

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### CHALLENGES FACED BY TAMIL LEARNERS IN LEARNING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

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#### ABSTRACT

Comparing the sounds of English and Tamil one can be able to acquire the knowledge of English sounds through his native. Only by studying the differences, difficulties of both English and Tamil it is possible to acquire a full understanding of the use of sounds. Phonological awareness refers to the ability to identify sounds of speech and make the necessary connection between the spoken units. And hence this paper attempts to discuss the differences between the languages and also the difficulties and the challenges faced by the Tamil learners in learning English pronunciation which helps the learners to identify the mistakes made by them and to be aware of the problems that forms the barrier. The possibilities will help the learners to be of a successful learner.

**Keywords:** Tamil learners, English pronunciation.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

First language is the language through which the child makes acquaintance with everything to communicate. Learning of mother tongue takes place in very natural way of imitation and exposition. The language skills listening and speaking are learnt at home and then child is sent to school for learning other skills such as reading and writing of the language. The child has more exposure to use his mother tongue and possibility of getting corrected about the mistake that is made is more. Regional language is learnt by birth. But the process of second language learning is quite different from that of the first language learning. Learning of foreign tongue is an artificial process. Tamil learners as a second language learner of English, faces numerous challenges in the process of acquisition. In case of the status of Introduction of English Sound Pattern to Indian learner, there is no conscious effort to introduce the sound pattern and whatever knowledge a learner gathers is simply accidental.

#### 2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the problems faced by the Tamil learners in learning English pronunciation?
2. Why is pronunciation important?

Following are some of the challenges faced by the Tamil learners.

#### 3. CRITICAL PERIOD

Every individual acquires his/her native language as he grows. The language structure that he encounters first is his mother tongue and he gets familiar to its form and structure. By the time he

attains the critical period he/she is well versed with his native language. As it is noted that language acquisition would be faster and efficient before the critical period, learners find it difficult to learn the second language and the language acquisition becomes a bit failure. The structures of L1 gets stick to the learner and later when introduced to the structures of L2, the clash occurs between features of L1 and L2.

#### 4. LESS EXPOSURE

Tamil learners are not very much exposed to English language socially. When one gets well exposure to a language he is able to acquire the language automatically. A child is able to acquire the native language even if it is not taught to it. This is possible because the language exposure that exists. But in case of second language, Tamil learners lack in English exposure.

#### 5. LACK OF PRACTICE

Tamil learners though they were made to learn English in schools, the present educational scenario does not provide essential knowledge. It doesn't fulfill the needs of the learners. No steps were taken in schools to make the students speak in English. They were only made to memorize things and just record things on examinations. The platform which should provide the space for the students to grow, fails to provide practice and thus without any practice of speaking the learner remain dumb in consideration with English.

#### 6. INAPPROPRIATE TEACHERS

English is being taught right from the schools but even students could not make their

pronunciation to be a successful one. This happens because school teachers aren't well versed so that they are not able to train their students. Our undeveloped curriculum syllabus doesn't provide necessary methodologies to improve one's speaking skills and so importance of pronunciation is hardly found. In most of the colleges phonetics sounds are handled in detail only at the level of master degree and so teachers who are qualified to the under graduate level in a way they aren't eligible to teach pronunciation as they don't have clear idea about that. So on one hand unqualified teachers create mispronunciations. And on the other hand the methodologies that is being followed in schools and colleges.

## 7. INFLUENCE OF L1 TAMIL

Most of the researchers agree that the learner's first language influences the pronunciation of the target language. This interference or influence from the first language causes errors in aspiration, stress and intonation in the target language.

English in Tamil Nadu is acquired as a second language through formal schooling. When a child learns a language through formal schooling, he learns it through the grids of his L1. When a child learns his L1 he does not learn sounds in isolation, but rather he learns the system. Having acquired the sound system of his L1 he tends to impose it on the sound system of the language he is learning. Tamilians learning English have been doing this for many years. When a child learns to speak a second language, the deeply ingrained patterns of his first language will interfere with those of the language he is learning. When a situation presents itself, the stronger associations of his first language will respond.

Native language plays an important role in the acquisition of second language. L1 features tend to affect L2 which creates a clash between the system of L1 and L2 in the minds of the learner. Due to this clash there occurs the transfer of features from L1 into L2. This type of transfer is called as interference. The learners transfer their L1 sound patterns into second language which results in mispronunciations.

Following are some of the interference or influence of Tamil over English.

In Tamil morphemes are generally made up of a consonant plus a vowel with no consonant cluster and it usually ends with a vowel. If there are consonants at the end, Tamil speakers add /u/

sound in the end. And so have problems in pronouncing words such as prompt. Eg. Book is pronounced as /buku/ instead of /buk/.

And also they drop the final /t/ in consonant clusters like /st/ /tft/ /-nst/ -skt/.

As Tamil lacks the sound /θ, z, ʒ/ Tamil speakers tend to replace these sounds.

/θ/ is replaced by /t/

/z / is replaced by /ʃ/ or /s/

/ʒ/ is replaced by /ʃ/ or /s/

Tamil learners use /e/ for English /ei/

Eg. Gate is pronounced as kate instead of /geit/

In Tamil the voiced plosives occur after vowel or after a corresponding nasal.

Eg. Country is pronounced as /coundry/

## 8. CONCLUSION

There are certain minimal challenges and difficulties are there in learning English pronunciation. But these difficulties can be overcome with certain practices. The main problem is that lack of awareness. The students are not aware of English. Thus the first and the foremost need is for the teacher to know the accurate sound pattern of English language and distinctly identify the subtle difference between that sound with its nearest sound in L1 of the learner. Thus by knowing the exact nature of both the sound systems in source language and the target language the teacher can progress in a way that she could convert the negative interference of L1 into positive influence in the teaching learning process. If they are taught by pointing out these differences and challenges they could be able to overcome. By comparing the sounds of English and Tamil he can be able to acquire the knowledge of English sounds through his native.

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