

# The challenges and problems encountered in teaching and learning English as a second language in ESL classrooms

M.Kannan<sup>1</sup>, Dr.S.Meenakshi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Social Science and Language, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore.

<sup>2</sup> School of Social Science and Language, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7092725>

Published Date: 19-September-2022

---

**Abstract:** Learning and possessing a very good knowledge of English language is extremely important, and guiding educators to contribute to effective instruction is considered as a huge necessity. This article covers the obstacles educators encounter in delivering English as a second language in the classroom to the learners, as well as alternative solutions, a theoretical viewpoint on students' learning difficulties, and future research to investigate evidence-based tactics. This article is expected to have a significant impact on more educators' awareness of their own limitations, sources of motivation, necessary abilities, and most significantly, ways to reorganize the process of teaching to be expert in the teaching of English as a second language. It also deals with the ideal outcome of successful integration between educators and desired learners.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Educators, Teaching, English as a Second Language (L2).

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English language is a highly esteemed language and it is regarded as a second language in many countries. In the overall development of a person, second language learning plays an important part. The whole element of personal development has been discussed. The history of English as a second language, as described by Thirusanku & Melor (2012), is closely related to the imperialist age of the United Kingdom. People in different nations including India, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa and others have adopted English as their second language. English has been introduced as a second language to enhance individual ability to communicate internationally to fulfil the required objective. The second language learning of English promotes opportunities, social standing and social elasticity. Gill and Kirkpatrick (2013) mentions the elite and the ostracist community are also continually differentiated through the use of language. In 2003, Scrase stresses a point that English language plays a prominent role not only to have a better work, but also for social interactions worldwide.

The second language of an individual is a language not of his/her mother tongue but is utilised in the geographical area of that individual. English was regarded as a foreign language before independence because it was not frequently used and not generally spoken in our country until it was prominent and liberally used. English has become important worldwide as a second language. Every teacher who teaches in all subjects need not to concentrate only on a particular topics, but to use several languages, particularly English, consistently in order to maximise use amongst their students to improve the capacity of their students with the essential abilities in English. These methods enhance the use of language by learners to communicate and build confidence and exercise outside schools and institutions. As we recognized, before the education reform teachers, especially the learning processes of students is highly significant and need to be reformed.

### The Importance of Learning a Second Language

Learning a second language is a good way for students to progress as learners and, later in life, as professionals in a globalised world. Speaking more than one language improves brain function and provides a number of mental advantages and benefits. It will also help to enhance decision-making and it will tend to make more rational conclusions. In general, multilingual persons are more aware of their environment.

Many public and private higher educational institutions play an important role in generating and encouraging the demand for English as a second language so that individuals may express themselves and get a better understanding in a global setting.

## 2. FACING CHALLENGES AND EXPLORING SOLUTIONS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Educators encounter a slew of issues when they go from the learning community to the classroom. Many research studies substantiates that teachers encounter many challenges in English education. Firstly, there are many issues which make for a shortage of educated and competent English teachers (G. Hu, 2005; Y. Hu, 2007). Teachers who do not have a sufficient education and qualifications are hence teachers who lead to poor delivery of subjects.

As a result of linguistic globalisation, teachers face important obstacles. The fact is, are teachers and their learners entering the world and finding fresh findings in English? Educators are encouraged to grasp the diversity of their learners in class on an individual basis, as this diversity may lead to, if they are not handled, to different problems and unfavourable perceptions among their learners. Teachers should therefore be fully equipped with endless knowledge and understanding about how to overcome and manage diversity of student in the classroom. Teachers face numerous problems, such as the mindset of students to learn a new language (Abdullah & Majid, 2013). The crucial aspect of behaviour is utilised, according to Latchanna and Dagnev (2009), to determine an individual's feelings and views regarding a given activity. Late bloomers and pessimistic student opinions regarding second language learning impair their capacity to properly learn. Students cannot grasp a language if they are negative, and teachers confront a variety of challenges while teaching the fundamentals of second language acquisition. An ever-increasing array of studies has looked at the relationship between student's behaviour and language of learning. While studies have looked at the issue of student attitudes as a deciding factor in educational achievement. Can the attitudes of learners alter? How can professors adjust to remove their barriers? Attitude is defined as a "relatively lasting organisation, which predisposes a person to respond in a preferable way" (Smith, 1971). To improve their negative attitudes toward learning English, teachers should identify and involve their students in a variety of activities, such as going to an art display, participating in an event, or presenting presentations.

Furthermore, it is very important to explain that the principle of learning and teaching English is driven by elements, such as the strong internal will and interest of the individual to learn. Only learner motivation depends on successful second language learning. But retaining the motivation of learners as stated by Hadfield & Dörnyei (2013) is a very difficult issue for teachers. The three stages of Motivation in foreign language education and learning have been identified by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011).

There are:

- (1) The social psychological phase is connected with Gardner (1959). He said the social milieu of students provides the foundation for second-language instruction, as well as their attitudes about the subject.
- (2) The intellectual positioning period. The reasons for acquiring a second language, the time of cognition is more crucial in the learning of a second language, where teacher and student contact occurs.
- (3) The process-oriented period in which researchers began to focus on motivational dynamics. This particular time-frame showed students' significant interest in studying language in their particular surroundings, which led to a new step in generating a wide range space for the literary works that concentrated on that idea. Teachers need to be equipped with a number of ways to the study of a second language by enhancing their motivation to learn.

## 3. AFFECTING FACTORS TO THE ENGLISH TEACHERS

The obstacles affecting the English teachers in the classroom are identified in a number of ways.

1. **Empower learners to establish their own goals** - Teachers are encouraged to set their own learning goals and assist them in developing effective methods for achieving those goals. In this area, teacher roles only make it easy for students to learn a second language successfully through simple and efficient procedures.

2. **Create a scenario for learners to discover and sense performance.** A sense of performance is a key aspect for successful second-language learning. More and more research have demonstrated that learning in a favourable classroom setting that can increase the self-esteem of a person paves way to good learning.

3. **Learning language from outside:** With the usage impoverished English outside schools, the huge obstacles encountered by English teachers arise. With each topic, teachers should understand the entire literacy knowledge and critical awareness of English globalisation. In every other area as well as in outside activities, it is very important to believe that the usage of English language should be emphasised.

4. **Maximize group classroom activities** - The amount of group school tasks and activities to break the incapacity to interact with second language learners which should be under the monitoring of the teachers. The pleasure and engagement of students in classroom activities like lectures and classes influences teaching and learning excellence significantly.

5. **Second Language Acquisition and Factors influencing in Learning-**It covers the definition of second language learning and identifies the motivation and social climate contributors. Language learning is a key component of human life. In literature acquisition of a second language is generally called language learning in a controlled situation in a classroom. The second language acquisition takes place in stages. To master a new language, the students need undoubtedly to go through these five phases below. **Vygotsky's Stages of Second Language Acquisition(1978)**

#### **i) Preproduction**

The process of recognizing a word. The learner is working hard to master nearly 500 words without uttering and repeating them aloud, but only after hearing the original sound.

#### **ii) Manufacturing words**

The student can memorise one or two-word sentences with more than one thousand words. Learners can pronounce important words such as food, table, milk, college, and school.

#### **iii) Emerging discourse**

The student can compose simple sentences and, despite grammatical faults, starts speaking. The student can also speak almost 3000 words. At this level, the student is able to interact and understand.

#### **iv) Intermediate level of fluency**

The learners must have the capability to master over 6,000 words and is able to create complicated sentences and keep acceptable understanding.

#### **v) Further fluidity**

This is the final stage in which the second language is mastered. They are then regarded as processors of nearly like a native language speaker.

In the last 3 decades, scholars have received much attention to the topic of motivation and learning a second language. There is an interconnection between second language acquisition and motivation is the main aspect in the learning process. They have long believed that motivation is an important motivator for pupils to study and do well in a second language in the groundbreaking study done by Gardner and Lambert (1959). They also said that the many affective components of an individual are vital to learning a second language, such as emotion and self-worthiness.

By presenting the orientation index, which asserts two sorts of motive theories, integrative and instrumental, Gardner and Lambert have made another step forward.

**I. Integrative theory** - Individual endeavours, in order to acquire a new language and communicate with other groups. For learners to increase their ability to learn a new language, the desire to mix with different groups is vital.

**II. Instrumental Theory** - This refers to a person's personal endeavour to learn a foreign language, so that people can get a job, they can be admitted to the best universities and communicate with colleagues in the future. The students profit from this sensible foundation and they can find a significant improvement (Ushioda, 2012).

The distinction between intrinsic (part of one's actual nature) and extrinsic (motivation from outside) motivation for learning a new language is that intrinsic motivation comes from inside the learner—two kinds of motivation theories. Gardner and Lambert's 1959 cutting-edge article aimed at identifying the main motivational source (intrinsic and foreign) in Montreal among second-language students of French (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Their emphasis was on the integrative motivation of the greatest resolve in successful second language learning.

Mundy and Jarrold (2010) suggested, other than motivating, that the sender and recipient were mostly responsible for the formation of a new language. They emphasised that communication that only rely on language in any social environment. They seemed realistic and firmly based in their assumptions. Abutalebi (2008) reports that successful second-language learning mainly in contrast to ordinary first-language acquisition, this takes happen in the presence of the desired spoken language contexts. Verga and Kotz (2013) argued, but failed to give an appropriate explanation of their data, that social interaction has a key function and contributes to the successful development of a second language. They also dismissed the study's findings due to the technological constraints imposed by interactive settings in imaging studies.

#### **4. STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES WITH ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FROM A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Despite the fact that English is taught to schoolchildren at a young age, many students find it difficult to communicate orally and regard English as a challenging language to communicate in since it is a non-native language. Teng (2012) estimates that mastering a new language will take more than a decade to reach oral and written competency. When communicating with others, ESL students found it challenging to use English as a communicative tool. According to the study, those who have fewer knowledge and abilities in utilising English as a communication tool are more likely to code flip between the first and target languages in order to enhance the chance of communicating the desired information. Human information processing theory is connected to the ability to acquire a second language.

"Learning a second language is similar to learning a skill since different components of the task must be practised and integrated into fluent execution." This necessitates the mechanization of component sub-skills. Learning is thought to be a cognitive activity since it involves internal representations that govern and guide performance. In the case of language acquisition, these representations are based on the language system and include processes for selecting relevant vocabulary, grammatical rules, and pragmatic conventions that guide language usage. Learners have more control over their internal representations when they simplify, unify, and harmonise their internal representations, there is a constant reorganisation as their performance improves. (Karmiloff-Smith 1986).

According to Altenaichinger (2002), human beings are created with a distinctive language processing machinery that allows them to acquire a variety of languages. His early work in this subject was largely focused on the social-context-proposed creative construction hypothesis, which was based on three intrinsic qualities linked to successful second language learning. Filter, organiser, and monitor are some of the internal elements he mentions. Altenaichinger (2002) coined the word "filter" to describe how social context influences an individual's ability to acquire a new language. The term "organiser" refers to a component of language structure and grammatical determination. Finally, monitor refers to a person's deliberate effort to examine and adjust their speech in light of their situation and age.

The most essential aspect that contributes to problems in obtaining competency and mastering a second language is the students' surroundings. Human information processing hypothesis proposed by Miler (1956) said that people have trouble connecting with their surroundings and are unable to expand and support current language learning. Every day, people get a vast amount of information from external settings, such as objects they see, smell, touch, and hear, and while it is difficult to recall everything in detail, some information is stored in a way that may be accessed later. So, what exactly is the point of this procedure? Scientists have constructed models that explain the process in great detail because the human brain is so complicated. One of the most influential theories is the information processing model, which implies that the human brain is similar to a computer.

There are three types of memory storage. Sensory memory is the initial type of storage. Everything a person notices from their environment is stored in sensory memory. The capacity of human sensory memory is quite limited, and it can only keep incoming information for two or three seconds. If the information was given enough attention, it would be moved to working memory, which is another type of memory storage. Using the rehearsal strategy, information from working memory is transferred to long-term memory and kept indefinitely. According to that paradigm, information may be practised in a variety of ways, including repeating it to oneself, elaborative rehearsal, and reference to other content.

Developing a link between theory and practise is a major roadblock to reaching the intended result. Swaffar (2003) claims that in the sphere of foreign language education, practise has replaced theory, resulting in a deafening blankness and a discipline in crisis. As a result, it's clear that educators need to think beyond the box when it comes to teaching English. Educators must recognise that teaching language without substance is ineffective: "If language teachers do not even begin to understand educational and applied subject theory, they will be simple technicians and believe themselves to be such". As a result, there is a need to redefine professional practise in light of a new form of teacher education.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the long-term trend and discover what challenges English as a Second Language teachers encounter, as well as a few contributing factors that contribute to successful learning. The most essential source of information for understanding the characteristics that determine learners' capacity to learn a second language is Gardener's hypothesis. Attitudes of learners and associated sources of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) are driving variables in language learning success, according to the literature review, and have been widely discovered by a large number of research around the world.

Furthermore, it is well established that relatively minimum use of the English language by teachers of other disciplines when engaging with students in and out of the classroom contributes to poor learning outcomes. As a result, All instructors should get in-service training to assist them acquire English, and the competent authorities should make an effort to encourage the use of English in general. The focus of the majority of the research was on western culture. In addition, their findings might not be representative of Eastern culture.

Because there is a paucity of study on contemporary concerns in the Eastern environment. More study on second-language acquisition, as well as its hurdles and contributing variables, should be performed in the following areas, according to the authors. More in-depth research on mastering a second language in the Eastern environment, including obstacles and contributing variables, with a focus on geographical issues to better understand this phenomena. We are certain that a growing corpus of regionally focused literature will serve as a basis for future advice and study on the themes below. Simultaneously, on a micro level, more research on the effectiveness of evidence-based treatments is required as an ideal first step toward successful learning.

This essay also mentioned that both integrative and instrumental motivation are crucial components of language acquisition success, as well as explaining the basic essence of integrative motivation, which is defined as external forces capable of sustaining long-term undertakings when learning a second language. Learners must have self-interest and need to strive to improve their ability to acquire new information. They must be encouraged to learn reading and writing with the support of teachers and parents. They should also make it a habit to use a dictionary (either online or in print) to obtain a complete grasp of word meanings and pronunciations. Contextual factors, such as relationships between parents and others, must be enhanced in order to increase learners' capacity to acquire a new language.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Abdullah, S., & Majid, F. A. (2013). English language teaching challenges in Malaysia: Polytechnic lecturers' experience. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 28(4), 540–547.
- [2] Abutalebi J. (2008). Neural aspects of second language representation and language control.
- [3] *Acta Psychol (Amst)*, 128(3), 466-78.
- [4] Altenaichinger, A. (2002). Theories of second language acquisition. In M. Hanak-Hammerel, & D. Newby (Eds.), *Second language acquisition: The interface between theory and practice* (pp. 8-12). Graz: University of Graz
- [5] Bajaj, S. (2013). Study of learning environment of urban and rural government middle schools: An overview of Jammu district. *Asian Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(2), 273-280.
- [6] Broadley, T., Martin, R., & Curtis, E. (2019) Rethinking Professional Experience Through a Learning Community Model: Toward a Culture Change. *Front. Educ*, 4(22).
- [7] Brown, H.D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4th Ed.). Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall
- [8] Cochran-Smith, M. (2005b). Teacher education and the outcomes trap. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 56(5), 411-417.

- [9] Djigunovic, J. M. (2012). Attitudes and Motivation in Early Foreign Language Learning. Centre for Educational Policy Studies Journal, 2(3), 55-74.
- [10] Dörnyei, Z. and Ushioda, E. (2011). Teaching and researching motivation. Harlow: Pearson Education
- [11] Ellis, R. (1997). The study of second language acquisition. Oxford University Press
- [12] Fallon, C. M. (2010). School factors that promote academic resilience in urban Latino high school students. Dissertations. 122.
- [13] Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1959). Motivational variables in second-language acquisition. Canadian Journal of Psychology/Revue canadienne de psychologie, 13(4), 266–272.
- [14] Gill, S. K., & Kirkpatrick, A. (2013). English in Asian and European Higher Education. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- [15] Hadfield, J. and Dörnyei, Z. (Edt). (2013). Conditions for The Motivating Capacity of Vision. Part1. Research and Resources in Language Teaching: Motivating Learning. p. 4. Pearson Education Limited. Harlow: United Kingdom.
- [16] Hu, G. (2005). Using peer review with Chinese ESL student writers. Language Teaching Research, 9(3), 321–342.
- [17] Hu, Y. (2007). China's foreign language policy on primary English education: What's behind it?.Lang Policy, 6(1), 359–376.
- [18] Karmiloff-Smith, A.(1986). From meta-processes to conscious access: Evidence from children's metalinguistic and repair data. Cognition, 23(2), 95–147
- [19] Kayi-Aydar, H. (2015). Teacher agency, positioning, and English language learners: Voices of pre-service classroom teachers. Teaching and Teacher Education, 45, 94–103.
- [20] Larsen-Freeman, D. and M. Anderson, N.A. Zainal-Abidin. (2011). The need for competent Techniques and principles in language teaching. work ready English language learners. Procedia - Oxford University Press
- [21] Latchanna, G. & Dagnev, A. (June 2009). Attitude of teachers towards the use of active learning methods. E-journal of All India Association for Educational Research, 21(1),
- [22] Lawes, S. (2003). What, when, how and why? Theory and foreign language teaching. Language Learning Journal, Special Edition, 28, pp. 22-28.
- [23] Lennartsson, F. (2008). Students' motivation and attitudes towards learning a second language: British and Swedish students' points of view.
- [24] Miller, G. A. (1956). The magical number seven, plus or minus two: some limits on our capacity for processing information. Psychological Review, 63(2), 81–97.
- [25] Mundy P, Jarrold W. (2010). Infant joint attention, neural networks and social cognition. Neural Netw, 23(8-9),985-97.
- [26] Oroujlou, N., & Vahedi, M. (2011). Motivation, attitude, and language learning. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 29, 994–1000.
- [27] Phakiti, A. (2006). Theoretical and Pedagogical Issues in ESL/EFL Teaching of Strategic Reading. University of Sydney Papers, TESOL, 1, 19-50.
- [28] Scrase, T.J. (2003). 'Precarious Production: Globalisation and Artisan Labour in the Third World'. Third World Quarterly, 24(3), 449–461.
- [29] Smith, Alfred. N. (1971). The importance of attitude in foreign language learning. Modern language journal,55(2), 83-88
- [30] Somsai, S. & Intaraprasert, C. (2011). Strategies for coping with face-to-face oral communication problems employed by Thai university students majoring in English. Journal of Language Studies, 11(3), 83-96
- [31] Swaffar, J. (2003). Foreign languages: a discipline in crisis. ADFL Bulletin, 35, pp. 20-22

- [32] Teng, H.C. (2012). A study on the teach ability of EFL communication strategies. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 3566-3570.
- [33] Thirusanku, J., & Melor, M. Y. (2012). The many faces of Eastern English. *International Scholarly Research Network*, Article ID 138928, 14.
- [34] Ushioda, E. (2012). Motivation in Second Language Acquisition. In *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, C.A. Chapelle (Ed.).
- [35] Verga, L., & Kotz, S. A. (2013). How relevant is social interaction in second language learning? *Frontiers in human neuroscience*, 7, 550.
- [36] Vygotsky, Lev. "Interaction between learning and development." *Readings on the development of children* 23.3 (1978): 34-41.