

# TROUBLE SPOTS OF LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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## ABSTRACT

*English as a Global language has made it necessary to learn it as a second language in non English native countries. English as a second language plays an important role in the education system of India. There are several barriers to learning English as a second language. Second language learners face many difficulties mainly because of the negative interference of the mother tongue and cultural differences. The purpose of this article is to identify the most common trouble areas faced by English language learners and to provide evidences why they cause difficulties for learning English as a second language. Many errors commonly made by speakers and learners of English language are identified and discussed. The major trouble spots identified are; pronunciation difficulty (phonology), lexical problems, grammar, repetition of words, influence of first language, and sentence formation. These difficulties are heightened for those learning English as a second language. Unlike their vernacular language English language is introduced way after they started speaking. These difficulties are discussed in this article briefly to analyze various trouble spots of learning English as a second language.*

**Key Words:** Second language, Phonology, Grammar, language skills, pronunciation, Vocabulary.

It is truly said, “*Language comes next to food.*” We are so intimately familiar with our mother tongue that we take it for granted as we do breathing or walking. When it comes to learning of a foreign language like English the scenario is entirely different and challenging. English, both as a language and as a medium of instruction has brought in the problems related to English language education situation in India. It is taught and learnt both as first and second language in various countries. In learning first language (L1) learner forms speech habits unconsciously and in second language (L2) speech habits are formed consciously and consequently the learner encounters several language learning problems. English as a second language is full of problems for the foreign learners as the learning situations are different. It is mostly artificial and the learner has to make additional efforts to learn it as a second language. This study is an attempt to bring out various problems associated with learning English as a second language.

The moment the learner enters the English classroom; various challenges are waiting for him. Few students may face difficulties in acquiring language skills and some in linguistic components. Learner may face difficulties in acquiring, knowing, seeking information or acquiring skill due to various reasons. The learner may face problem with both oral and written language. Difficulties can be faced by the learner in recognizing, acquiring and using the components that forms the linguistic skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing. Second Language learners often face difficulties in syntax and pronunciation due to the influence of their L1. Forming inappropriate grammatical patterns, pronouncing certain sounds incorrectly or with difficulty, and confusing items of vocabulary are the major difficulties. This is known as L1 transfer or "language interference". However, these transfer effects are typically stronger for beginners' language production. The difficulty level of the language can be decided on the basis of the learner's notion of how alien he feels English language is? Linguistically, Indian and English language differs from each other. The difference in English and Indian languages can be seen in subject matter relating to phonology, morphology and syntax. The difference in linguistic field and the difficulties faced by the Indian students in learning English as second language were based on phonology; morphology and syntax:

#### a) PHONOLOGY

Indian language has its own phonological features which are distinct from English phonology.

Examples:

/f/ is a voiceless labio-dental fricative in English. When the consonant /f/ occurs some Indian speakers substitute it by /ph/ which is voiceless aspirated bilabial plosive.

Fish – *phis*,                      Fast – *phast*,                      Father - *phader*

Some Indian speakers tend to say the above words by using /ph/ which is voice bilabial plosive in India.

/v/ is a voiced labio-dental fricative in English but /v/ is absent in Bengali. When the consonant /v/ occurs it is substitute by /b/ which is voiced bilabial plosive in India.

Vehicle – *bihikal*                      Van – *ban*                      Volley - *boli*

Bengali speakers while speaking English they tend to say above the words by using /b/ which is voiced bilabial plosive instead of using /v/.

#### b) LEXICAL PROBLEMS:

Ship- *cheap*                      Same- *shame*                      save-*shave*

The problem that can be seen unable to distinguish between /s/ and /ts / or /s/ and /sh/

To-*too*                      Sit- *seat*

The problem that can be seen unable to distinguish between /u/ and /u:/ and /i/ and /i:/

**c) GRAMMAR:**

Grammar is without doubt one of the most daunting aspects of the English language, an area riddled with complexities, inconsistencies, and contradictions. It has also been in a state of flux entire its existence. For native speakers of English, as well as for those learning it as a second language, grammar poses a very serious challenge to speaking and writing both accurately and effectively.

**TENSE, ASPECT, AND MOOD**

English has a relatively large number of tense–aspect–mood forms with some quite subtle differences, such as the difference between the simple past "I ate" and the present perfect "I have eaten." Progressive and perfect progressive forms add complexity.

**FUNCTIONS OF AUXILIARIES**

Second language learners in India find it difficult to use the various ways in which English uses auxiliary verbs.

Example:

Negation- He hasn't been drinking.

Inversion with the subject to form a question - Has he been drinking?

Short answers - Yes, he has

Tag questions -has he?

**MODAL VERBS**

English also has a significant number of modal auxiliary verbs which each have a number of uses.

Example,

The opposite of 'You *must come to college.*' (Obligation) is

'You *may come to college.*' (Lack of obligation, choice),

**IDIOMATIC USAGE**

English is regarded for its idiomatic usage.

Example

The use of different main verb forms in such apparently parallel constructions as

"Try to learn", "help learn", and "avoid learning" pose difficulty for learners.

Another example is the idiomatic distinction between "make" and "do": "make a mistake", not "do a mistake"; and "do a favour", not "make a favour".

**ARTICLES**

English has a number of articles, including "the" (the definite article) and "a, an" (the indefinite article). At times English nouns can or indeed must be used without an article; this is called the zero articles. Some of the differences between definite, indefinite and zero article are fairly easy to learn, but others are not, particularly since a learner's native language may lack articles or use them in different ways than English does.

## PHRASAL VERBS

Phrasal verbs in English cause difficulties for many learners because they have several meanings and different syntactic patterns.

## PREPOSITIONS

The correct use of Prepositions in the English language frequently creates confusion and can turn out to be quite a frustrating learning experience for SECOND LANGUAGE/EFL learners. For example, the prepositions "on" (come on, rely on, turn on), "of" (think of, because of, in the vicinity of), "at" (turn at, meet at, start at), "in" (listen in, turn in, step in) "up" (make up, give up, look up, turn up, get up) are used in so many different ways and contexts, it is very difficult to remember the exact meaning for each one. When translating back to the second language learners' respective L1, a particular translation of preposition may be correct in one context, but when using the preposition in another context, the meaning is sometimes quite different.

### d) VOCABULARY:

Reduplication

It is done to emphasize the effect where words are repeated but in English it is rarely practiced. Examples:

*dhire dhire jao* - slowly slowly go 'Go slowly'

Word derivation

Word derivation in English requires a lot of rote learning. For example, an adjective can be negated by using the prefix un- (e.g. unable), in- (e.g. inappropriate), dis- (e.g. dishonest), or a- (e.g. amoral), or through the use of one of a myriad related but rarer prefixes, all modified versions of the first four.

**COLLOCATIONS** - Collocations in English refer to the tendency for words to occur regularly with others. Second language learners make mistakes with collocations in their writing/speaking which sometimes results in awkwardness.

**Slang and Colloquialisms** In most native English speaking countries, large numbers of slang and colloquial terms are used in everyday speech. Many learners may find that classroom based English is significantly different from how English is spoken in normal situations. This can often be difficult and confusing for learners with little experience of using English in Anglophone countries.

### e) SYNTAX

India language has the following order of its constituent subject, object and verb (SOV). While English language its constituent is subject, verb and object (SVO).The problems that are likely to arise are on the sentence construction as they tend to imitate L1 pattern.

Example: Hindi - *aadmi aam khaya* English- Man ate mango.

Other difficulties associated with learning English as a second language are, little understanding of aims of teaching English, dearth of competent teachers, wrong methods of teaching, insufficient provisions of audio-visual aids, over-crowded classes, and shortage of time etc.

### **Conclusion:**

Mastering English language is not an exercise that is confined to classroom. It is certainly important to learn how English language works will enhance your engagement with speech and writing every day, from the books you read, to the e-mails you write, to the conversation you have with friends and strangers alike. It is also important to learn the structures, styles, and rules that shape the language. The key to truly learning English as a second language is to read and listen to the people write and speak every day, from the most well-known authors to the people you talk to on the bus.

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