

## Challenges to Learning a Second Language: What do the University Students of Islamabad City Think?

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### ABSTRACT

*Language learning is a multifaceted process that implies a range of internal and external learner-based dimensions. Although numerous empirical studies have been conducted to acquire knowledge on second language acquisition, one of the neglected areas involves the identification of socio-cultural barriers in Pakistani people. The current research proposal was intended to fill this gap by conducting a qualitative study analyzing the issues of second language learners in Islamabad. In the present investigation, we analyze the hurdles of university students in Islamabad encounter while attempting to acquire Second language acquisition especially in English language. This research investigates the major problems learners face in their journey to reach fluency in English. From the learners' responses given analysis of themes located several main obstacles which are that pronunciation is hard to get, there is widespread laziness and insufficient resources for study. Large classes and the learners' L1 (first language) have compounded these obstacles, so that making individualized attention paid one's owned an even heavier burden than it already was before. Nevertheless, by making use of effective techniques such as daily practice, getting involved with English media and working with others who are also learning, it is possible to overcome those problems and improve one's language. More profound repercussions to these findings underscore the urgency of designing specific curricula tailored to suit the needs of individual learners, offering extra incentives and resources - which enable them tackle complexities in English language learning successfully.*

Key Words: Second Language Learning, Islamabad, University students

To Cite: Tabbasum, R. (2023) Challenges to Learning a Second Language: What do the University Students of Islamabad City Think? *Competitive Education Research Journal (CERJ)*, 4 (2), 42-53.

## INTRODUCTION

Language learning is a complex process characterized by multiple dimensions internal and external to a learner. Although second language acquisition has been the focal point of many empirical studies around the globe, little is known about the socio-cultural barriers experienced by people in Pakistan. The present research proposal is aimed at reducing this gap by qualitatively exploring the problems language learners encounter in Islamabad while studying a English second language. The undeniable role of language as a medium for communication makes its significance clear in any culture. Special mention must be made of Pakistan, a country with many languages: Urdu still holds the position as lingua franca. Although a large majority of people often use the spoken language and the educational language of the state is Urdu, in numerous places quite a few people in the population cannot effectively communicate in Urdu themselves where it is not widely understood. Meanwhile, there are 72 national languages spoken in Pakistan. English, which has international importance, was made a constitutional language in 1971. At one stroke it became the second official language of education and also as well as being used as a medium for general world-wide communication.

But because of its multilingual environment, learning English as a foreign or second language in Pakistan is a tough task. The average child is more likely to be better at gaining the skill of language. The critical age for acquiring language is generally about twelve years old. On the other hand, adults are more likely to find it hard to master a new language. Children are not self-conscious and so are free from emotional interference. In this way, they can learn more easily with greater confidence. They are not bound by a concern for the rules of grammar and do not let interference from their mother tongue get in the way. Accordingly, children are often extraordinarily good at catching a second language, sometimes achieving a native-like fluency.

By contrast, the self-consciousness, and emotional barriers to learning a language, combined with the interference from one's own mother tongue, may impede the process of language acquisition for adults. Age is a key factor in language acquisition. While children display an extraordinary natural ability to learn languages easily, with careful effort and good teaching strategies even adults can become proficient. The practical consequence in a multilingual society like Pakistan is that recognizing the importance of language acquisition calls for diversified approaches to language education, taking into consideration the individual problems encountered by learners of different ages and backgrounds. The current research

proposal was intended to fill this gap by conducting a qualitative study analyzing the issues of second language learners in Islamabad. The objectives formulated for the present research are:

- To examine the hurdles during the course of English language acquisition by university students in Islamabad and perform a critical analysis.
- The extent to which the students' mother tongue dominance is a hurdle for them to learn the desired language in the Islamabad.
- To investigate various factors such as the number of students in a classroom, the type of instructional methodology used, and the academic setting hinder and support language acquisition by university students in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.
- To find out how motivation determines the course of English language acquisition by university students in Islamabad and how the students find their way around these hurdles.

This paper explores the hindrance factors of my way of learning English at BS level in the Islamabad. The study reveals that the students of higher level face English learning hurdles as a second language because of speaking and studying many more mother tongues and regional language in addition to one country. The students also learn in English language in their institutions as a second and foreigner language in addition to speaking their personal and same region language of developed trends. This paper discusses all these points of trends determine the obstacles in learning English of the students of higher level in the public sector university. This study focuses specifically on adult L2 learners who are enrolled in four-year undergraduate programs in English at public-owned university. These are the L2 learners who hope to have as good L2 skills as can be done so as they can do superlatively well in their L2 classrooms, or for the job or for academic studies. In this study, the adult L2 learners are the students who have graduated from high school and who are more than 17 years old.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Urdu is the open language of Pakistan and people of Pakistan talk in more than 70 diverse dialects like Punjabi, Sindhi, Pushto, Balochi and Saraiki, etc., it is straightforward that learners learn articulation of foreign language by amalgamating the target language with their first language, local or provincial dialects. Language transmission describes the equitable intercession of the first language in L2 language learning. Learners apply information from their native languages to assimilate an unknown dialect in the EFL study hall. This point can

be supported to some extent in understanding and using the target language, but it can also be a barrier to accurately achieving the L2 rules, sentence structure, vocabulary and pronunciation. On the same line of action Krashen (1981) has furthered that sentence errors in grownup execution establish a dialogue with the first language in the student's life and this influence lasts for a long time in the mind of the learners.

Adult second language learning is more difficult than children's. It depends on a Critical Period Hypothesis as proposed by Lenneberg (1967) who thinks that the so-called critical period of language acquisition must end by about the age puberty just after Cerebral Localization has been established. With the establishment of cerebral lateralization of function, language acquisition will be qualitatively different. If an individual acquires any more in a second language after the age of puberty than he does in his native tongue within the first seven years having a CPH, French L3, that is due to artificial constraints imposed on the neural systems involved. One of the characteristics of such development is obviously that adults are slower and less successful in learning a second language than children are. Language ego is a prevalent factor with adult language learners, which makes them less successful learners. The above mentioned is just one of many factors that affect language learning in adults.

The biggest obstacles to successful second-language learning are always ego-related problems, which brings about powerful emotions in an adult learner's mind that ultimately slow down or even halt the learning process. As a result, adults are no more successful learners of L2 than small children are. For the more they think, the less they will fail. They do not speak to anyone at all. They feel shy and tongue-tied to do it. If they do not pronounce their vocabulary correctly and speak without fluency, they think that people will laugh at them. If they make any mistakes in grammar, they believe that others would make fun. Under these circumstances, a person's language ego is often very poorly served indeed. It is one of the major factors that hurt native-language learning. This does not mean that language ego is the only specific reason why many people have problems in learning second languages. But it is a major factor. Along with many other factors that rigidify people to learn a new language, when adult learns that language L2, the dominant factor often is ego it generates strong feelings in an adult's mind and or slows down the learning process. Whenever they think about speaking, they hear the advice aimed at a peasant as issued by Françoise Sagan: Do not move on a day that will be full of changes.

They are in fact nervous about speaking, thinking that if they are not smooth speakers, the public will make fun of them. People will tease them after this They will be the butt of jokes

and what recourse would there be even when fluency itself is not enough beyond Oh yes with all that kind of question torturing his mind is it any wonder that a being is faced with a blank page in his memory be! In such circumstances, become children, by contrast, never experience feelings. They are no different from anyone else. They may just stumble into it without thinking about what they wanted to say or even how others reacted when some incomprehensible sentence issued forth from their mouths. A child sets about learning the language without any holdback that is why he learns better than adult second language learners to speak any effectively and easily Another advantage is that children can not only learn languages more easily but also acquire a sense of ease in using them (Harley: Op. cit., 1986, p 4^0).

Since they are more malleable in terms, however, children can produce native-like accents when they learn a second language. This is a significant barrier for an adult learning to read and speak a second language with native fluency. "Those children who pick up a second language after the age of five may have an advantage over adults to the same extent that it is physically possible to control phonemics in another language. Thus, while the plasticity in adult brains may still be there all over the place, judging from the evidence children speak as though they were native speakers but"": they do not unless get it worse " (Brown, H. D., 1994, p. 5). Language ego has a strong and negative effect, for adults in second language learning. This it makes skill acquisition impossible and Second Language acquisition fluency are at bottlenecks detours levels Thus, most adult second language learners feel frightened As a result, the adults feel pressured in using an oral language While on the other hand child learners never have this kind of feeling and for that same reason they learn instantly in no time because their language egos are unshakable.

External barriers include pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, rules of grammar, classroom environment and role teachers play in teaching students to speak the language. Latha (2012) is sure that as long as learners' grammatical competence is good, they will be able to correctly understand this configuration of L2 and that it leads learners into fluency and accuracy. It has also been reported that L2 learners are at a disadvantage in talking, not being able to communicate proper grammar in their speaking. LarsenFreeman (2001) then emphasizes pronunciation as he believes that its importance actually lies in speaking practice. If a single sound or word is mispronounced, meanings can easily be confused. Or if the stresses and intonations are used incorrectly this could lead to serious misunderstandings between speakers. Likewise, as Nation (2001) concludes, one important factor for developing speaking skill is to

have enough exposure to a wide range of words or vocabulary. Non-native students are often faced with many challenges when they are trying to find a word that properly fits the meaning or occasion. If students' receptive vocabulary is low, however, they are likely to find it difficult to use their vocabulary productively.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study will use an interpretivist paradigm to focus on the participants' lives and their perception of the language learning process. Ontological perspective that there is no single reality and reality is created by individual. Epistemological that reality needs to be interpreted. The chosen view is particularly applicable to multidimensional social constructs, considering socio-cultural boundaries encountered in SLA. When conducting qualitative research using structured interview, the research paradigm typically adheres to interpretivist, which assumes that there is no single reality and reality need to interpret on the basis on individual. As the result, the study employed a pure qualitative research design. The research collected audience's perceptions using a qualitative research design interview.

In research, the term "population" refers to the complete set of individuals, items, or data that you're interested in studying. This could mean all the people living in a country, every instance of a particular plant species in a forest, or all the data points that could possibly be collected about a particular phenomenon. (Creswell, 2014) The population of its study in the shopping mall of twin city. Native speakers will be taken for this research. The study involved a sample size of 10 participants, with the age bracket specifically between 18 to 25 years old. These participants will be recruited through convenience sampling at the university of Islamabad, a central and accessible location that provides exposure to a diverse population within the target age range.

In sampling, "probabilistic" and "non-probabilistic" are terms used to describe different methods by which samples are collected from a population. Non- probabilistic sampling involves selecting participants based on non-random criteria, where not everyone in the population has a chance of inclusion. This includes convenience sampling for easily accessible subjects, purposive sampling for those with specific characteristics, quota sampling to represent certain traits proportionately, and snowball sampling where subjects recruit others. These methods are chosen based on the specific needs and context of the research. Probabilistic sampling gives every member of a population a known chance to be selected using random

methods, ensuring representative samples. It includes simple random sampling for equal chance selection, stratified sampling based on subgroup characteristics, cluster sampling where random clusters are chosen for inclusion, and systematic sampling where every nth member is selected. These methods aim to facilitate generalizable and unbiased research findings. (Thompson, 2009). As discussed, researchers will choose non-probabilistic sampling methods when selecting participants. Within these methods, convenience sampling employed, allowing researchers to choose subjects based on accessibility and willingness to participate. This approach simplifies participant selection in situations where practical boundaries limit the feasibility of probabilistic sampling techniques. Researcher discussed the tools which she has used for the research.

The selected participants responded to structured interviews, which will be conducted either face-to-face or through a video conference based on the convenience and preference of the participants and the researcher. The interviews are framed based on the interview guide, ensuring that each question is framed in the same manner. The interviews conducted and participants gave consent to record their voices, and responses were recorded for better understanding of the exact situation. The responses transcribed verbatim to record participants' verbal communication as well as non-verbal aspects to get integrated expressions of the responses.

## **RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

The analysis employed thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and categorize patterns and themes within the data. The following thematic analysis can be made based on the provided responses concerning the most significant hurdles while learning English:

Many students find it difficult to reproduce English sounds accurately and this affects their overall standard of language. This finding indicates how hard English phonetics and pronunciation can be for a learner to get the hang of.

The overall correspondence study's findings confirm that often learners lack motivation to keep going with their English. The reasons for this could be manifold, with -- as several students indicated in their own case-stories -- uninteresting classroom experiences, personal obstacles or a lack of relevance in their eyes to what they are trying to accomplish.

Virtual learning endeavors in English come to little fruition because learners often refrain from putting their knowledge into practice. This timidity may stem from an uncertain feeling about one's language skills, or anxiety over being thought stupid by others. To beat this fear is vitally necessary for language fluency and proficiency.

The research identifies significant obstacles in the way of learners, in their access to resources (learning materials etc.) and also the environment of learning. This lack of provision prevents meaningfully participating in a language, and prevents improvement.

Where class sizes are large, smaller groups are crowded out, making it difficult for teachers to offer students personalized aid and encouragement. This is a lack of input which could cause learners problems, and so they might only slowly solve these throughout their language learning journey.

Scholars acknowledge the fact that learners' first languages always affect the acquisition of English. Furthermore, as the interference from L1 prevents fluency and diminishes the accuracy rate, it would be accurate to assume that learners from the similar cultural and linguistic background may require a more specific approach due to peculiarities and unique problems.

Nonetheless, the study indicates that learners who develop certain learning strategies, including regular practice, exposing to English media sources and communication with classmates, are more likely to meaningfully interact with the language and eventually make progress. Armed with the abovementioned aspects, both teachers and learners identify the variety of anticipated problems in learning English and may be able to decide about ways to overcome them more easily..

The implications of these findings are multifold and crucial for both educators and learners in the field of English language learning:

Educators should design courses in a way that meets pronunciation needs of the learners. This might include getting students to do exercises that seek improvement of phonetic accuracy and fluency as well as activities promoting careful attention from inherent production habits.

Since most people in our society seem apathetic about learning, teachers must work with a sense of responsibility to actively engage students in their studies. This might mean giving



clear goals, monthly small awards and introducing interactive learning activities. guilt means a heavy responsibility for one's own behavior.

Teachers may offer learning spaces where supportive, non-intimidating language learning takes place—where learners are willing and able to take chances because they want to change the way things go. By integrating a growth style into their language-teaching philosophy and promoting respect among teacher and student alike they can help reduce the students' fear of making mistakes.

For all of the learning resources textbook, online materials and audio-visuals named so far however it is necessary to provide a way in which students can practice their speaking out of class and feel the effects on their overall operability and ability fluently using a language.

Educators need to engage in methods to deal with the problems that arise when class sizes grow. This may involve group work, peer teaching, and individualized learning adapted to different students. By providing a form of feedback that is most closely tailored to people's tastes, they can facilitate students' growth in this manner.

Educators and students both need to have a clear perception of how the learner's first language limits their English. This will enable teachers to instruct by addressing the possible stumbling blocks and interfering patterns and systematically assist students in overcoming these hurdles.

Educators should encourage students to use effective learning methods such as daily practice, hearing English in the media, and working in partnership with other students. Letting students direct their own progress in language learning and providing them with tools to do so can result in better outcomes overall for languages.

In summary, by dealing with these implications, teachers can develop more inclusive and efficient learning environments which allow students to overcome difficulties and attain their language-learning aims.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, we undertook this research to discover the hurdles facing students in Islamabad as they acquire the use of English, in addition providing a critical analysis of what contributes to these hardships. In short, the findings emphasize all kinds of problems people encounter

when learning English, including pronunciation difficulties, lack of motivation and resources. To nurture an environment conducive to language learning and proficiency, both teachers and learners should be aware of those problems. Then they can at least start to grasp how to deal with them. By taking measures such as making adjustments to the curriculum, using motivational techniques and improving learning conditions, educators can offer more targeted support when students face challenges in learning English. Moreover, bringing forth and elaborating ideas acquired from the native language into English language acquisition strategies can arm learners with the resourcefulness and confidence necessary to negotiate this complicated process. Ultimately, a collaborative approach that actively confronts what they take to be the significance of these findings can do much to create an inclusive and effective learning environment both for language development in general, but particularly second languages.

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