

Original Article

English Language Acquisition Difficulties: Causes, Manifestations and Pedagogical Implications

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**Abstract**

English language is much difficult for learners of age groups and sociocultural contexts. These difficulties arise from linguistic differences between English and learners first languages, cognitive and affective factors, instructional conditions, and broader social influences. This paper examines the major difficulties encountered in acquiring English as a communicable language. It also explores learner's internal factors such as age, motivation, and mother tongue as well as external factors like teaching methodology and exposure to English language. Finally this paper discusses pedagogical implications and evidence based strategies to overcome these difficulties and support effective English language learning.

Keywords: English language acquisition, Second language acquisition (SLA), Language learning difficulties, Mother tongue interference, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Pedagogical strategies, Language anxiety, English language education, Sociocultural factors, Technology-assisted language learning.

Introduction

In the early 20's, it was recognized that English is a language that is commonly used in almost every corner of this world. English is a language that has emerged as a global lingua franca and is playing an important role in education, business, science, and all areas of education as a medium of instruction in educational institutions and workplaces around the world. There are different cognitive and socio-cultural processes involved in it. Different theories like behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism have been put forward regarding language acquisition. However, second language acquisition is quite different from first language acquisition because of the possibilities of mother tongue interference, age, and socio-cultural factors involved.

It has been observed that in spite of the availability of approximately 14.71 lakh schools teaching in the medium of English in India, there still exists a considerable disparity between teaching and learning. Although it is not easy to pinpoint a cause for this disparity, it can be clearly stated that there exist several hurdles. The purpose of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of the identified hurdles to suggest improvements to the present educational system."

The objectives of this research paper on second language acquisition are as follows:

1. To find out what are the major causes of difficulties in learning the English language.
2. To analyse what are the difficulties involved in learning the English language.
3. To find out what are the pedagogical implications and what are the best ways of teaching

Literature Review

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies offer a basis for understanding the factors that affect learning difficulties.

1. Behaviourist Theory

Behaviourists believe that learners acquire a second language through imitation and reinforcement. They claim that learners make mistakes due to negative transfer from their first language.

2. Cognitive Theory

Cognitive learning theorists believe that learners use mental processes to learn a second language. These processes include memory, attention, and information processing.

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1. Krashen's Theory

Stephen Krashen proposed that learners acquire a second language when they are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their level of proficiency ($i+1$). Without comprehensible input, learners will not make progress.

2. Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky proposed that learners acquire a second language in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) with support. The above theories show that there are many factors that affect learning difficulties in a second language.

Causes of English Language Acquisition Difficulties**1. Linguistic Factors**

Mother Tongue Interference

The most basic problem lies in the difference between the learner's mother tongue and English.

Phonological variations

Phonology that is available in the English language but not in the learner's native language causes difficulties in the pronunciation of the new phonology.

Phonology that is not available in the learner's native language causes difficulties in pronunciation.

Limited Vocabulary Base

This causes the learners to have a poor vocabulary base.

2. Cognitive Factors

Age of Acquisition: Young learners have better pronunciation than older learners, who find phonetics challenging.

Memory Limitations: Working memory plays a part in the limitations learners have.

Learning Disabilities: Dyslexia and other learning disabilities affect the learners.

3. Psychological Factors

Language Anxiety: Fear of making mistakes causes learners to be reluctant to join in.

Low Motivation: No intrinsic or extrinsic motivation causes learners to be reluctant to join in.

Low Self-Confidence: Learners fear to communicate because they feel embarrassed.

4. Socio-Cultural Factors

Limited Exposure to English

Being in a rural or non-English speaking environment makes it difficult to find situations in which to practice.

Socioeconomic Constraints

No access to resources such as books, internet access, or trained teachers.

Cultural Attitudes towards English

English is perceived as elitist or foreign.

5. Pedagogical Factors

One of the pedagogical factors that play an important role in influencing the effectiveness of language learning is the teacher-centered approach. In this method, the teacher is at the center of almost all activities, and the students are just passive listeners. However, there is very little room for interaction, discussions, and independent thinking, which are essential for developing communication skills.

Another pedagogical factor that influences the effectiveness of language learning is the persistence of the grammar-translation method. This method of teaching emphasizes the learning of grammar, memorization of words, and translation of sentences. This method, although useful for students in passing examinations, does not give students adequate practice in speaking and listening. As a result, students are unable to communicate in real-life situations.

Another pedagogical factor that influences the effectiveness of language learning is the lack of the communicative approach. This method of teaching involves activities like discussions, role-plays, and presentations, which are essential in developing communication skills. However, students are denied these opportunities, and the sole aim of the teachers is to ensure students pass examinations.

Manifestations of Language Acquisition Difficulties**1. Listening Difficulties**

Listening difficulties are also a major challenge in language acquisition and are likely to affect language learning in general. One of the difficulties is the inability to comprehend fast speech. When individuals communicate at a natural rate or a fast rate, it is difficult for students to understand and comprehend the flow of words and information being conveyed. This makes them hesitant and lowers their self-confidence in responding appropriately.

Another challenge is the identification of different accents of words. Students are often exposed to one accent of words in language classes, but in reality, different accents are used by people of different regions and nations of the world. This makes it difficult for them to understand words that they are already familiar with, resulting in confusion and leading to wrong responses.

Misinterpretation of word meanings is also a major issue in language learning and is likely to affect students as they learn and try to communicate in a foreign language. Students are able to understand individual words but are not able to comprehend the meaning of a sentence because of a lack of contextual knowledge and understanding.

2. Speaking Difficulties

Speaking difficulties are one of the major problems faced by language learners. These difficulties often impact language learners' confidence and speaking abilities. One of the major speaking difficulties is hesitation and too many pauses during speech. Language

learners find it hard to find appropriate words and sometimes need to think about correct grammatical sentences. This often affects the fluency of speaking.

Inaccurate pronunciation is another major speaking difficulty faced by language learners. Language learners often find it hard to accurately pronounce words. This is often due to a lack of speaking practice and the influence of the mother tongue. Language learners' pronunciation is often not clear and sometimes hard for other people to understand.

Inaccurate grammar is one of the major speaking difficulties faced by language learners. Language learners often find it hard to use correct grammar. Language learners often make grammatical errors, and these errors sometimes create confusion and reduce the clarity of communication.

Limited fluency is one of the major speaking difficulties faced by language learners. Language learners sometimes find it hard to express themselves fluently due to a lack of speaking practice.

3. Reading Difficulties

Reading difficulties have a great impact on the development of students' language as a whole. Among the challenges that learners face in their reading process is the slow rate at which they read. Most learners read word by word and do not read phrases or ideas as a whole, which makes their reading process very slow and inefficient. A slow rate of reading can affect learners in their examination tests because time management is very important in exams.

The other major challenge that affects learners is poor comprehension. Despite the fact that learners can read and pronounce what is in the text correctly, they do not understand what they read. These challenges make learners fail to answer questions or give a correct summary of what is in the text.

The other challenge that affects learners is the limited inference skill, which limits their ability to read effectively. Inference involves reading between the lines and understanding what is implied in the text as opposed to what is directly mentioned in the text. Most learners lack this skill because they do not understand what is implied in the text or what the author wants to convey to the reader.

4. Writing Difficulties

One of the major challenges facing students is writing difficulties. One of these is the use of improper sentence structures. This is where students find it hard to use correct word order, tense, and subject-verb agreement. This affects the quality of writing, as grammatical errors make it hard for one to understand what they are writing.

Spelling is another writing difficulty. This is where students find it hard to spell words due to a lack of sufficient vocabulary and poor reading and writing habits. This affects the quality of writing, as poor spelling makes writing look poor and of low quality. Repeated use of poor spelling makes writing confusing and affects its impact.

Poor coherence and cohesion is another writing difficulty. This is where students find it hard to connect ideas and sentences, even though they are grammatically correct. This makes writing confusing and hard to understand. Poor organization of ideas is also a writing difficulty. This is where students find it hard to present ideas in a correct sequence with a proper introduction, body, and conclusion. This affects writing quality, as ideas become confusing and hard to understand.

5. Pragmatic Difficulties

Pragmatic difficulties can be defined as challenges that learners experience in using language appropriately in different social situations. Pragmatic difficulties can be described as the use of inappropriate language in different social situations. In this case, the learner may experience challenges in using different forms of language according to the context or situation in which the language is used. Therefore, the learner may end up using inappropriate language in a particular context or situation.

The other challenge that learners experience is in understanding idioms and expressions. Idioms and expressions are usually used in a different sense compared to their literal meaning. Therefore, the learner who uses literal meaning may not understand the meaning of the idioms and expressions used in different contexts or situations. This makes it difficult for the learner to understand what is being communicated in different contexts or situations in which idioms and expressions are used.

Pedagogical Implications

Strategic intervention is required to overcome acquisition barriers.

1. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Facilitates communication in real life and interactive learning.

2. Task-Based Learning

More emphasis on tasks than grammar rules.

3. Differentiated Instruction

Takes into account the needs of the learners.

4. Technology Integration

Language learning apps

Virtual classrooms

Research Methodology

The research methodology adopted for this research is the qualitative descriptive research methodology. In this research, secondary research analysis has been used to analyze the research articles published in various research journals, books, and educational reports to find the pattern formation for the research question of English language acquisition difficulties.

Results and Discussion

The research findings have indicated that English language acquisition difficulties are multidimensional. Linguistic and psychological barriers are the major English language acquisition difficulties. In many countries, learning practices are based on examinations. Students are encouraged to memorize rather than learn.

Discussion of research findings on English language acquisition difficulties indicates that communicative learning methodologies are highly effective for the students. Learner-based learning methodologies are highly effective for the students. Technology-based learning methodologies are highly effective for improving the accuracy of pronunciation in the students' language. The socio-economic status and language proficiency relationship is an important factor in English language acquisition difficulties.

Conclusion

English language acquisition difficulties are multidimensional and involve various interacting factors. To overcome English language acquisition difficulties, it is essential to consider overall and comprehensive strategies. Teachers need to use communicative and learner-based methodologies for teaching English. English language acquisition is not only important for academic purposes but is also essential for social mobility and global participation.

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Conflicts of interest

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