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**Needs Analysis of Secondary Students Studying in Government  
Schools in Bhavnagar District with Special Reference to Writing  
Skill**

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## **Abstract**

The significance of English today is very well known. It has become a world language due to its influence across different spheres of life. The demand of English language in a state like Gujarat is very high due to its ability to give an advantage it gives to students in education and in the work place the work place. Therefore, many initiatives been taken by the State governments to improve the standard of English. The textbooks prescribed by the State Board been made more interactive. However, there are many challenges due to which the aim has not been fulfilled. Many students especially in the rural regions of Gujarat still do not have even the basic competency required to progress to the next level. This study aims to understands the need of such learners.

**Keywords:** Needs Analysis, English Language, Secondary Schools.

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## **1.0 Introduction**

In last few decades English has become most used language of the world. The term lingua franca means “any language used for communication between groups who have no other language in common” (Matthews, 2000, p. 209). Today English has become an international language of business, entertainment, social interaction and education. Dewi (2015), says that English is used everywhere as a medium to interact among people from different cultures, backgrounds and countries. The situation is very common in India as well. As competency in English increases opportunities for people, parents want their children to enroll in English medium schools only. It is perceived as a language that increases one’s social status as well.

“No one gains advantage having it. Rather, anyone without it suffers. We are fast moving into a world in which not to have English is to be marginalized and excluded” (Graddol, 2010, p. 10)

India is a unique country in many ways. Being multilingual is one of them. After 1991 when the policy of economic liberalization was introduced, along with the economy, the aspirations of Indian students also increased. It was felt that a good command over English language was needed to really progress and compete in the world \. Therefore, language learning in school education should be given importance because students in India are bilingual or multilingual. NPE also stresses teaching of English in our classrooms.



*“Special emphasis needs to be laid on the study of English.”*

National Policy on Education (1986)

However, many students from rural areas have not been able to learn the language as well they ought to have. The situation is reflected in Gujarat as well. Realizing the need to improve the standard of English, the Gujarat government started taking initiatives for improving the status of English language. They started programs like Society for Creation of Opportunities through Proficiency in English (SCOPE), Digital Education and Learning Labs (DELL) (Formerly known as Digital English Language Labs) and Knowledge Management Program for Faculty (KMPF) during 2008 to 2009.

With the adoption of the 10+2+3 pattern of training, English was presented as a discretionary subject in classes V-VII. As a consequence of this, in standard VIII, there were two classifications of understudies, one who had the presentation to English for a long time and alternate gatherings were at zero level fitness in terms of English language capability. At this stage English was obligatory in class VIII, IX, and XI yet discretionary in X. It is clear that the poor status of English in Gujarat till the '80s had a reasonable connection to the language approaches actualized during those days. By the '90s, be that as it may, most schools had English in Classes V, VI, and VII. In any case, the way to deal with the instructing of English was primarily basic. Towards the end of 80s some changes were observed in textbooks and teacher training programs. In short English language has gained a lot of importance in Gujarat.

## **1.1 Importance of Secondary Education**

Secondary education is the first step in the career because from here on they get to choose the direction that their career can take whether it is Arts, Science or Commerce. It is really important for students to focus during this phase of life. Secondary and Higher secondary education gives them a foundation and perspective about the education and what career choice to make in the future. This is the phase where students come to know about the areas, they might be interested in. It also helps to build the basic knowledge in many areas. Secondary education also helps students to seek and find answers on their own and to continue their learning throughout the life.



Gujarat has adopted the 10+2+3 pattern of education, where standard 1 to 10 is the first phase then higher secondary schools for two years and lastly comes the course for three years known as college. Here secondary education means 9 and 10 standards.

Secondary education is considered as the first milestone for students. It is the first step for any learners to build the base for the future and getting admissions in different streams. Many students also chose to go in some professional courses. Whichever course they choose, English is a compulsory subject and the medium of instruction in most cases is English.

It is seen that in many rural schools of Gujarat the students' competence in English is very poor despite many initiatives. As a consequence, they suffer setbacks in class X and higher education. Lack of good English impedes their progress and results in loss of confidence and low self-esteem as well. The researcher teaches English in the secondary and higher secondary levels in a rural area near Bhavnagar, Gujarat. Looking the really poor ability of the students in English when they join class IX paved the way for research leading to his PhD. An attempt is being made to prepare a Bridge Course for the students to bring them at par so that they ready themselves for the next level in their career.

In order to prepare a Bridge Course, it was important to know the areas that needed attention and understand what the students needed to learn. So, a **diagnostic test** was prepared keeping in mind the expected language learning outcomes of students who have cleared class VIII. The diagnostic test was both subjective as well as objective and was prepared by keeping in center the knowledge level, understanding level, and application level of the students. The test was validated by the experts of the ELT field. This test was assessed by three experts in the field of teacher education to check its content validity. The test included fill in the blanks, connect the sentences, correct the sentences, match the following, answer the following questions, reading comprehension, close-ended and open-ended questions, essay writing, report writing, picture description etc. The test items were based on the syllabus of class VI, VII and VIII. This diagnostic test helped the researcher to understand the needs of the learners.

## 2.1 Needs Analysis

Needs analysis plays very crucial role in preparing any language course whether it is for school or ESP. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) described the importance of needs analysis when they say that any approach to syllabus design must start with some analysis of target needs, present conditions, language etc. After



gathering the data, it is possible to make general target and more precise aims as expected outcomes (cited in Irma Dolores, 2007). These precise objectives show learner's needs, and help in making decisions to develop course. Techniques and procedures used for collecting relevant information to understand the learner's needs and purposes are referred to as needs analysis. This information is related to the learners, the learning goal, and the contexts of use as well as learner or learning preferences.

Hutchinson and Walters (1987) explain needs analysis as the main feature of ESP course design. Needs analysis is the first step in developing any syllabus or course design. It is the most important part of curriculum development and needed before developing a syllabus. Thus, the information collected by needs analysis can be used to define program aims and the materials mostly needed for the language syllabus. Johnson K. (2008, pg.200) says that: "in order to plan a foreign language teaching we need to find a way of analyzing learner's needs. What is going to tell us just how much, and for what purpose our learners will need which foreign languages, it is the process of needs analysis."

Needs analysis in language teaching and learning can be considered as a systematic process which helps teachers to gather information and collect exact and whole data of their student's needs and requirements. Then they analyze the collected information and decide what to include in their course, depending upon the analysis in order to achieve learner's needs. This process can be used for all the students to advance their achievements and gathering challenged academic values. Some resources for gathering data in needs analysis are: tests, questionnaire, surveys, observation and personal interviews etc. Needs analysis collects the information about the condition in which language is going to be used, the reason for which that language is required, the types of communication that are going to be used in the lessons and the level of skill that is needed to create a course. As Amie N. Casper (2003) states: "The information gleaned from a need analysis can be used to help you define program goals. These goals can be stated as specific teaching objectives which will function as the foundation on which a teacher will develop the lesson plans, materials, tests, assignments and activities." Thus, needs analysis helps to clarify the purpose of learning program

### 3.1 Population of the Study

All the students studying in standard 9 of Bhavnagar district were considered as a population for the present research. The sample for the present research was selected randomly, convenient sampling method was used. A block was selected first from Bhavnagar district randomly then four schools from that block were



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selected. From each school 50 students were selected randomly for the present research. Then each school was given the test in test papers were students had to write answers in paper only. The students were given 3 hours for this test. The test was administered before school hours. The researcher helped the students to understand whenever required. The papers were evaluated and the scores were tabulated in Excel sheet.

### 3.2 Sample of the Study

From the population, samples for the present research were selected randomly. Specifically convenient sampling method was implemented for the selection of sample. First of all, a block from Bhavnagar district was selected randomly for the present study. From the selected block four schools were selected randomly. 50 students of standard 9 each school were selected randomly for the present research.

### 3.3 Tools

The researcher used a diagnostic test to collect data and analyzed the statistically.

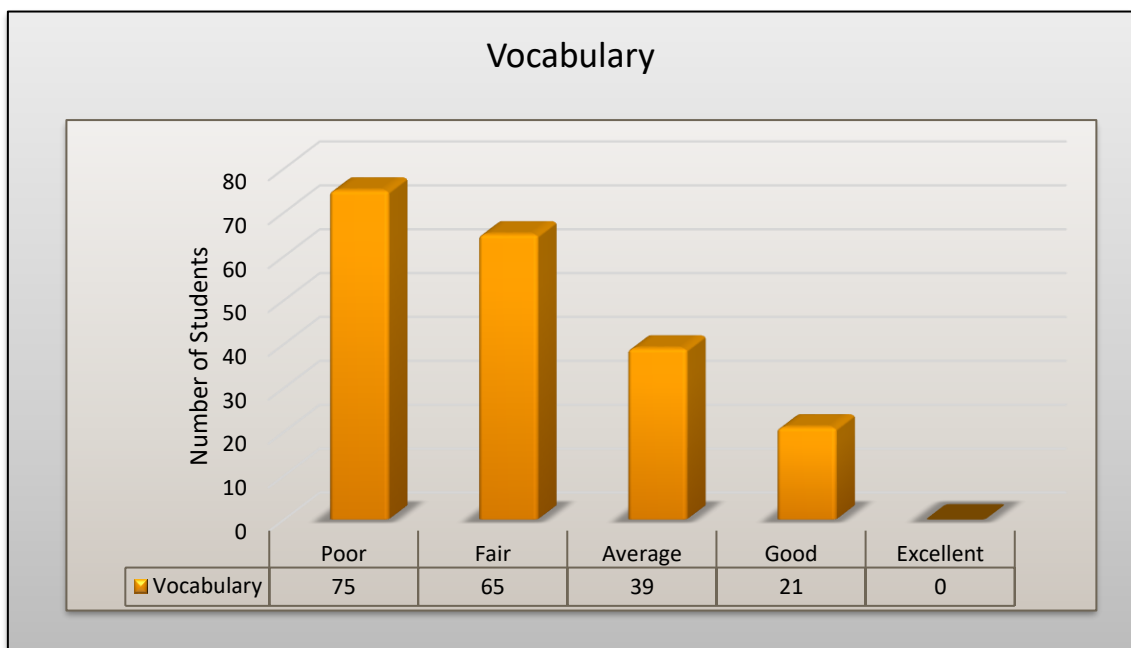
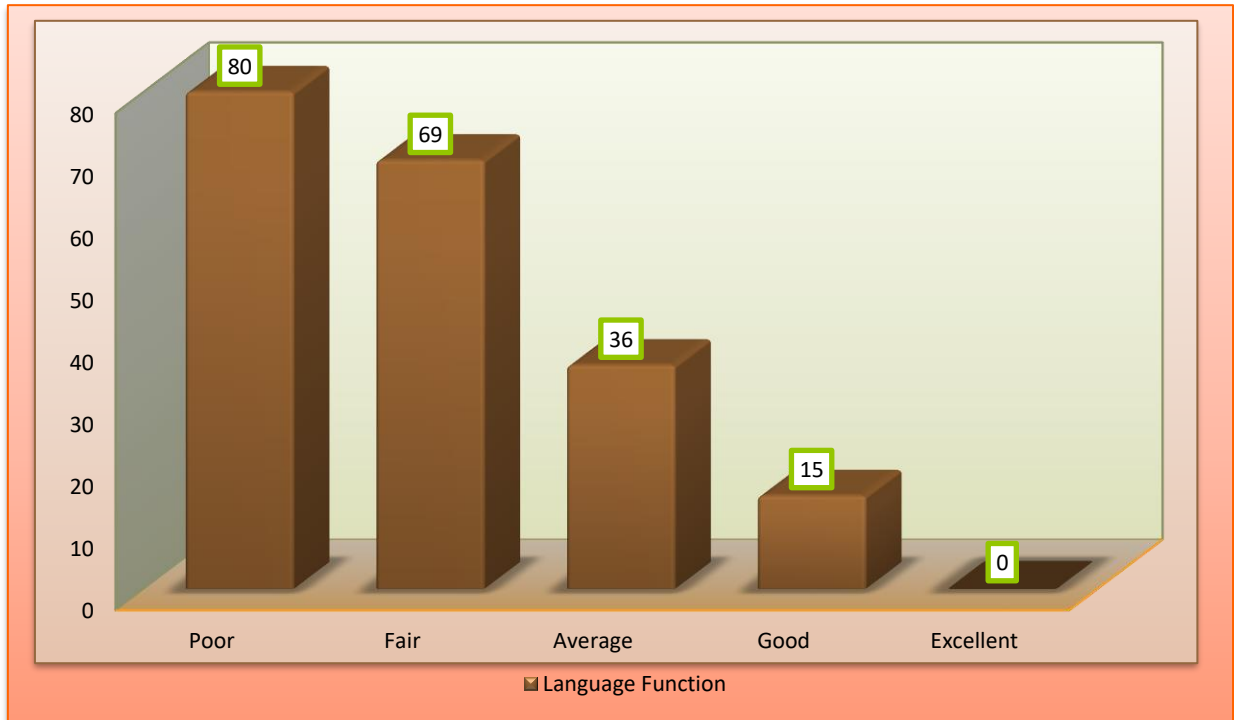
### 3.4 Process of Data Collection

First of all, a diagnostic test was prepared by the researcher for the students. A diagnostic test was prepared to know the gaps of learning students have at present. The test was of 170 marks which included many different types of exercises like open ended questions, short questions, fill in the blanks, match A with B, true and false, multiple-choice questions, essay type questions, reading comprehension questions etc. The test items were based on the prescribed textbooks (Classes Vi- IX) by the Gujarat Government.

### 4.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation

This diagnostic test incorporated questions related to writing and use different language functions. The test also included open ended questions, short questions, essay type questions, reading comprehension questions, jumbled sentences, picture description, completion of sentences, completion of paragraph etc. The researcher has divided all components majorly into three types. They are Language Function, Vocabulary and Sentence Formation.

**Graph 3.1: Students' Competency in English Language**





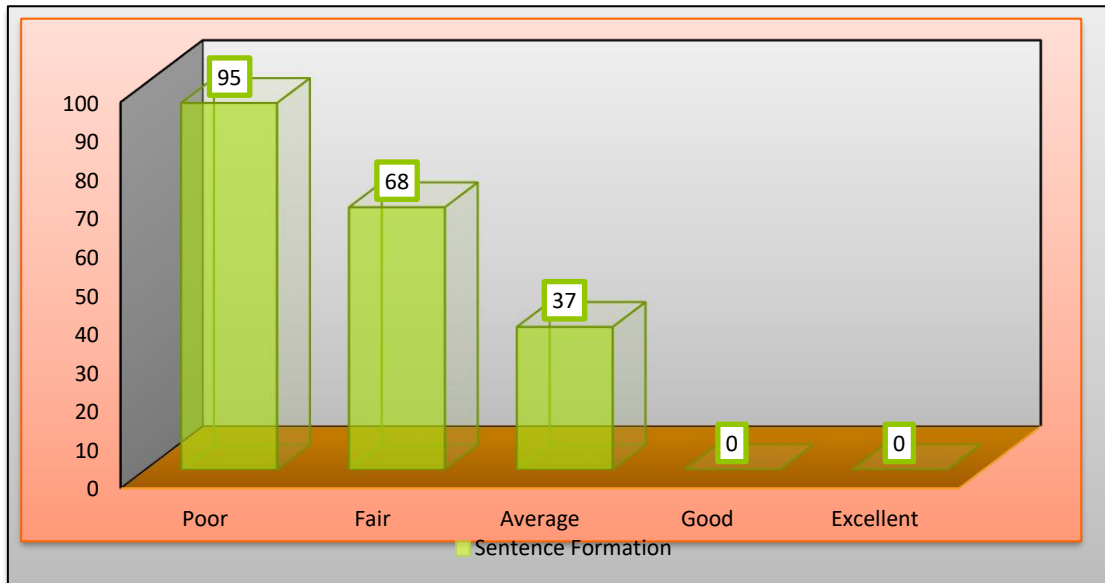
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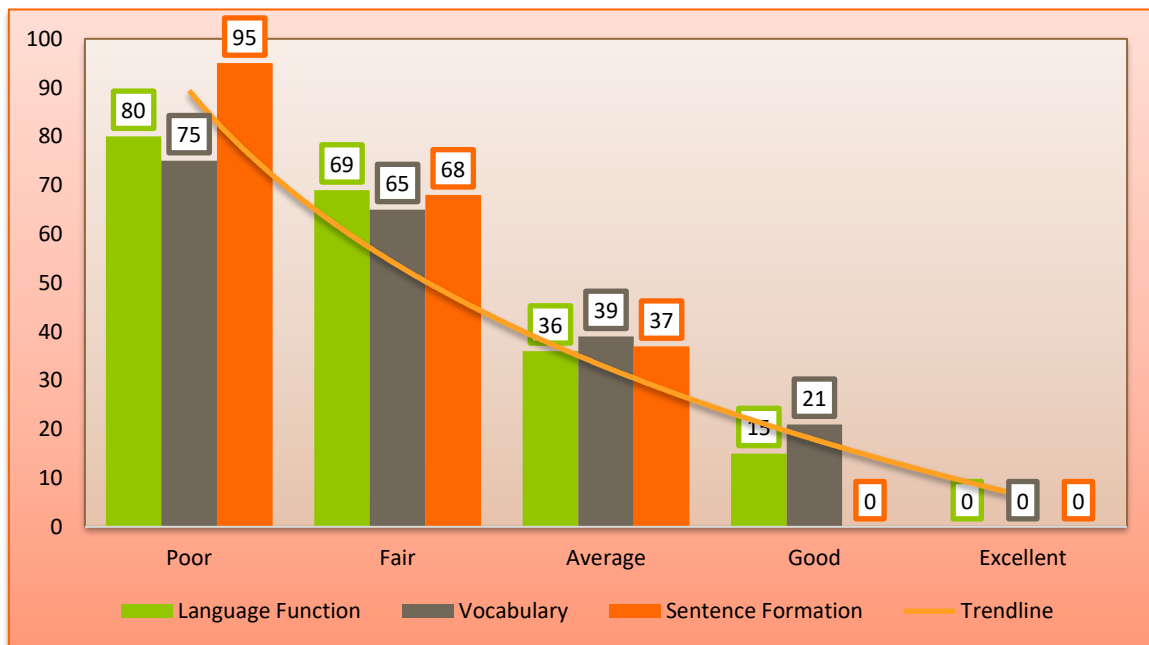
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## OVERALL REPRESENTATION







Students with  $\geq 30$  percent were considered Poor.

31 to 45 percent as Fair,

46 to 60 percent as Average,

61 to 80 percent as Good and

$\leq 81$  percent as Excellent.

Out of 200 students who took the diagnostic test,

- 95 the highest, scored poorly in sentence formation (score less than 30)
- 80 scored poorly in language function
- As far as vocabulary is concerned, slightly fewer students 75 scored poorly.
- About 67 scored in the fair range in all the components (score between 31 to 45: Fair,
- About 37 scored in the average range all the components (score between 46 and 60)
- Only 18 students were in the good category in language function and vocabulary. None was in this category with regard to sentence formation
- But none scored more than 81 % in vocabulary, in language function and Sentence formation

#### 4.1 Analysis

- For each component, Poor Category has the highest count of students.
- Overall, we see that a pattern that students who are poor performers face challenges in grammar and sentence while Average and Average performers are not hindered by Grammar or Sentence formation but limited by their vocabulary.
- It can also be concluded that, for poor performers, the focus should be to simultaneously develop Grammar structure and Sentence Formation, only to be supplemented by Vocabulary Enrichment later on, when the initial hurdles of Grammar and Sentences is gone.



Based on the given data, we can interpret and analyze the performance of the students in various components of the test:

### 1. Sentence Formation:

The highest of students, 95, scored poorly in sentence formation, which means they obtained a score of less than 30 and just 37 students fared in the average column and there was none in good or excellent category. This indicates a significant weakness in their ability to construct sentences correctly. That means effort must be made through exercised to focus on grammatical competency. This inability indicates that the learners do not have the competency or understanding of the sentence structures or patterns.

### 2. Language Function:

A high number of 80 of the students, scored poorly in language function. There were only 36 in the average column and just 15 in the good category. This suggests that a majority of the students struggled with understanding and using different language functions effectively, such as expressing opinions, making requests, or giving instructions. This reflects their incompetency in "pragmatics." "This skill is the ability to use and understand language appropriately in different social and communicative contexts.

It involves understanding and applying the implicit rules and conventions of language, such as taking turns in conversation, using appropriate tone and register, interpreting non-literal meanings, and understanding the intended purpose or function of different types of language (e.g., requesting, persuading, apologizing, etc.). Those who have difficulties in understanding language functions may result in challenges in interpreting and responding to others' communication effectively.

### 3. Vocabulary:

Slightly fewer students, 75 scored poorly, 39 were in the average range and only 21 were had a good score in vocabulary. This implies that a substantial portion of the students lacked proficiency in their knowledge and understanding of words and their meanings.



Poor vocabular can significantly impact students' language proficiency and communication skills. Vocabulary is a basic aspect of language learning, as it includes the words and phrases that enable us to express ourselves and understand others. Not having a good vocabulary can affect their understanding of what the learners listen to or read and also affects the way they express their ideas or thoughts.

#### 4. Overall Performance:

Around 67 of the students scored in the fair range (score between 31 to 45) in all the components, indicating an average performance across all areas.

Approximately 37 of the students scored in the average range (score between 46 and 60) in all the components. This suggests a slightly better performance than the fair range students across all areas.

#### 5. Good Category:

Only 18 of the students were categorized as good in language function and vocabulary. It's important to note that none of the students were classified as good in sentence formation. This implies that there is a significant gap in the students' ability to construct sentences effectively.

#### 6. Score Limitation:

None of the students scored more than 81% in vocabulary, language function, or sentence formation. This indicates that there were no exceptional performances in these areas and highlights the need for improvement.

It very is quite clear from the graphs that out of 200 respondents, majority scored poorly across the three components of sentence structure, Functions of English and vocabulary. Those who are poor at sentence formation were found to be poor at vocabulary and language functions as well. The same is the case of other performers.

This also proves that no component can be learnt in isolation. It means that any course that is designed to help address these needs have to focus on integrating the skills and language components. This clearly means that language learning cannot be done by isolated teaching of different components. It has been observed that people learn language as a whole and not in parts, though learners do exhibit knowledge or



awareness of vocabulary without being able to use it in a discourse. On the other hand, not having competency in language structure / grammar will affect competency as a whole.

Overall, the data shows that a large number of students need improvement in all three language skills. The most urgent need is for improvement in sentence formation, followed by language function and vocabulary.

Here are some specific recommendations for how to improve student performance:

- Sentence formation: students could be provided with additional practice in forming sentences through activities such as identifying the parts of speech in sentences, creating sentences with different grammatical structures, and correcting errors in sentence formation.
- Language function: Students could be with additional practice in using different language functions. This could be done through activities such as describing events, giving instructions, and asking questions.
- Vocabulary: Students could be provided with additional practice in learning new vocabulary words. This could be done through activities such as reading, writing, and using flashcards.

The students' progress should be monitored and they should provide with additional support where needed. This could be done through individual tutoring sessions, small group instruction, or extra practice assignments.

The other factors that affect learning and may be contributing to the students' poor performance are:

- The students' native language: As the native language is Gujarati and they have no opportunity to use English in their day-to-day transactions as they are in a rural area, they may have difficulty learning English grammar and vocabulary.
- The students' educational background: If the students have not had a lot of exposure to English, they do not not have the foundation they need to succeed in English language classes.
- The students' motivation: As said earlier, there is no need of English to carry out their daily transactions. They use Gujarati for everything. So, there is no motivation to learn English, they may not put in the effort needed to improve their skills.



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## 5.1 Conclusion

There might be many more challenges for teaching English as well but these are the basic problems they are facing with their teachers. It is very crucial time for the language teachers to think about it because even after spending so much time energy and money they hardly get the desired outcomes. Policies and courses need to be designed according to the needs and challenges they find. As the importance of secondary school education is high enough government also has to come up with some innovative ideas to improve the present situations of the government schools.



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