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The Problems faced by Non-native English Learners and The Remedies

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Abstract:

English language learning has become a challenging task for non – native speakers. A country like India has been making apt efforts to encourage English language among students as well as business people. In India English has established its own value as English is used commonly on the internet, social media and websites, higher education institutions as well as research centers. Almost all the spheres of knowledge have the English as the medium, so, it becomes inevitable to learn the English language either for the lively hood or for the decency. English language learning has always been proved meticulous and lengthier process.

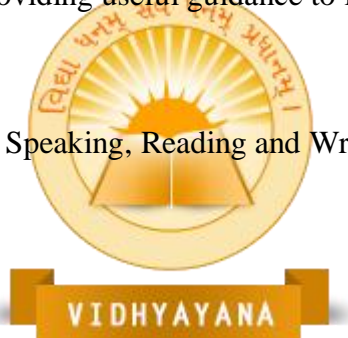
English has been taught as the compulsory subject in schools and colleges, but the result is not so satisfying. Grammar has been taught at the initial stage of learning English language which proves to be the greatest hurdle in acquiring the fluency in the language. As the fear of speaking or writing wrong English has so much rooted in the minds of students that they do not initiate at all and English language remains alien to them.

English speaking for non-native speaker is complex due to various reasons. Colloquialism, Communicative Competence and Word power are chief among them. English language learning basically needs four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

The present article tries to highlight the major difficulties faced by non- native learners in learning English as well as to simplify English language learning by providing useful guidance to improve all the four skills.

Key Words:

Foreign Learners, Four Skills- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, Communication



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Introduction:

English language learning has become a challenging task for non – native speakers. A country like India has been making apt efforts to encourage English language among students as well as business people. In India English has established its own value as English is used commonly in internet, social media and websites, higher education institutions as well as research centers. English language learning has always been proved meticulous and lengthier process. It has been taught as the compulsory subject in schools and colleges, but the result is not so satisfying.

English speaking for non-native speaker is complex due to various reasons. Colloquialism, Communicative Competence and Word power are chief among them. English language learning basically needs four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. The present article tries to highlight the major difficulties faced by non- native learners in learning English as well as to simplify English language learning by providing useful guidance to improve all the four skills

If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, "Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well" (qtd in Sharma 43)

Dr. Martin Luther King JR.'s statement emphasizes that the treatment one gives to someone will turn him in that way. This well applies to non-native speakers of the English language too. English has been taught keeping in structural and grammatical aspects at the center. For decades, English has been stuffed technically (grammatically) in the minds of English learning students.

Major Problems in learning the English Language:

English language learning has become a challenging task for non – native speakers. A country like India has been making apt efforts to encourage English language among students as well as businesspeople. In India English has established its own value as English is used commonly on the internet, social media and websites, higher education institutions as well as research centers. English language learning has always been proved meticulous and lengthier process. It has been taught as the compulsory subject in schools and colleges but the result is not so satisfying.

The time has come when we can return to the big question about the role of performance in explaining or teaching English language at various levels.

English speaking for non-native speaker is complex due to various reasons. The first and foremost being colloquialism. English native speakers use the language fluently and naturally as their day to day conversation has their common stock of vocabulary and sentence patterns which might not fully adhere the rules and regulation of the language but commonly understood by them. The non-native speakers would follow all the set of laws of the English language, but the effect which native speaker can achieve cannot be achieved by a second user of the language. It is as simple as the learning to drive. Even after one learns driving and knows all the rules; he can have confidence of driving when he has practiced it and faced it



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personally. In the same way, non- native learner should have or create the exposure so, he should frequently be listening and speaking the language.

Another problem found among non-native speaker is that they might excel in using English in their respective fields and subjects but their communicative English is weak. For instance a person working in the bank will have the vocabulary related to the banking sector and he will be able to communicate issues associated with his field effectively, but the same person might not be able to communicate effectively at causal occasions in English. There are critics who draw line between communicative English and especial field related English. They argue that one might be very good in communicating in his field of expertise, but his English might seem to be weakening at other occasions. Sometimes communicative English has been understood as just casual talk, but it does not mean that. As in the article New Direction in ELT methodology: A Dialogue for the uninitiated, Bagchi and S Velayudhan state:

“There’s a lot of misunderstanding about the expression. Communicative competence doesn’t merely mean the ability to exchange greetings, ask the way to the post office or make social, inconsequential noises at a party.” (Bagchi S Velayudhan47)

The understanding of the English language also creates problems for non- native English speakers as native speakers speak with certain pace and their pronunciation would also differ from that of native speakers. How to pronounce any word properly has been taught to native speakers from the childhood and they develop the tendency to pronounce words naturally as they grow up. While non- native speakers have to learn each and every word and their pronunciation with hard work and even after that new word would create confusion in their mind. Furthermore, it would be very difficult to pronounce like native speakers as a regional language of a person also affects the English language. For instance, if the person trying to learn the English language is from the region where their regional language has a slow pace and a higher tone, it would naturally be found that he would speak English language with slow pace and a higher tone.

Any language spoken in the world possesses two distinct kinds of vocabulary; one formal and another informal. For non-native speaker it becomes complicated to set apart the informal words and formal words. Using informal word when formal is needed seems to be insulting and using formal when informal is needed becomes the cause of laughter. The reason for the same is that non- native speaker has limited vocabulary and sometimes one word would be used as substitute to another for communicative purpose which makes the sense but it is not the right word for the occasion.

The same kind of problem arises when one is confused between written and spoken English. In the written English certain conventions of language to be followed while spoken English has the purpose of communication and corrections are possible at the time of speaking. Written English does not give such space to improve and one should be very careful while writing English. In spoken English one may even use slang that he has picked up, in formal situations which may perhaps be viewed negatively.



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How to improve four basic skills of English:

1) Listening:

It is believed that to learn any language one should listen to that language frequently. Listening plays a very important part in building vocabulary, constructing sentences and learning grammar. If one is very conscious while listening English language he would be adding into vocabulary and improving sentence pattern naturally. There are certain suggestions that can enhance the listening and comprehension of the English language.

One should listen to English news or programmes on the radio instead of television so the attention is not diverted and concentrated listening helps in understanding the language in a better way.

It is also advisable to record the lectures or speeches of the person fluent in English and listen them later at ease to improve the language.

2) Speaking:

English language speaking is the most difficult task for non-native learners. They are found hesitant to speak as consciously the only thought keep hampering is that they might make mistakes. The confidence level is found low compared to that of English speakers.

To get fluency in speaking English, the only aid is to speak. It is very obvious that fear can be eliminated by getting used to speaking English frequently at all occasions.

One should start speaking English with the native language. Adding a few words and sentences occasionally

3) Writing:

Writing needs perfection at the level of spellings and grammar both. Generally, it becomes difficult for non-native learners to write spellings unmistakably. English spellings are spoken and written differently. Spellings do not have the same pronunciation as they are written; this creates confusion at writing level,

To improve English spellings one needs conscious effort and practice while using any spelling for the first time. It is better to check the spelling in the dictionary than to write it incorrectly.

One should also know the various shades of the same word as verb, noun and adjective. Some words are used as adjective frequently and some words as verb forms are popularly used. For example the word 'beautiful' is commonly used, but its verb form 'beautify' is not used so commonly.



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4) Reading:

Reading English might seem easy but, reading it correctly with right pronunciation and tone is quite difficult. If one does not pronounce words properly, he is ridiculed.

To develop correct reading, one must refer dictionary while using a new word for the first time.

Conclusion:

To learn any language, listening that language is the most effective as well as a natural way. If one trains his ears for listening English regularly, it would not be an exaggeration to say that his mind will unconsciously store the vocabulary and sentence patterns. Speaking, reading and writing English language would follow unsurprisingly. Furthermore, use of dictionary to enhance and correct the vocabulary is advisable. Reading newspapers and magazines are also suggested for the betterment of the English language.



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