

## DIFFICULTIES OF STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT ELEMENTARY LEVEL

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study was conducted to find out the difficulties of teachers teaching English as a second language to the elementary students. The method adopted for this research was descriptive method and the sample comprised of 144 teachers and 288 students. It was found that 75.6% sample students of elementary level face difficulty while interacting in English with teachers and classmates. 67.3% students of elementary school admitted that they face difficulty while learning English as compared to other language. It was found that 71.8% agreed that their English teacher taught them English as a subject rather than language. 53.1% students mentioned that they do not know how to speak in English. It was found that 69.7% students felt that mother tongue is one of the barriers for learning English. 69.1% students were of the opinion that overcrowded classes hamper learning English effectively where as 30.9% were against it. It was found that 100% students agreed that their English teacher uses translation method while teaching English. Out of 288 student respondents, 70.5% were of the opinion that teachers use Kashmiri language and the rest 29.5% were of the opinion that their teacher uses Urdu language while teaching English. Out of 288 students of elementary schools, 60.1% were of the opinion that learning of English is tough as compared to other language.*

**Keywords:** Elementary students, difficulties, language, pronunciation, consonants,

### Introduction

Language is a familiar feature of our daily life. It is a human and social activity without which human beings cannot function in the society. It is one of the basic needs. One has to learn it. It is not something optional. We just cannot avoid it. We regard it as both simple and natural. It is an essential element in the culture of a society. It is the flesh and blood of our culture. According to Leonard Bloomfield, (1935), "Each Community is formed by the activity of language." Without language, human life would exist, but there shall be no standard and no transmission of all, that is best in human tradition and civilization from one generation to another. It plays a prominent role in our daily life and compels us to study it. With the advent of the concept of globalization, people all over the globe communicate with each other and exchange ideas. Though technological advances have served as a medium for communication, we cannot deny the role played by language. In India, elementary schools provide education from Class 1 to Class 8. The children in these classes are generally aged between 6 to 14 years. It is the next stage after kindergarten (Pre-Nursery, Nursery, Prep or Lower Kindergarten and Upper Kindergarten). The next stage after primary education is Middle School (Class 6th to 8th). In most schools in North India, children in Classes 1st to 3rd are taught English, Hindi, Mathematics, Environmental Science, and General Knowledge. However some schools may introduce this concept in Class 3 itself. Some schools may also introduce a third language in Class 5th or even in Class 4th. At some places, primary education is labeled as the education of Class 3rd to Class 5th and up to class 2nd as pre-primary education. This is because many new concepts are introduced in this class. The NCERT provides support and technical assistance to a number of schools in India and oversees many aspects of enforcement of education policies.

### Objectives

- 1) To find out the problems faced by elementary students in learning English as compared to other language.
- 2) To know the opinion of students of elementary level regarding learning English as a second language.

### Review of related literature

**Sobia, B. et al. (2015)** found that the teachers described their difficulties related to grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary; linguistic devices i.e. rhyme scheme, alliteration, assonance, consonants, syllable, diphthong, digraph, etc. **Wong, M. L (2010)** revealed that Pre-service teachers recognized the existence of foreign language aptitude and placed strong emphasis on excellent pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, the benefits of practice and an immersion approach to language. Most of the teachers reported of being highly motivated to learn English and were positive about their ability to master the language. **Enamul, H. (2008)** found that the major problems in English language teaching and learning at the Alim level lie with the textbook materials, syllabus, uninteresting lessons, method of teaching, avoidance of practicing listening and speaking, poor quality of teachers, lack of physical facilities of the classroom, very poor quality teaching aids and equipment, etc. **Mishra, K.C. (2005)** revealed that the trainees exhibited positive attitude towards errors during the course period and 93 percent of teachers under the present course had changed their methods of correction. **Chidambaram, K (2004)** revealed that the medium of instruction has direct impact on the achievement of second language Skills.

### Method and Design

The present study has been completed through the descriptive method of research.

### SAMPLE

The sample for the study has been drawn from both rural and urban elementary schools of Kashmir division. List of all these elementary schools was obtained from the Directorate of School Education, Kashmir division. There are 10 districts in Kashmir division, out of which only four districts were selected. Out of which, two districts fall in urban areas viz, Anantnag and Srinagar and two districts fall in rural areas viz, Bandipora and Budgam. The investigator took one educational zone from each district. The sample comprised of 48 elementary schools, 12 schools were taken alphabetically from each zone. The sample included 24 lower primary and 24 upper primary schools.

### The breakup of the sample is given as under:

	District		Boys School	Girls School	Total Boys & Girls Schools	Total No. of Schools
Urban	Anantnag	Lower Primary	3	3	6	12
		Upper Primary	3	3	6	
	Srinagar	Lower Primary	3	3	6	12
		Upper Primary	3	3	6	
Rural	Bandipora	Lower Primary	3	3	6	12

		Upper Primary	3	3	6	
	Budgam	Lower Primary	3	3	6	12
		Upper Primary	3	3	6	
<b>Total</b>						<b>48</b>

### Description of the tools

As the researcher planned a descriptive study, keeping in mind the objective of the study therefore, the data for the present investigation was collected with the help of the following self-constructed tools:

**1. Questionnaire (for students):** The investigator in consultation with the research supervisors constructed a questionnaire for students of elementary level. The initial format of the questionnaire consisted of 45 items was presented to a jury of 10 experts who were working in the field of language teaching for their opinion and judgment. These experts were requested to give their opinion regarding inclusion of each item in the questionnaire. On the basis of 75% agreement among the experts, the final selection of items was made as such and only 28 items were retained for the final format. Out of these 28 items 14 were multiple choice items and the remaining 14 items were with 'Yes' and 'No' options. These items were spread over various elements like textbooks, audio-visual aids, skills, syllabus, and method of teaching and mode of evaluation.

**2. Interview Schedule (for students):** The interview schedule was prepared by the investigator in order to collect the information from the students regarding English language learning. The interview schedule was constructed for the sample of selected elementary students. The interview schedule included 19 open ended questions. The sample of elementary students selected for the study was interviewed to know the problems faced by them in English Language Learning through interview.

### Statistical treatment:

In order to accomplish the objectives of the present study, the data collected through various data gathering devices was analyzed by applying the percentage statistics

### Analysis and interpretation

**Table 1.1 showing the problems faced by elementary students in learning English as compared to other language**

Statement	Yes		No	
	N	%age	N	%age
Difficulty while interacting in English	218	75.6	72	25
Teach English as a subject rather than language	207	71.8	81	28.1
Mother tongue as a barrier for learning English	201	69.7	87	30.2

Difficulty while learning English as compared to other subjects	194	67.3	94	32.6
Subject matter hardly related to environment	192	66.6	96	33.3
Defective methods of teaching English	154	53.4	134	46.5

The table 1.1 shows the problems faced by elementary schools in learning English as compared to other language. A perusal of the table depicts that out of 288 sample students, 218(75.6%) mentioned that they face difficulty while interacting in English with teachers and classmates whereas 72(25%) mentioned that they do not face difficulty while interacting in English with teachers and classmates. Out of 288 student respondents, 207(71.8%) mentioned that their English teacher taught English as a subject rather than language whereas 81(28.1%) did not agreed. Out of 288 student respondents, 201(69.7%) felt that mother tongue is one of the barriers for learning English whereas 87(30.2%) were against it. Out of 288 student respondents, 194(67.3%) admitted that they face difficulty while learning English as compared to other languages whereas 94(32.6%) mentioned positively. Out of 288 student respondents, 192(66.6%) felt that their subject matter is hardly related to their surrounding environment whereas 96(33.3%) responded positively. Out of 288 student respondents, 154(53.4%) felt that methods of teaching English adopted in the schools are defective whereas 134(46.5%) did not agreed.

**Table 1.2 showing the Problems faced by elementary students in learning English as compared to other language**

Statement	Response	N	%age
Language used by teacher	Kashmiri	170	59.1
	Urdu	100	34.7
	English	8	2.7
	All of the above	10	3.4
Difficult skills of English	Speaking	231	80.2
	Writing	18	6.2
	Reading	17	5.9
	All of the above	22	7.6

Teacher skips while teaching English	Pronunciation	245	85.1
	Spelling	43	14.9

The table 1.2 shows the problems faced by elementary students in learning English as compared to other language. A perusal of the table revealed that out of 288 sample students, 170(59.1%) admitted that their teachers use Kashmiri language while teaching English, 100(34.7%) agreed that their teachers use Urdu language while teaching English, 8(2.7%) mentioned that their teachers use English language while teaching English in the class, 10(3.4%) mentioned that their teachers uses all the above three languages while teaching English in the class. Out of 288 student respondents, 231(80.2%) agreed that speaking skill is most difficult while learning English, 18(6.2%) found writing skill is difficult while learning English, 17(5.9%) mentioned that reading skill is difficult while learning English, 22(7.6%) admitted that all the above three skills are difficult while learning English. Out of 288 student respondents, 245(85.1%) admitted that their teacher skips pronunciation while teaching English in the class, 43(14.9%) mentioned that their teacher skips spelling while teaching in the class.

**Table 1.3 showing the problems faced by elementary students in learning English as compared to other language**

Statement	Yes		No	
	N	%age	N	%age
Picturized text books	288	100	0	0
Overcrowded classes	227	78.8	61	21.1
Regular home work	61	21.1	227	78.8
Completion of syllabus	120	41.6	168	58.3
Lack of individual attention	161	55.9	127	44.1
Successful in motivation	151	52.4	137	47.7
Boring text books	96	33.3	192	66.6

The table 1.3 shows the problems faced by elementary students in learning English as compared to other language. A perusal of the table depicts that out of 288 student respondents, all the 288(100%) agreed that they like more picturized English textbooks. Out of 288 student respondents, 227(78.8%) felt that overcrowded classes hamper learning English effectively whereas 61(21.1%) were against it. 61(21.1%) mentioned that their English teacher give them regular homework whereas 227(78.8%) were against it. Out of 288 student respondents, 120(41.6%) agreed that their English teachers complete syllabus within stipulated time whereas 168(41.6%) did not agreed. Out of 288 student respondents,

161(55.9%) felt that most of the students lack individual attention in the class when English is taught whereas 127(44.1%) did not agreed. Out of 288 student respondents, 151(52.4%) mentioned that their English teacher successfully motivated them towards the lesson whereas 137(47.5%) responded negatively. Out of 288 student respondents, 96(33.3%) found that their textbooks are boring whereas 192(66.6%) did not agreed.

**Table 1.4 showing the problems of elementary students in learning English as compared to other language**

Statement	Response	N	%age
Types of evaluation	Written	205	71.1
	Oral	23	7.9
	Both (oral& written)	60	20.8
communication with teacher	You do not know how to speak	153	53.1
	You are shy	17	5.9
	You are afraid of teacher	15	5.2
	All of the above	103	35.7
Reading skills	Loud reading	151	52.4
	Silent reading	117	40.6
	Both	20	6.9
Mode of evaluation	Marks	129	44.8
	Grading	63	21.8
	Both	96	33.4
Art of teaching	Asks pupils to read one by one	198	67.7
	Make you read aloud	23	7.9
	By reading alone	12	4.1

	All of the above	58	20.1
Modes of question paper	Multiple choice questions	129	44.7
	Yes/No & True/False	117	40.6
	Completion items (Fill in the blanks)	16	5.6
	Descriptive questions (Long answer)	18	6.2
	Matching exercises	14	4.8
	Oral tests	12	4.1

The table 1.4 shows the problems faced by elementary students in learning English as compared to other language. A perusal of the table revealed that out of 288 student respondents, 205(71.1%) admitted that they like to have written type of evaluation system in their examination, 23(7.9%) agreed that they like to have oral type of evaluation system in their examination, 60(20.8%) reported that they like to have both written/oral type of evaluation system in their examination, Out of 288 student respondents, 153(53.1%) admitted that they do not know how to speak, 17(5.9%) agreed that they feel shy while learning English in communicating their problems with the teacher, 15(5.2%) agreed that they are afraid of teachers while learning English, 103(35.7%) mentioned that they face all of the above problems while learning English. The table also shows, out of 288 students, 151(52.4%) agreed that they like loud reading most while learning English, 117(40.6%) admitted that they like silent reading, 20(6.9%) mentioned that they like both reading skills most while learning English. From the table above, 129(44.8%) agreed that teachers follow marks method for assessing students performance, 63(21.8%) mentioned that teachers follow grading method for assessing students performance, 96(33.4%) mentioned that teachers follow both marks/grading method for assessing students performance. The table also depicts, out of 288 students, 195(67.7%) admitted that their teacher imparts teaching by asks them (students) to read one by one in the class, 23(7.9%) agreed that their teacher make them (students) read aloud in the class, 12(4.1%) agreed that their teacher teach them by reading alone (teacher) in the class, 58(20.1%) mentioned that the teacher adopts all methods (in the table) of teaching in the class. Out of total 288 student respondents, 129(44.7%) mentioned that Multiple choice question papers should be made compulsory, 117(40.6%) agreed Yes/No&True/False mode of question papers should be made compulsory, 18(6.2%) mentioned that descriptive questions (Long answer) mode of question papers should be made compulsory in examinations, 16(5.6%) mentioned that completion items should be made compulsory, 12(4.1%) added that oral tests question papers should be made compulsory in schools, 14(4.8%) admitted that matching exercises question papers should be made compulsory.

**Table 1.5 showing the opinion of students of elementary level regarding learning English as a second language**

Statement	Yes		No	
	N	%age	N	%age
Importance of work books and other reference books	280	97.2	8	2.7
Importance of mother tongue	268	93.1	20	6.9
Provision of audio-visual aids	259	89.9	29	10.1
Illustrated English text books	259	89.9	29	10.1
Relation of text material with environmental knowledge and issues	209	72.5	79	27.4
Teach English as a subject rather than a language	198	68.7	90	31.3
Sufficient time not given to teaching English	175	60.7	113	39.2
Correction of notebooks	147	51.1	141	48.9

The table 1.5 shows the opinion of students of elementary level regarding learning English as a second language. Out of 288 student respondents, 280(97.2%) were of the opinion that workbooks and other reference material are important for learning English whereas 8(2.7%) did not agreed. Out of 288 student respondents, 268(93.1%) admitted that mother tongue is important for learning whereas 8(2.7%) were against it. Out of 288 students, 259(89.9%) were of the opinion that provision of audio-visual aids should be necessary while learning English whereas 29(10.1%) did not agreed. Out of 288 student respondents, 259(89.9%) were of the opinion that their English text books should be illustrated whereas 29(10.1%) did not agreed. Out of 288 student respondents, 209(72.5%) were of the opinion that their text material should be relevant to environmental knowledge and issues whereas 79(27.4%) were against it. Further it was revealed that 198(68.7%) opined that their teachers teach English as a subject rather than a language whereas 90(31.3%) did not agreed. Out of 288 student respondents, 175(60.7%) were of the opinion that sufficient time were not given to teaching English whereas 113(39.2%) were against it. Out of 288 student respondents, 147(51.1%) agreed that teachers check their notebooks whereas 141 (48.9%) did not agree.

#### **Discussion and conclusion**

The researcher revealed that students of elementary level felt that sufficient time was not provided to them in teaching English. The researcher found that the time-bound limit provided by teachers in schools is main reason of inadequate/insufficient teaching; resulting in poor access of learning English language. They mostly agreed that their English text books should be illustrated with suitable examples. It was found that overcrowded classes hamper learning English in classrooms. The teachers opined that provision of audio-visual aids should be necessary while teaching English. Further it was found that Student respondents also



agreed that mother tongue is important for learning English as a second language. They stressed mostly on using workbooks and other reference material for learning English language. Some student respondents agreed that teachers correct their notebooks in classrooms while others did not agree. The student respondents were of the opinion that their text material should be relevant to environmental knowledge and issues. It was revealed from the analyses that students of elementary level opined that marks method should be effective in evaluating students while as some others prefer both marks and grading at elementary level. They also mentioned that loud reading improves the learning of English and some others felt that silent reading improves the learning of English. They also admitted that their teachers use Kashmiri language and some teachers use Urdu language while teaching English in the classrooms. Further, it was found that all the student respondents agreed that teachers follow translation method while teaching English. Student respondents also agreed that Grammar book should be used in learning of English. They also agreed that speaking is the difficult skill for learning. Majority of students mentioned that they complete 75% of syllabus during the year in English. The researcher found that proper timely planning of academic schedule and the syllabus completion strategy facilitated the teacher to complete the syllabus as per the pre-decided schedule. Further it was found that students of elementary opined that weekly tests are suitable evaluating system for them. They felt that reading poetry helps them in improving pronunciation in English language. Most of the student respondents also agreed that learning of English is tough as compared to other language. The researcher found that the students lack proper pronunciation of English language as they do not focus on practical methods like drill work while teaching English. Majority of the students considered English as a tough subject because of their low or lack of confidence, inability of use formal language, lack of adequate language skills, and lack of exposure to English.

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