

# Challenges Faced By L2 Learners In Learning English Language In Technical Institutions

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**Abstract :** The aim of this study is to identify the challenges faced by L2 learners in learning English Language. This study was conducted among students studying in Technical Institutions in Erode District, Tamil Nadu State. The researchers collected the data by administering structured questionnaire method. Systematic sampling method was also employed by the researchers to collect the data. This study was conducted from January 2019 to September 2019. The researchers used statistical techniques like Factor analysis, Multiple regression, Cronbach alpha for data analysis. This study identified seven important dimensions of difficulties faced by L2 learners in learning English Language. They are: Grammar, Vocabulary Knowledge, Fluency, Pronunciation, Comprehension, Mother Tongue Influence and Anxiety. Among the identified dimensions the study found that there are significant impacts on Pronunciation, Comprehension, Mother Tongue Influence and Anxiety. Furthermore, the results revealed that there are no significant impacts on Grammar, Vocabulary Knowledge and Fluency. Mother Tongue Influence had the highest mean score (3.77) and it was the highly perceived problem dimension among engineering students learning English as the second Language.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Comprehension, Fluency, Grammar, Influence, Language, Pronunciation, Vocabulary.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English is considered as the language of business and also the language preferred by most of the educationalists across the globe. In the recent years, English has become a language of communication and instruction in the field of higher education globally (Chen and Kraklow, 2015). Undoubtedly, mastering English has numerous advantages to students, educators, civil servants, and professionals worldwide, irrespective of ethnic background or nationality (Okoro 2010). However, Learning English as a second language is quite challenging especially in a country where English is not spoken as the first language. Learning English is considered to be a tough task particularly at the beginning of the academic study among the non-native speakers (Berman and Cheng 2001). In most of the cases, Learning Environment, Cultural differences, Influence of the vernacular language can be barriers for a learner to learn a second language. Though studies prove that learning a new language is very good for the function of the brain, many learners find it very challenging to become proficient in learning a second language. These learners are referred to as L2 learners. The difficulty in learning begins as the L2 learners have to rely on their native language in order to learn a new language. They must apply the required knowledge only from their native language. So the language learners obviously face many obstacles in learning because of the negative influence of the mother tongue. This results in inappropriate understanding of a new language especially in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and so on. However in the current scenario, learning English as a second language becomes very essential for the students of Engineering Colleges. Most of the technical terms associated with engineering programme are well defined only in English language. Hence it becomes unavoidable for the learners to learn English as a second language when they opt to pursue a technical

course. Krashen and et al., (1979) believes that the younger age acquirers are better at second language acquisition. But even such young learners studying in Engineering colleges find it quite challenging. They fail miserably to express their ideas clearly and speak fluently and flawlessly in English. Khan, T. J., & Khan, N. (2016) points out that the learners of English face many obstacles in learning English as a second language and though they desire to achieve competency over the language they cannot remove the hurdles in way of their progress. The reasons for such a failure are that the learners are from varied social backgrounds and they study in different institutions up to their higher secondary education. And some of these learners learn all their subjects only in their vernacular language. The current research seeks to examine the various difficulty dimensions of learning English as a second language by the entry level L2 learners in Engineering Colleges. Secondly, the influence of various dimensions of learning English as a second language is identified. This study explores the perception of difficulties faced by L2 learners in learning English Language. This paper is organized as follows: The first section presents the background of the study, followed by the methodology and conclusion. The final section of this paper discusses limitations and scope for further study.

## 2. BACK GROUND OF THE STUDY

Christopher Bergmann and et al., (2015) identified that speaking a second language (L2) is a challenging task and that who call themselves 'fluent' in the L2 may also at times find unsure about the usage of grammar or at a loss for the right words. The most obvious reason for this lack of fluency is due to lack of proficiency, and insufficient knowledge of the L2 and insufficient practise in using it. Thirumalai (2002) found that pronunciation is an essential component of speaking skill and it should be somewhat similar to native performance if not so much identical to that of the native speakers. Bowen et al., (1985) identified that it is possible to communicate one's intent without elegant pronunciation. However, such communication would be inadequate or could even lead to miscommunication. Carrió-Pastor and Vallés (2015) conducted a study to analyze the motivation of students when they are taught a foreign language using different methodologies and

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identified that they are influenced by their mother tongue. Biemiller & Slonim (2001) in their study report that students with poor vocabulary knowledge often experience difficulties in learning to read and that early vocabulary knowledge predicts their future academic achievement. Comprehending is another important aspect of learning a language. Al-Issa and Dahan (2008) mention that a lack of comprehension of English texts is due to the dislike of reading, and the lack of prior knowledge of historical and cultural issues around the world. Saito et al. (1999) conducted a survey to identify the anxiety level among foreign language reading of the students and found that anxiety related with foreign language was distinct in general. Muhlis (2017) found that students may experience anxiety when they read foreign language texts in order to comprehend meaning. Although several studies have been conducted with regard to the difficulties faced by L2 learners internationally, only few studies have been conducted from Indian perspective. Therefore, the researchers intended to do their research on this topic.

### 3. OBJECTIVES

This study is approached with the following objectives

- To identify the important difficulty dimensions of learning English as a second language by L2 learners.
- To examine the impact of difficulty dimensions of learning English language among L2 learners.
- To identify the highly perceived difficulty dimensions of learning English language among L2 learners.

### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The scope of the study is confined only to the engineering students who completed their higher secondary education in their vernacular (mother tongue) in Erode district. The researchers adopted systematic sampling method for collecting data from the engineering students, since non-availability of sampling frame. This study was carried out from January 2019 to May 2019. The researchers adopted questionnaire method for collecting data from the respondents. The questionnaire for this study is divided into three parts namely A, B and C sections. Section A of the questionnaire contains questions on the demographic profile such as the Name of the respondents, Gender, Age, Medium of study, Programme and Year of study. The second part, Section B of the questionnaire solicits responses on the key constructs of the research framework, namely Grammar, Vocabulary Knowledge, Fluency, Pronunciation, Comprehension, Mother Tongue Influence and Anxiety. The third part, Section C of the questionnaire contains questions relating to English language learning. A Questionnaire was distributed among the respondents studying in Engineering Colleges in Erode District. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. A Total of 137 completed questionnaires were received from the respondents. Therefore the response rate of the study is 68.5 percent. Before collecting data from the respondents the researchers checked the content validity of the questionnaire. The purpose of content validity is to eliminate or correct questions that have not fulfilled their research objective (Bock and Kim, 2002). The researchers examined

the content validity by constituting a panel which consists of one expert from English Language Teaching. Furthermore, the researchers conducted a pilot study using a group of 10 Engineering College students.

### 5. CONSTRUCTION OF HYPOTHESES

This study is approached with the following hypotheses:

H0<sub>1</sub>: Grammar will have no significant impact on learning English Language.

H0<sub>2</sub>: Vocabulary knowledge will have no significant impact on learning English Language.

H0<sub>3</sub>: Fluency will have no significant impact on learning English Language.

H0<sub>4</sub>: Pronunciation will have no significant impact on learning English Language.

H0<sub>5</sub>: Comprehension will have no significant impact on learning English Language.

H0<sub>6</sub>: Mother Tongue Influence will have no significant impact on learning English Language.

H0<sub>7</sub>: Anxiety will have no significant impact on learning English Language.

### 6. DATA ANALYSIS

#### 6.1 Demographic Profile of the learners:

**Table No.1 - Demographic characteristics of the L2 Learners**

S.No	Profile variables	Description	Percentage
1	Gender	Male Female	66 34
2	Age	Less than 19years 19 – 21 years Above 21 years	77 19 04
3	Medium of study up to Higher Secondary	Tamil Hindi Telugu	97 2 1
4	Programme	B.E. B. Tech	76 24
5	Year of Study	I year II year III year IV year	27 23 32 18

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents who participated in the study, in which 66 percent of the respondents are male and 34 percent are female. 77 percent of the respondents fall under less than 19 years of age, 97 percentage of the respondents had completed their higher secondary education from the medium of Tamil, 76 percentage of the respondents are from B.E. programme and 32 percent of the respondents are from third year B.E./B.Tech. Programmes.

## 6.2 Reliability Analysis

According to Drost (2011), reliability refers to the extent to which measurement of the particular test are repeatable. Hair et al., (2010) asserted that reliability is an assessment of the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of variables. According to Cooper and Schindler (2006) and Zikmund et al., (2010), the test-retest, split-half reliability, and internal consistency methods are also known as Cronbach alpha. Internal consistency is the degree of different items that are homogeneous in measuring the same underlying construct (Cooper and Schindler, 2006). Cronbach alpha was used to test internal consistency of 30 items for all dimensions which are Grammar, Vocabulary, Fluency, Pronunciation, reliability, MotherTongue Influence and Anxiety. The alpha value ranged from 0.782 to 0.701, indicating that the result of this study are acceptable. The result of reliability analysis are exhibited in Table no.2.

**Table No.2 Reliability Analysis**

S.No	Problem dimensions of learning English	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
1	Grammar	4	0.701
2	Vocabulary Knowledge	5	0.782
3	Fluency	4	0.761
4	Pronunciation	5	0.732
5	Comprehension	4	0.714
6	MotherTongue Influence	4	0.748
7	Anxiety	4	0.730

## 6.3 Results of Factor Analysis:

Both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used to assess the dimensionality of learning English. A first step is visual examination of the correlations, identifying those that are statistically significant. All correlation are above 0.30 which is considered substantial for factor analysis (Hair et al., 1998). Furthermore, an examination of the correlation matrix shows that practically all correlation are significant at less than 0.01. Exploratory factor analysis for this study was conducted by the use of principal component method of extraction with varimax rotation. Varimax rotation maximizes number of items with high loading on a component helps in enhancing the interpretability of factors (Malhotra, 2003). Eigen value criterion was used to determine the number of factors to be extracted. A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the 30 items that

assessed the problem dimensions of learning English. The statistical test result (KMO=.755, Bartlett's Test of sphericity=1143.185, significance=.000), revealed that factor analysis was appropriate. Therefore 30 items with eigen value higher than 1.0 with were retained for further analysis. The resultant factor analysis explained 54.687% of the item variance

**Table No. 3 Factor Pattern Matrix of the items measuring problem dimensions of learning English**

Variables	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7
V18	.710						
V14	.583						
V12	.520						
V27	.473						
V21		.684					
V28		.610					
V8		.544					
V16		.501					
V24		.449					
V20			.592				
V9			.571				
V23			.563				
V7			.474				
V30				.759			
V29				.615			
V17				.440			
V3				.418			
V22				.402			
V6					.744		
V2					.654		
V4					.461		
V25					.401		
V11						.758	
V5						.398	
V26						.378	
V1						.302	
V19							.749
V10							.647
V13							.610
V15							.501
Cumulative percent of variance explained	17.341	24.228	31.017	37.091	43.008	48.851	54.687
Variance explained	17.341	6.887	6.789	6.074	5.917	5.843	5.836
Eigen value	20.344	6.184	5.538	4.793	4.641	4.406	4.009

Note: Total variance extracted by the 7 factors 54.687 %, KMO=.755, Bartlett's Test of sphericity=1143.185 significance=.000<0.001; Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Factor 1, which is labeled as "Grammar", was composed of four items and accounted for 17.341 percent variance explained. Factor 2 composed of five items that related to the "Vocabulary Knowledge" problem dimensions in learning English Language and accounted for 6.887 percent of the variance. Factor 3 was "Fluency" factor that contained four items. It accounted for an additional 6.789 percent. Factor 4, which is labeled as "Pronunciation", was composed of five items and accounted for a 6.074 percent variance explained. Factor 5, "Comprehension" was composed of four items that related to the problem dimensions in learning English Language and accounted for

5.917 percent of the variance. Factor 6, was "Mother Tongue Influence" that contained four items. It accounted for an additional 5.843 percent. Factor 7, which is labeled as "Anxiety", was composed of four items and accounted for 5.836 percent of the variance explained.

#### 6.4 Regression Analysis Results:

The effect of learners' perceived difficulty dimensions on learning English language is shown in Table No. 4.

**Table No. 4**  
*Effect of learners' perceived difficulty dimensions on learning English language*

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Independent Variables		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	.988	.244		4.050	.000
	Grammar	.046	.056	.062	.828	.409
	Vocabulary Knowledge	.051	.062	.063	.816	.416
	Pronunciation	.146	.059	.196	2.472	.015
	Fluency	.190	.067	.233	2.852	.005
	Comprehension	.130	.054	.178	2.411	.017
	Mother Tongue Influence	.103	.045	.159	2.275	.025
	Anxiety	.091	.042	.153	2.151	.033
R Square				0.500		
Adjusted R Square				0.430		
F Statistics				18.449		
Significance				0.000		
a. Dependent Variable: Learning English Language						

To study the impact of difficulty dimensions in learning English language, multiple regression analysis was carried out. The factor scores of the seven difficulty dimensions in learning English language obtained from the factor analysis (Grammar, Vocabulary knowledge, Pronunciation, Fluency, Mother Tongue Influence and Anxiety) represented the independent variables, whereas learning English Language represented the dependent variable. It is thus evident from the adjusted  $R^2$  in Table 4, revealed that the model explains 47.3 percent of the variance in learning English Language. The multiple regression model was found to be statistically significant ( $F=18.449$ ). The regression coefficients indicated in Table 6 offers strong support for the facts that the independent variables, Pronunciation, Fluency, Comprehension, Mother Tongue influence and Anxiety are significant predictors of learning English as a second Language. Fluency dimension is the most important

factor for influencing in learning English ( $\beta=.233$ ,  $t=2.852$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). The Pronunciation dimension is the second most important factor for influencing in learning English as a second language ( $\beta=.196$ ,  $t=2.472$ ,  $<0.05$ ). Table 5 presents the mean value, standard deviation for each problem dimensions.

**Table No: 5**  
*Respondents' opinion on various difficulty dimensions of learning English as a second language.*

Sl.No	Problem dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Co-efficient of variance
1	Grammar	3.43	.791	23.06
2	Vocabulary knowledge	3.47	.744	21.44

3	Fluency	3.44	.794	23.08
4	Pronunciation	3.49	.727	20.83
5	Comprehension	3.49	.816	23.38
6	MotherTongue Influence	3.77	.914	24.24
7	Anxiety	3.43	1.002	29.21

Among the seven dimensions of learning English Language, Mother Tongue Influence had the highest mean score (3.77), that was followed by Pronunciation (3.49), and Comprehension (3.49), Vocabulary knowledge(3.47), Fluency (3.44), Grammar (3.43) and Anxiety (3.43).

### 6.5 Hypotheses Testing:

Multiple Regression were administrated to test the hypothesis Table No.8 shows the result of the hypotheses. Three out of the ten hypotheses revealed a p value less than 0.5, while the remaining seven hypotheses were not significant at 5 percent level.

**Table No. 6 – Testing of Hypothesis**

S.No	Hypothesis	Beta	Results
H0 <sub>1</sub>	Grammar will have no significant impact on learning English as a Second Language.	.062	Accepted
H0 <sub>2</sub>	Vocabulary knowledge will have no significant impact on learning English as a Second Language.	.063	Accepted
H0 <sub>3</sub>	Fluency will have no significant impact on learning English as a Second Language.	.196	Accepted
H0 <sub>4</sub>	Pronunciation will have no significant impact on learning English as a Second Language.	.233	Rejected
H0 <sub>5</sub>	Comprehension will have no significant impact on learning English as a Second Language.	.178	Rejected
H0 <sub>6</sub>	MotherTongue Influence will have no significant impact on learning English as a Second Language.	.159	Rejected
H0 <sub>7</sub>	Anxiety will have no significant impact on learning English as a Second Language.	.153	Rejected

## 7. CONCLUSION

This study identified seven important dimensions of difficulties faced by L2 learners in learning English Language. They are: Grammar, Vocabulary Knowledge, Fluency, Pronunciation, Comprehension, Mother Tongue Influence and Anxiety. Among the identified dimensions the study found that there are significant impacts on Pronunciation, Comprehension, Mother Tongue Influence and Anxiety. Furthermore, the study found that there are no significant impacts on Grammar, Vocabulary Knowledge and Fluency. Mother Tongue Influence had the highest mean score (3.77) and it was highly perceived problem

dimension among engineering students learning English as the second Language. The study findings would help the policy makers to formulate suitable policies with regard to learning English Language by the L2 learners.

## 8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has been conducted among engineering students studying in Erode District, Tamil Nadu State, which limits the generalizability of the results. Future studies might tackle these limits by extending the analysis to wider area. Furthermore, dimensions of challenges faced by the L2 learners considered for this study are not exhaustive as there might be other dimensions. Future studies could be conducted in longitudinal research. The data collected was sufficient for statistical analysis, but for ensuring more accuracy and precision, larger sample size can be taken for the study.

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