and grammatical rules. The sole objective of the teacher and the learner remain to clear the exams. The students never realize the importance of learning English as a language. In the past, in rural areas, English was

introduced to students in the fifth class. But now there is no dearth of English medium schools in such area yet the standards of English are falling rapidly.

- **Approach of learners towards learning English**

If we compare a graduate of present time with a graduate of the past, the result is shockingly amazing. The emphasis on passing the exams lies so heavy on the students that they opt for the cramming method. Such an approach helps unscrupulous elements to flourish. They help the students in achieving their goals of passing the examinations.

- **Over-crowded classes**

With the expansion of education, there is unprecedented growth of numbers of learner. This phenomenon is carried forward to the school stage and from there to secondary and the university stage. Sixty to seventy students is regarded as the normal class-size and in certain cases the class size is 100 to 120 students. Over-crowded classes always come with issues and challenges for English teachers. It is difficult to pay due attention to individual students and this is very much desirable in English classroom.

- **Challenges of teaching English in rural area**

English is always challenging for rural area students. English is their second language. Learning a second language means acquiring a system of rules, but just as a very little is known about these rules, even less is known about how such rule systems are acquired. They always struggle to express themselves using English language. They have no idea of proper sentence structure. They do not know proper pronunciation, spellings and grammatical rules. The sole objective of the teacher and the learner remain to clear the exams. The students never realize the importance of learning English as a language. In the past, in rural areas, English was introduced to students in the fifth class. But now there is no dearth of English medium schools in such area yet the standards of English are falling rapidly.

- **Lack of understanding about the aims of teaching English**

There is a general lack of clarity about the aims and objectives of teaching of English in India. The policy makers have failed to address clear aims and objectives of teaching English in schools and colleges. The teachers know that they have to teach the subject since it is included in the syllabus. The students understand that they must study this subject as they will be examined in it. In English medium schools, English is taught from the very beginning. In schools, English is not being taught as skills and that is the reason why teaching and learning of English in Indian schools is in a muddle.

- **Incompetent Teachers**

Incompetent English teachers are either trained in old methods and have never cared to look for something better in new techniques or there are those who receive new insight but never apply their knowledge to actual teaching work and remain satisfied with routine methods. Sometimes, English is taught by those who did not offer this subject while under training.

**Conclusion**

The government, the visionary policy makers in Education and English Teachers need to consider the above said challenges and issues in teaching-learning of English Language in Gujarat, and try to observe them. By working together, we can definitely surpass almost all the challenges to English language teaching in our respective state and the nation in general. The modes, methods, tools, approaches, and techniques to teach and learn English language should be changed and constantly being updated regularly with the advancement in technology and other knowledge domains. The traditional teaching of English should be replaced by the modern, innovative techniques of English Language Teaching.

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