

## Challenges of Learning English as a Second Language (ESL)

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### ABSTRACT

*The teaching of any second language has perpetually been an arduous task, specifically managing the United Nation's agency feedback from totally different cultures and backgrounds, as it involves some complexities that must be overcome through the application of acceptable methods. English as a second language (ESL) becomes indivisible and ineluctable in our education system. To learn a second language, a physical, intellectual and emotional involvement is required as well as the ability to send and interpret linguistic messages. This paper is meant to focus on the hurdles and barriers that the learners of a second language, specifically of English, typically encounter and the remedies that will help overcome these odds.*

**Keywords:** *Challenges Faced by learners, Barriers & Instructions to English Learners, ESL Standards to Promote Language Proficiency*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a very important means of communication. It is very difficult to think of a society without language. It sharpens people's thoughts and guides and controls their entire activity. It is a carrier of civilization and culture. In the case of the mother tongue, the child learns it easily, due to a favorable environment and by the great amount of exposure to the language. However, learning a second language requires conscious efforts to and the exposure to the second language, in most cases, is limited. Majority of the students have favored classroom instruction for second language acquisition. There are many factors that affect the process of learning a second language, including attitude, self-confidence, motivation, duration of exposure to the language, classroom conditions, environment, family background, and availability of competent teachers. Students with English as a second language constitute a significant percentage of the population around our globe. This population continues to increase more rapidly than that of native English speaking students, so teaching of English is of great significance. Every teacher who teaches any subject matter in English to ESL students is not only a teacher of the content area but also is a teacher of English as well so he/she should have to continually reflect on teaching and update practice to address the needs of the learners [1][3]. This paper includes an analysis of the challenges ESL students face and the strategies that teachers can use to meet these challenges.

## II. CHALLENGES FACED BY LEARNERS

The major challenge that the learners of ESL experience is described as "*language shock* [4]," a struggle to learn the English language; to be absorbed in a society that is not willing to embrace diversity. Such are the students, who on any strange land, try to maintain a sense of identity related to their native culture. Students encounter many obstacles in their efforts to become proficient in the English language. They often come to realize that in order to be fully accepted, they must abandon their native language, surrendering an aspect of their identity. They are caused to feel they must either speak English or nothing at all. Thus, they become trapped in a painful power struggle over the use of English and their native language. Instructors must realize that education occurs in the context of a social climate. The relationships between students and accompanying range of social behaviors have a major impact on how well ESL students learn English [5]. Many learners fail to adjust in an unwelcoming, hostile environment where they are made fun of when they try to speak English and also when they speak their native language; so they end up silent and withdraw from participation, thus their learning and achievement is hindered. While ESL students are taught academic English in separate classrooms they often lack the ability to interact in social settings with English speaking peers and often have limited opportunity to interact academically or socially [6][7]. They often have great difficulty learning the "slang" and social English because they have no one to learn it from. Such learners come to prefer English out of necessity, often abandoning their native languages to fit in. They end up without comfort in either language and may end up losing the ability to communicate with family members and friends in their native land. It can be concluded that ESL students will remain torn between two worlds until society truly embraces diversity and the notion that biculturalism and bilingualism are assets. What is needed in the education of ESL learners is the development of English and maintenance of their native language.

## III. OBJECTIVES

This study has following objectives.

1. To examine the obstacles in learning English as second language among the Intermediate collegiate students.
2. To present the ways to improve the declining condition of learning English as second language.
3. To provide guidance for the future among the students.

## IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Obstacle or difficulty means a concept with objective and subjective validity. It is defined as a task that requires effort or labor to solve. In the light of such an observation, an obstacle may be measured in many ways as quoted Ne- well & Simon (1972) [8] as cited in ITS (nd). This study is going to explore the obstacles in learning English academically. But this study does not intend to look at the issue as has been observed. Such obstacles and problems in language learning arise when there is no symbiosis between available data and grammar. At intermediate level, English is being taught as a compulsory subject in this context.

Obstacles mean the problems, hurdles and difficulties in way of learning English at this level. Examination systems, students' weak position and foundation in English, large classes, passive learning, uninteresting, lengthy, difficult literature-based syllabi, the poor performance of the English teachers and old methodologies are considered to be major problems in the learning English. The annual results of the students of our country indicate the sheer increase in failure and it is all due to failure in the subject of English. The failure of English means the failure in all subjects. In the opinion of Abbas [9] [10] reveals the fact that in spite of so many efforts, the result in English remains poor and this is all due to "flawed pedagogy and material design".

## V. BARRIERS & INSTRUCTIONS TO ENGLISH LEARNERS

Here are mentioned some of the barriers and the effective measures that teachers can adapt to help the ESL students in overcoming the barriers to meaningful instruction. Teachers can use strategies based on social interactionist theory, such as that of Vygotsky [11], to create classroom conditions that foster learning by modeling, scaffolding and helping students to construct understanding, with the eventual goal of becoming independent thinkers and problem solvers. There are four loads that can be identified as barriers to meaningful instruction; cognitive load, culture load, language load and learning load. It is demanded that the English language teachers must be skilled at lowering these barriers and sparking student interest and curiosity by developing a creative, wise and passionate curriculum.

### A. Cognitive Load

It refers to the number of new concepts embedded in a lesson. It is critical that we consistently assess prior knowledge of all students to identify the concepts and skills they do and do not possess. We must then fill in any conceptual gaps by trying to relate new concepts to life experiences of ESL students. Thus, it becomes more critical to get to know and understand these students.

### B. Culture Load

Culture load: It refers to the way language and culture are related and the amount of cultural knowledge required to comprehend meaning or participate in an activity. Meanings of words are determined by the uses of words within linguistic and cultural settings, never the same in any two cultures. English learners need to learn the words in English as well as the cultural background that gives the words their English meaning. They need to learn words in context to understand the meaning. Additionally, the information conveyed in our textbooks and lessons is culturally embedded. Some texts or topics can actually be culturally offensive. Culture load also refers to how teachers expect interaction to occur in a classroom that includes when to speak, when to stay silent, when to respond and when to write. These expectations vary from one culture to the next. English learners are often expected to determine the classroom behavioral norms independently. The following strategies can help teachers lighten the culture load for students.

- Teachers should treat English learners with respect, not judgment, and try to be friendly with students and

try to establish social relationships with their elders.

- Teachers can use information gained through these relationships to develop lessons and activities that help students understand the teacher's culture.
- By demonstrating respect for students, teachers allow a door of trust to open that can serve to further deepen a nurturing teacher-student relationship.

### *C. Language Load*

It refers to the number of unfamiliar words encountered as an English learner reads a text or listens to teacher or peer academic talk. Teachers can lessen this load by rewriting or explaining text material. Complex sentences can be broken down into comprehensible parts. Academic vocabulary can be presented at the start of a lesson and highlighted. Several different texts can be available covering the same content but at different reading ability levels. Additionally, teachers should model both academic and social language and scaffold its appropriate use to help the learner acquire it, use it effectively, and move to more sophisticated levels of speaking and writing

### *D. Learning Load*

It represents what teachers expect students to do with English in the learning activities. An example is brainstorming, an activity that is oral and fast-paced, with few visual examples and minimal clarification in the initial stages. An English learner would have difficulty following such an activity, let alone participating. Thus, teachers must carefully consider the learning load of all activities involving English learners, making adaptations and offering supports accordingly [12]. One such strategy is the language bath. This strategy involves the teacher doing the initial talking about a new topic and students listening before any brainstorming or other activity is assigned. This strategy is also effective with English speaking students [13]. It prepares students to participate by helping to familiarize them with vocabulary and develop their thoughts on a topic. There is another interesting concept of the "yearning goad," which is intrinsic motivation, a drive to know and learn more. This needs to be cultivated by teaching, whenever possible, through topics of high student interest. Teachers should also endeavor to broaden student interests by sharing their passions with students. Critical selection and creative implementation of curriculum are also important. By lightening even one or two of these loads and arranging meaningful learning for students, teachers can motivate students and facilitate learning of both the English language and content. This can help ESL students avoid being misinterpreted, unmotivated or resistant to learning.

## **VI. ESL STANDARDS TO PROMOTE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

This discussion is related to curriculum alignment for ESL instruction. ESL standards can have a significant impact on ESL student achievement by integrating academic language into the ESL curriculum. The ESL standards provide structure and guidance that can help to increase student academic success. Linking the ESL standards to state academic standards ensures that ESL students will receive high quality instruction in English language and content areas [14]. The standards that provide the teachers of English to

Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) with scope and sequence of the language skills that ESL students need for success in classrooms are the use of;

- English to communicate in social settings,
- English to achieve academically in all content areas,
- English in socially and culturally appropriate ways.

Several strategies can be applied to develop competency in social use of English which include the use of seating Arrangements (such as round tables, quads or pairs) to encourage social interaction. Teachers can also try to structure opportunities [15] for students to use English outside of the classroom. Cooperative learning encourages the use of language in a social manner.

Positive social interaction can help students perceive the classroom as a comfortable and friendly place, where they will feel safe using their new language skills and where they may find intrinsic motivation for communicating in English. To enhance academic achievement, teachers can create a language-rich classroom, by providing students with advance organizers, label everything in the classroom to build vocabulary and help students make connections to their native language; and have different media available for student use (books, magazines, newspapers, audio-tapes, and video tapes, computer software) [16] to address different learning styles and also help build connections. To help students to use English in appropriate ways, teachers should teach what language is appropriate in what setting so students can determine when to speak and in what way (for example, formal speech or slang). Teachers should also recognize diversity and sameness in their classrooms, incorporate multicultural literature into the curriculum, and invite parents/family members to share their cultures and talents with the class. Students need to develop an understanding of and appreciation for others considering the diversity of society.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The government should often conduct in-service training to train the teachers to use the English language in classrooms.

They should try to bring reforms in the pattern of examination. Separate marks could also be allotted to test the spoken language of the students. An attempt should also be made to give rewards to the rural students for those who performed well in English examination [17]. Government should facilitate all schools with language laboratory. The Government may encourage the management to develop oral skill of students The educational officers should arrange guidance and orientation programs in English. They may encourage the management of the schools to conduct reading test in English [18]. Often they have to supervise the way of providing English education in schools. By the way of supervision, they can give suggestions for improvement in the curriculum. They have to motivate the teachers to imbibe the culture of referring dictionary among the students. Management should often insist the teachers to assess the development of students' proficiency in English. The information on students' development in English should be communicated to parents at regular intervals. They may arrange special coaching classes for slow learners and rural students. They may also encourage the students to read English news during prayer hours. The key

role of the management is to insist the English teacher to converse in English with the students even in and outside the school campus. To impart the spoken aspects of the language, they should allot separate period for spoken English. If time permits, they could also extend the duration of the English class. Children are more successful when their parents are involved in their education. Parents have to create conducive atmosphere to learn English. Their role is to encourage their children to communicate in English even at home. They should provide English newspapers, journals and magazines to enrich the reading skill of their children. They may also encourage them to listen to English news and to watch English programs. The mind of the students should always be ready to learn. They should read English newspapers, journals, novels, etc., as per the advice of their parents and teachers. They should also develop their habit of listening to English news and referring dictionary. They should not study English from an exam point of view. If they study English from an exam point of view, they may not be able to write on their own. The conversation with their parents, teachers and peers should always be in English. To learn English, opportunities have to be utilized by them effectively.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The discussion on the various aspects of teaching and learning English as a second language brings us to the conclusion that the learning of English is must for all those who intend to settle on such a foreign land where English is the first language of natives. Exploration of the obstacles in learning is a daring venture to expose many issues. The study has come to the conclusion that there are obstacles in learning English at intermediate level students of the public sector colleges in our country. The learners verily come across some cultural and social obstacles and challenges which to be overcome. Moreover some hurdles make the meaningful instruction sluggish. All these odds can be ridden over by the use of appropriate strategies which include cooperative learning, positive social interaction, language-rich classroom and the incorporation of multicultural literature into the curriculum.

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