



## Problems of Teaching English at the Collegiate Level in Tribal Areas of Gujarat

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### ABSTRACT

*English has long been a language of modernity which allows growth, power, position, etc. It has been a medium with which parents craze their children to educate so that their children can be on par with the world. It has also been taught as a second language in schools, colleges, and universities. It is equally a language of business communication. It has the potentiality to impress and hide the man from himself. Among these benefits of language, we cannot deny the fact that it has been difficult for the teachers of English to teach English as a second language. The learners due to their cultural variations, long-kept habit and attitude towards learning English have failed to be the apt users of it and the result is the final loss they have to bear in the jobs which they wish to opt from the market with high perks. The diversity of the students' socio-cultural background, motivation and interests, learning styles, differing personalities and behaviour patterns, the teachers' attitude and long-kept practice make the language teaching task intricate one. The present research paper focuses on the problems of teaching English as a second language at the collegiate level in the tribal areas of Gujarat. The attempt has been made to find out the obvious reasons for the failure in the teaching and learning of English and possible solutions have also been offered. Despite the fact that a lot of methods in ELT (English Language Teaching) are potential to find the remedies themselves, which are still been improved upon, a bent towards humanistic approach has been offered to empower the English language classrooms.*

**Keywords : ELT, Tribal Areas, Motivation, Employability, Raison de etre**

No people can be on island in the modern world. There is a necessity of English language teaching and learning so that the best of the knowledge and communication can be extended to all. To make the students aware of the outside world in a broader sense, English language plays an important role.

When teaching English for getting the desired outcome is a global problem, teaching English as a second language in tribal areas still remains a greater problem. It is easy to understand the difficulty of the situation as one has to teach English to some who have, perhaps, no or little English.

One would not argue with the statement that at the school level, the major focus of students is to pass an English exam. The teacher shows the tricks of passing the exam and does not bother whether the students have learnt English at the end of the term/year or not. Such practice on the teachers' and the students' path create lack of interest in students and demotivate them from the learning of English at a very early stage in life, which by the course of time becomes one of the major problems of lack of communication skills. The student realises this by the time he/she is about to be graduate and searching for job in the market.

One of the major problems of teaching English in tribal areas is to change the mindset of the conservatives (those who do not feel the necessity of change) to persuade them for the change that education and the learning of English shall bring: after all, learning is a change of behaviour. So, a lot of things depend on the parents and relatives to educate their siblings so that they can also be on par with the modern world.

Lack of motivation remains the major challenge for teaching English. If the teacher can establish a good rapport with the learners, his/her job would be easier. Studies suggest that teacher motivation contributes more to teaching-learning process than the teacher competence. Therefore, it is rightly said: 'If you are teaching John Greek, you must know John, you must know Greek, and you must know how to teach John Greek'. It is in the context of this kind

that the following small historical fact has been contextualised with the learning of English.

During 1936, England was in need to listen to its Crown Prince Albert, Duke of York (later King George VI), who was suffering from stammering. The speech therapy conducted by Lionel Logue his tutor helped him render the speech successfully without stammering. Logue prescribed a regimen (course of therapy) of vocal calisthenics (exercises) to improve his speech. David Seidler the actor once in an interview explained: 'These mechanical techniques are incredibly useful once you have overcome your stutter internally'. A film *The King's Speech* was also made on it and reflecting on the king's struggle to overcome his stutter, Firth the film-maker says: 'It's actually friendship and intimacy that galvanises him, not the diaphragm work'. Logue may not have 'cured' the stammer, but by instilling a sense of confidence and chipping at Bertie's anxieties, he made it possible for the king to untwist his tongue and find his voice at a moment when his country most needed him to speak. We can aptly quote Earl Stevick in the context of teaching English in tribal areas. 'In a language course, success depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom'.

Evidences suggest that any normal human being possesses the basic cognitive abilities for successful participation in teaching-learning process. Yet students in tribal areas have very low level of participation and success for learning English in schools and colleges. We can boost the learners from these sections of society by appreciating their universal values like honesty, bravery, family ties, health and hygiene, friendship, etc. Moreover, the students have to be regarded as human beings, avoiding 'holier-than-thou' and patronising attitude. Unless there is a rapport, the students won't be persuaded to learn. Such attempts will be helpful in generating and promoting the sense of competence, self-efficacy, self-respect, among tribal children in particular. So, one has to explore the humanistic qualities not only in literature teaching but also in language teaching.

The designing of the proper syllabi is also an important task. The lessons in the text should be related to the students' actual life (pragmatics). It is perhaps very difficult for a student from a tribal area to study the British or American or European context given in the lessons of the text. An imaginative leap that the student has to take without proper context is very difficult and therefore he cannot appreciate the lessons written in English. The process of taking the imaginative jump should be initiated gradually. This process can be from immediate environs to distant ones, both spatially and temporally. For one it requires to imagine the time of Shakespeare and the theatre with the details in reading and to appreciate the puns like 'you are the men of understanding', which refers to both the men of pit class and of sensible behaviour.

I do not mean to say that a student from tribal area is immune to modern life all together, still the lessons taught should be nearer home. Another benefit of the students' interest in learning English can result into a give-and take process which makes language richer. The students can also contribute in the English lexicon just as the Red Indians who learnt English and in the process enriched and contributed a good amount of vocabulary in the American lexicon (e.g. Ohio, Idaho etc.).

One more and very obvious problem an English teacher may encounter is of the mindset with which the students come for

learning. The students due to school experiences of the past believe that since they do not know grammar, they cannot learn English. One should not forget that whosoever knows grammar in one language also knows it in another so far as its substance is concerned. If he cannot however speak another language, or understand those who speak it, this is because of the difference of words and their formations which is accidental to grammar.

Right from the beginning the method of oral work should precede writing. Writing should come much later. In the beginning oral instructions have to be stressed upon. The method of substitution table can also be used along with the oral drills. Above all, one must remember that learning should be fun. Of course, one has to dangle a few carrots like improvements in the present condition, future employment, etc. to make the students want learn.

Further, the teacher has to be ready to learn some of the customs, manners and the language there, that will help him teach the students because language and society are so intertwined that it is impossible to understand one without the other. The teacher's confidence in the learner should be such that the learner can't be but infected, after all the very *raison d'être* for the English teacher is English and the enthusiasm he shows for it.

## REFERENCES

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