



*Journal of Advances and  
Scholarly Researches in  
Allied Education*

*Vol. IX, Issue No. XVII,  
Jan-2015, ISSN 2230-7540*

**DEFICIENCIES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING  
ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN INDIA**

AN  
INTERNATIONALLY  
INDEXED PEER  
REVIEWED &  
REFEREED JOURNAL

# Deficiencies in Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language in the Secondary Schools in India

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**Abstract –** *The process of teaching and learning English in India is not satisfactory. Most of the Indian students, who have passed seven years of learning English (from junior to secondary school), fail to acquire expected level of proficiency in English. In the Indian context, a high percentage of school dropouts who were taught English for about six periods per week for seven years, leave their schools as ignorant of English usage.*

**Aim:** *The aim of this study is to identify the existing problems of teaching and learning English as a foreign/second language in the secondary schools of India.*

**Material & Method:** *The samples consist of 400 randomly selected government secondary school students, 20 English teachers of the same schools. The questionnaires mainly focused on language usage, teaching strategies, medium of instruction and English textbooks.*

**Results & Discussions:** *Indian students were found to have better access to English audio-visual aids. They read English newspapers and magazines and majority of them find the contents of their English textbooks interesting.*

**Keywords:** *ELT (English Language Teaching), EFL (English as a Foreign Language), ESL (English as a Second Language), Questionnaire*

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## INTRODUCTION

English language is considered by many as the international language. It is a language which has secured a place for itself alongside local languages in multilingual communities and is also learnt by all classes of the society. Its acquisition can guarantee the availability of opportunities to employment, traveling, higher education, and even better life (Crystal, 1997). The knowledge of English is also essential to access higher education which is dependent on English in many countries.

In India, English is taught as a foreign language and in India it is taught as a Second Language. The major difference between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) is presented in this paper. In an ESL context, English is the partial or universal medium of instruction in some or most subjects in school, while in an EFL

context instruction in other subjects is not normally given in English.

English is taught in Indian schools about six periods per week for six years. But it has been estimated that they hardly know few words by the time they join a University. This means that they have hardly been able to learn English words at the rate of one word per period. They do not know how to use the commonest structures of English. The mistake is in Educational system itself as teacher's target is to "prepare" his students for the examination and not to make them skilled in the use of the language they are learning (Subramanian, 1985). Communicative language teaching was introduced in India in the 1980s; it was a stuffy failure for the first few years because of the lack of the right context (Gupta, 2005).

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are presented below:

- To explore the ways of developing ELT in India at the level of secondary schools.
- To study and compare perceptions of teachers and students of Indian secondary schools about the following:
  - Medium of instruction in English class.
  - Methods used in English class.
  - Difficulties faced in ELT.
  - Textbooks.
- To suggest ways for improvement of status of ELT in Indian secondary schools.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

For systematically describing the situation, I have used a “Descriptive Method” to examine the ELT status of the Indian secondary schools. At the same time, this study could be called as a qualitative study which deals with issues not directly observable.

### Materials

The sample in the present study was consisting of 200 government secondary school students and 20 English teachers in Gujarat, India.

### India Sample

The Indian study was carried out in three districts of Gujarat. Questionnaires were collected from 200 students of four government secondary schools of these districts. Out of four schools, one was a boy's school, two were girl's schools and the fourth was a co-educated one. A total of ten teacher's questionnaires were distributed among the teachers of the same schools.

### Instrumentation: Development of Tools

#### Questionnaires

The materials comprised of two types of questionnaires, one for students and the other for teachers, consisting of mainly multiple-choice questions and some open-ended questions.

#### Student's Questionnaire

The student's questionnaire, with 29 questions, was planned with three parts: personal information, nineteen multiple-choice questions covering the areas of English classes, English textbooks etc. The last part

gave emphasis to teaching styles and methods which contained five questions.

#### Teacher's Questionnaire

The teacher's questionnaire, with 30 questions, was designed in four parts: personal information, fifteen multiple-choice questions, six open-ended questions on the problems posed in ELT classes, textbooks etc., and the last part which questioned teaching and learning strategies.

#### Techniques Used for Data Analysis

After the data were collected, the questionnaires were content analyzed. Subsequently, the frequency of each response was tabulated. Comments from the open – ended questions were used as part of analysis.

#### Medium of Instruction

Medium of instruction is the language that is used in teaching. In India, media of instruction switches among English, Hindi, and the respective state's official languages.

## CONCLUSIONS:

According to findings opted from the present study, ELT in the Indian secondary schools seems to be unsuccessful and English language proficiency and communicative competencies of a majority of the students are still open to question. In spite of the fact that they have had nearly 1000 hours of formal language instruction in their language classes before entering the university. Most of them have a very poor command over the English language.

On the basis of the conclusions of this study, it can be said that most of the Indian students don't receive adequate exposure to the English language, only the textbooks and not any other English books are taught, and there is frequent use of mother tongue by both students and the teachers.

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