

Problems Faced in English by the Second Language Speakers

Esther Talang-Rao

Professor, Division of Arts and Social Sciences, Spicer Adventist University

Abstract

This research article examines the second language speakers and their problem areas. Learning and speaking a new language after the age of five or passed the adolescence age can be a big issue for most L2 speakers. The reason is that by this time, they have already mastered their L1 in form, syntax, and phonology. In this study the L2 speakers in general are of different levels; such as, students, teachers, and professors (young and old; males and females). However, the speakers commit mistakes in English more or less the same. The writer has classified their mistakes in three categories; namely: vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. In using words some L2 speakers commit malapropism. For example, there is a mixed up of words having similar sounds such as, 'suffocated' and 'sophisticated'; 'immaculate' and 'emasculate'. These words surfacely look and sound similar but they are very different semantically. In grammar, some languages have some similarities while others have very different rules. When we talk in English some of the rules that are in English are either absent or different in other languages or native tongue of the speakers; therefore, because of these differences, mistakes make roads when an L2 speaker speaks in English. Similarly in pronunciation if the sound is present in the native tongue of the speakers, they pronounce it correctly, they are already familiar with that sound. On the other hand, there are some unfamiliar sounds in English which do not exist in the native tongue of the speakers. It is important to note here that the writer is talking about the 44 distinctive sounds of the English language and not letters. Other factors are, English is a stressed language, whereas, many languages have no stress. For instance, we Indians give equal stress to all syllables in a word. We also pronounce a good percentage of time according to how we spell the words; whereas, in English the consonants and vowels can have more than one sound. L2 speakers have issues using the right words and structure in English but there seems to be a more complicated issue in pronunciation. It is hoped that this article will help the L2 speakers and (English) teachers to be aware of these limitations and focus on ways of remedying them. The purpose of this article is to help the second language speakers to improve their speaking skills and to solve their difficulties that crop up in everyday conversation in the use of English language particularly in pronunciation.

Keywords: Second language speakers, problems, mistakes, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation

*Email address: estherra@sau.edu.in

Introduction

English as a second language (ESL) means English comes into use by speakers of different native languages. Though at times, for some speakers the term ESL can be a misnomer because they have learned a few or several languages before they pick up the English language. Some speakers, particularly those who are in the rural areas, started learning and speaking English when they enter the educational programme, that is when they go to the English Medium School.

By the time they go to the English Medium School, they have become quite fluent with their first language (L1) or their own native tongue. When they start learning English, they first learn isolation words and a little later, about two to three months grammar and syntax; depending on how much exposure they have to English. At this point, there is complication because in English, for instance, there are singular and plural nouns; whereas, in the L1 of some learners and speakers the way how nouns are made plural is different. In English a noun can simply become a plural by adding an -s; such as, bird is singular (Sg) and birds is plural (Pl).

But in some other languages the noun 'bird' will always be 'bird' whether it is used as a Sg or Pl. When it is necessary to make it plural, there is an element that comes before the noun. For instance, in Khasi language the noun *sim* meaning 'bird' will always be *sim*; but if it is a plural, the element *ki* comes before *sim*; therefore, *ki sim* (two or more birds). Perhaps for this reason why some second language speakers of English say, "one birds" and "seven bird."

Similarly, second language learners/speakers (of various degrees, especially those with less education or less exposure to English) make many mistakes with vocabulary, grammar/syntax, and pronunciation as we shall see in the data which the author has observed and collected.

One of the reasons for the second language speakers to not be able to speak acceptable English is age. When speakers start learning English after the age of twelve it becomes difficult for them to speak fluently in English. When they come across L2 before the age of five or six, they can achieve fluency almost like the L1 speakers of English. When they learn English after the age of seven, they are likely to commit mistakes and errors, enough 'to set them apart' from those who speak English as their first language. But after the childhood age, twelve or thirteen, it can become very difficult to acquire fluency like the L1 speakers (Hyltenstam, & Abrahamsson, 2003). Of course, the less educated ones encounter more problems but to a certain degree even the educated, those who have done MA, MPhil., and Ph. D. can easily be identified that they are second language speakers. The background and the L1 follow them and in some cases very prominent especially when it comes to pronunciation.

Review of Literature

Ama (2019) opines that learning English is not easy for the second language learners. Learning English can be harder in countries where it is used as a second [or third] language. For example, Ghana, Zambia, and other countries in Africa face many problems since English is not their native tongue. Following are the challenges the second language learners and speakers encounter:

1. Unqualified teachers-This is one of the most important points, but it is also one of the most neglected problems. In an area where the speakers are second

language users of English, whatever the teachers say is accepted whether right or wrong. For this reason, there is a lot of confusion among the students because different teachers tell them different things, different teachers pronounce words differently. For example, 'cup' is pronounced in different sounds by various teachers. Some use the vowels /a/ or /o/ instead of /ʌ/. Teachers themselves pronounce the word wrong since /ʌ/ is absent in many languages, for instance African languages. Therefore, when it comes to pronunciation even teachers encounter problems.

2. Limited learning environment- By limited learning environment, Ama (2019) is referring "to the weather, the availability of furniture in the classrooms, or the location of the school" (para. 4). Learning from outside of the classroom is also a great challenge. Students are not able to hear acceptable English in their surroundings. Consequently, it is difficult for them to learn English correctly. When it comes to study materials, students may have books, but they need the guidance from their teacher. For instance, when they see the word 'ewe', how are they to pronounce it right? A lot of terms students can learn from "movies" but they learn without having deep understanding. Moreover, films and movies do contain slangs or dialects.
 3. Students do not take their study seriously- Ama finds out that students do not seem to realise that the English they use at home and in the streets are not the same from the language they use when they write their examination. Students do not follow the rules they learn in school.
 4. Another reason is that students take English subjects light- they do not spend time studying much as they do in other subjects. After the English class they just leave their books until the next class. They hardly study pronunciation, practicing essay writing, and take the time to learn new vocabulary. And in class they hardly ask for help from their teacher. Some say that it is not their language, therefore, that attitude affects their learning ability.
- Other problems are the overuse of mother tongue in the classroom, students are very dependent on their teachers, stronger and smarter students outnumber the weaker students and they are left behind by teachers and students.

Korneev (2020) explains that one of the 'hardest' languages to learn is English and there are many reasons to this: the 'baffling spelling', pronunciation, and "peculiar grammar structure" and a lot more reasons as to why second language learners cannot speak smoothly and correctly. He has pointed out five common problems:

1. Learning the language without a goal- If the goal is just to speak English with people who speak it, then it is a less important goal but if the goal is something to do with the "opportunity in life" then it will be more motivating to learn the language.
2. Bored with traditional teaching methods- Many times language learners both young and old are asked to learn in a strict and traditional way [that is to read and memorise] of learning the language. He opines that learning a language is to get into a topic of learning to find enjoyment; such as, "film" and "video games". He himself learned English by playing video games. That is the subject he finds interest in.

3. Feeling of embarrassment- When a second language learner starts using or speaking a new language it is very natural to feel shy especially practicing speaking English in front of those who are already very good and fluent in speaking English. He suggests that in order “to conquer this fear of embarrassment, it’s important to practice as much as possible” (para. 5). Learners can practice speaking out loud alone at any time and place whenever and wherever they feel at ease.
4. Not enough time- Dedicative time to learning a new language is another problem faced by some language learners. Setting aside sometime to learn and practice every day could be very helpful.
5. Lack of interaction with native speakers- Many speakers of English language interact with people who are also second language learners of English. Therefore, it can be very challenging for them.

Saraswathi (2006) opines that learning a second language is a very complicated activity/process. Second language learners may not have acquired the language in the same process of learning as there are many different ways of learning a new language. For instance, many learners must have learned English through the course books used in schools; however, there are others who learn English as their second language without books, without methods, without grammar rules, without punishment, and without tears.

Today linguists and researchers realize there are reasons to be happy when speakers commit mistakes for two purposes: the learners are actively participating in the learning process and these mistakes (and errors) can be utilized in designing syllabuses. This realisation is useful in the part of the learners as well as teachers. The teachers can emphasise, explain, and create activities to help learners improve on their grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Some of the errors committed by the second language learners of Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam, and Canada is due to the strong root of the L1. For instance, in these languages mentioned, the sentences have no copula; an example of this is – “He Prime Minister of India” (Saraswathi, 2006, p. 39). When learners write this sentence, teachers will probably make a correction that the acceptable sentence is to add a copula: He is the Prime Minister of India (pp. 39, 62).

Similarly, Verma, & Krishnaswamy (2009, p. 348) have analysed the problems faced by the second language learners as follows: The ‘pull’ of the mother tongue is very strong; the internal analogy and overgeneralization, hence the mix up of nouns, verbs, and articles- such as, childrens, bringed, and a sugar from words such as boys, promised, and a tin. Other problems are to pronounce according to spelling, bad teaching (as also stated by Ama), non-standard variety picking up from the streets, attitudes towards the second language, policy of the government, failure to understand the nature of the second language, poor adequacy of vocabulary, and many other factors.

Methodology

The data was collected in a span of a little over two years from seminars, zoom meetings, webinars, and listening to small social groups in person meetings and conversations which eventually makes this study to be a qualitative research article.

The instrument used is observation; but mainly non-participant. Hence, it is not a pencil/pen and paper responses of the informants. The total number of speakers included in the study are forty-six: sixteen college students, eighteen teachers (a subset of these teachers are both teachers and research scholars), and twelve professors.

The author was always ready with a pen and a writing pad to pen down whenever she heard the speakers committing mistakes in their speeches and presentations; and also marked down the speaker's identity for the sake of analysis. Recording was not needed since most of these speeches and presentations are available in YouTube as well. Therefore, the data was organized and analyzed in three categories: vocabulary, syntax/grammar, and pronunciation (V, S/G, P). The list of the exact mistakes the speaker commits in each category (V, S/G, P) was listed and put inside the quotation marks followed by (wherever necessary) the acceptable answer and explanation.

Data Analysis and Findings

The data revealed the following problems the second language speakers encounter when they speak in English. The author has identified eleven words which are used wrongly, forty-one grammatical mistakes, and fifty-seven wrong pronunciations.

Vocabulary

The kinds of words that are used by the second language speakers observed in this research article are those which we can call 'wrong words' and also 'malapropisms. The speakers commit these mistakes perhaps because they do not know the exact word; therefore, they just use a word that sounds similar to the right word. The data have shown their problem as listed below:

1. "interested" for interesting- "very interested lesson"
2. "interesting" for interested- "she is interesting to work as your secretary".
3. "good afternoon" for good morning, when the time was still morning or before twelve noon.
4. 'Attaching, attached, attachment; enclosing, enclosed, and sending' were used inappropriately.
5. "slash" is used instead of sash- "All of you should wear your slash".
6. "plate" for plaque- "Keats plate stone" when referring to Keats' Tomb Stone
7. "errors" for eras- "different errors in literature"
8. "humiliation" for humility
9. "scuber driving" for scuba diving
10. "thrash can" for trash can
11. "smash potato" for mashed potato

Grammar

Grammar involves a number of items. In this study the following grammatical items are observed which are an issue to the L2 speakers: article, question, preposition, subject-verb agreement, tense, number, degree, and tag.

Article is one of the problems the second language speakers encounter; particularly the article 'the'. Listed below are the example observed the speakers committed when they use article.

1. “Something is wrong if the Satan is silent in your life”.
2. “Turn to the book of the Genesis”.
3. “He told the Naman...”

In sentence 1 the article ‘the’ is used before the proper noun by a Ph D holder. And sentences 2 and 3 by a teacher and research scholar. The misused of the article ‘a’ and ‘an’ did not occur in the data collected for the study. Therefore, as explain by Hornby (1983) the article ‘the’ has many functions and it is not easy to use. Many L2 speakers of English do not know when and how to use the article ‘the’. For instance, many do not know the difference between 1. I am going to the hospital and 2. I am going to hospital. In 1 it means to see something or visit someone; in 2 it means I need medical help (Hornby, 1983, p. 127). In sentences above; 1, 2, and 3 the article is not at all needed.

Question is yet another problem of mostly L2 speakers. “The normal order for sentences differs from language to language, though there are always exceptions. In English, the word order is usually: subject, verb, object (SOV)” (Winkler, 2021, pp. 14-15). Similarly, we follow a certain order for nouns and verbs when we ask questions.

1. “Ma’am, you are still in college?”
This kind of mistake comes under the characteristics of Indian English, where the sentence is changed into a question just by changing the tone towards the end of the statement.
2. “Anyone knows?”
If this is to be a question, it should be- Anyone know? Because when we speak, often times we do not use all the words as it is done in writing. When this question is used in writing no words are left out. Therefore, it will be -Does anyone know? The grammar should be acceptable whether full or incomplete sentence.
3. Do you know who is he?
Of course, here it also depends on the tone; but the better question is- Do you know who he is?

Prepositions are also not easy to use and not easy to teach or to explain either. Therefore, it becomes even harder for the L2 speakers to choose the acceptable preposition. Of course, for some prepositions we can explain and give examples. Sometimes, we can use more than one preposition in the same slot. For this reason, many times we check from the dictionary to be sure which preposition goes with which word. In the following sentences prepositions are used or not used/absent as observed in the study:

1. “Share to your friend.
2. Family is not happy each other.
3. Do you want to dedicate *to yourself to the task?
4. When you look somebody...
5. I came *to home.
6. I want to go washroom”.

In sentence 1, it would be better and smoother to use the preposition 'with' in place of 'to'. In 2, 4, and 6; the insertion of 'with', 'at' and 'to' respectively is necessary. In 3 and 5 the insertion of 'to' as indicated with an asterisk is not needed.

Subject verb agreement is another problem the L2 learners and speakers face. Though it is taught at the early learning level, as early as when the learners are in class five but there is still a mixed up of what verb to use with the subject. Here are a few examples which occurred in the data:

1. "Sarah and Eva was sleeping.
2. The police is...
3. My lips is unclean".

The word 'police' is a plural (pl); therefore, the pl verb 'are' should be used. However, if the noun is a singular (sg); such as, a police officer or a policeman, then the sg verb can be used. But 'police' is pl, hence it takes a pl be verb 'are'.

Regarding tense, the data revealed that some second language speakers have problem with perfect tense, past tense, and repetition of past tense as observed in the following sentences:

1. "Thirty long years I had wait.
2. I was suppose to leave.
3. I didn't went."

There are two important tenses in English, present and past. Consequently, we have present participle and past participle. In the first sentence "... wait" is supposed to be a past perfect. "The tense used to refer to '**past in past**' is the **past perfect (had + V-en)**". In the English language "the past perfect tense is formed by using **had** followed by a verb in its past participle form" (Verma, & Nagarajan, 2006, p. 29).

In 2 and 3 the speaker is confused with the present and past tenses. It should be 'was supposed' because that was the intention and expectation; and 3 is a common mistake of some L2 speakers particularly those speakers with the rural educational background. Grammatically, 'didn't' is a contraction of did not. The verb 'did' is a past tense; therefore, it cannot be followed by another past tense. The verb that follows should be the present tense-I didn't go.

Singular and plural nouns seem to be of a great issue for the L2 speakers as to when to have or not to have an -s ending to a noun. For instance, where it is supposed to be a sg such as 'a miracle' an -s is added; whereas, 'two sisters' is without the pl -s. To say 'king of king' is meaningless when the -s is not present in the second word- king. The problem here is of countable, uncountable nouns, and their meaning. The data revealed that utterances such as "many juice" and "Psalms" are used by the L2 speakers. The use of pl form 'Psalms' when the speaker refers to only one chapter.

Following are the exact utterances observed from the speeches/conversations of the L2 speakers:

1. "There will be a miracles.
2. There are two sister.
3. Teenage childrens drive high speed.
4. May this two book be like mana for our growth.
5. King of king and Lord of lord
6. Does anybody has books?

7. So many juice, no?
8. Psalms 150
9. He lost one of his leg."

Syntactically and semantically, at times it is difficult to understand what the L2 speakers are trying to convey. The following utterances were found in the data:

1. "You could able to achieve
2. He can able to come
3. She was die in a week
4. Following people were slept due to covid- 19.
5. As a father I wanted to faint.
6. Her helper take bath for her."

Semantically, such sentences are not clear; for instance, when one of the speakers said, "As a father I wanted to faint." Did he really want to faint? Or he felt as if he was going to faint when his son was diagnosed with cancer. Also, sentence 6 though syntactically acceptable but semantically it hardly makes any sense.

Comparative and superlative degrees are a problem with some L2 speakers. The following are the examples which the data have revealed:

1. "The most happiest woman
2. The most strongest
3. He is more wiser.
4. Life is becoming sweet and sweet.
5. He's working hard and hard."

Question tag is one of those topics in grammar that most of us Indians (both educated and not so educated) are not using it right. Perhaps this is why some established authors, for instance, Yardi (1994) has quoted George and Corbulth who suggest that "we need not teach and should not have to teach all the question tags ...the universal 'Is it?' and 'Isn't it?' are better left as they are" (p. 148). A few of these question tags occurred in the data as listed below:

1. "He is a tiger guide, isn't it?
2. He gave an excellent presentation, isn't it?
3. You will share your notes with others, isn't it?"

Pronunciation

Pronunciation seems to be very difficult for most of the second language learners and speakers. L2 learners and speakers have many problems while learning English, in examining the data which has been classified under vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation; the speakers in this study have more problems in pronunciation than in vocabulary and grammar. The problems in pronunciation revealed in the data are as follows:

1. "...two different errors in literature"
The speaker was unable to pronounce or perhaps confused between errors /'erəs/ and eras /'ɪərəs/.
2. Interference pronounced as "interfrence"

The principal stress is on the third syllable /ɪntə'fɪərəns/ however, some L2 speakers leave out the syllable completely.

3. Isle pronounced as “isel” instead of /aɪl/
4. Drunkard as “drunka:d”
The speaker is dragging the second syllable long and strong; whereas, it should be shorter and weaker than the first syllable.
5. Leopard /'lepəd/ has two syllables, but the data revealed that some L2 speakers pronounced it as “le.o.pard” three syllables and given importance to all three equally.
6. Tortoise /'tɔ:təs/ is pronounced as “tortois”
The /r/ sound which is supposed to be silent is very prominent.
7. Heir /eə/ is pronounced as “hair”
The /h/ sound is supposed to be silent; the letter ‘r’ is not pronounced when ‘heir’ is used in isolation.
8. Sword /sɔ:d/ is pronounced as /swɜ:d/
Many L2 speakers pronounce with the /w/ sound and also commit a mistake for the vowel sound as well.
9. Born is pronounced as “burn”
This is the same vowel mistake as number 8.
10. World is pronounced as “wall”
This is also the same vowel mistake as number 8, where the L2 speaker is not able to distinguish the central vowel /ɜ:/ from the back vowel /ɔ:/.
11. Food as “foot”;
This is not only unintelligible to native English speakers, but to many Indians as well. Here is an example, “She did not have ‘foot’ to eat”. The speaker is not able to understand the difference between the long /u:/ and the short /ʊ/ sounds.
12. Martyr /'ma:tə/ is pronounced as “marteer”
13. Live /lɪv/ as “leave”
14. Speak /spi:k/ as “spick”

In 13 and 14 the L2 speaker is confused or not able to hear the two different sounds between the long /i:/ and the short /ɪ/ sounds.

15. Raise /reɪz/ is pronounced as “rise” such as “I want to rise a question”.
16. Praise /preɪz/ and prayers /preəz/ is another mixed up of vowels sounds for some L2 speakers; such as “Let’s uphold them in our praise”.
17. Slap is pronounced as “slep” for instance, “John got angry and slep on her face”.
18. Young /jʌŋ/ is pronounced as “eng”
Concerning the word ‘young’ some speakers are not able to differentiate between a consonant /j/ and a vowel /e/; perhaps it is due to the influence of the mother tongue.
19. Apostle /ə'pɒsəl/ as “apostle”
Some L2 speakers tend to pronounce the letter ‘t’; whereas in some words, it is supposed to be silent.
20. Prejudice /'preʒudɪs/ pronounced as “prejudais”
21. Example /ɪg'zɑ:mpəl/ as “exsample”

In 20 there is a mixed up of a pure vowel /ɪ/ and a diphthong /aɪ/; and in 21 the problem of the letters 's' and 'z'.

22. Special /'speʃəl/ is pronounced as "spesial"
23. Concern /kəns'ɜ:n/ is pronounced as "conse:n"
24. Word /wɜ:d/ as "we:d"
25. Deserve /dɪ'zɜ:v/ as "dese:f"
26. Worse /wɜ:s/ as "we:s"

Words from 23 to 26 clearly revealed that the speaker has a problem pronouncing the strong, central vowel sound /ɜ:/. For instance, the speaker said, "the sickness was going we:s and we:s".

27. Cherubim was pronounced as "cherubeams". Here there is a mixed up between the two vowels: short /ɪ/ and the long /i:/.
28. Against /ə'genst/ is a two-syllable word. The speaker pronounced the second syllable with a long sound as in 'gain'; whereas, it is supposed to be short though it is a strong and prominent syllable.
29. Said /sed/ as "se:ɪd"
30. Says /ses/ as "se:ɪs"
31. Bag /bæg/ as "be:g"
32. Shall /ʃæl/ as "she:l"
33. Chaos /'keɪs/ as "khawas"
34. Bible /'baɪbəl/ as "bibul"
35. Thirty /'θɜ:tɪ/ as "tharty"
36. Firm /fɜ:m/ as "fa:m"
37. Earth /ɜ:θ/ as "a:d"
38. Hurt /hɜ:t/ as "ha:d"
39. Learn /lɜ:n/ as "la:n"

The words thirty, firm, earth, hurt, and learn have the same pure, central vowel /ɜ:/. However, some of the L2 speakers of English use the back vowel /a:/ instead of the central vowel.

40. Bereaved /bɪ'ri:vɪd/ has two syllables but it was pronounced as "brief" one syllable and a different word altogether.
41. Honour /'ɒnə/ was pronounced with the initial sound of the letter 'h' whereas it is supposed to be silent; but some L2 speakers commit the error of pronouncing it quite prominently.
42. Card /ka:d/ as "cord"
43. Realm /reɪlm/ as */rɪəlm/
44. Livelihood /'laɪlɪhʊd/ as */lɪvɪhʊd/
45. Power was pronounced as "bower", there is a mixed up of /p/ and /b/ sounds.
46. Instead /ɪn'sted/ as instid, in English a word with more than one syllable, will have one which is more prominent than all the others.
47. Read /red/ as */ri:d/, an L2 speaker pronounced the past tense of 'read' as /ri:d/.
48. Ear /ɪə/ as "air"
49. Pleasure /pleʒə/ was pronounced as "plejar"
50. Shall /ʃæl/ as "sal"

51. Shields as “seals”, there is a strong L1 interference that the second language speaker was not able to differentiate between the consonants /ʃ/ and /s/.
52. Law /lɔ:/ as “low”
53. Warn /wɔ:n/ was pronounced as “wern”
54. Fill /fɪl/ as “feel”, these words have different vowels: ‘fill’ is pronounced with a short vowel but ‘feel’ should be with a long vowel /i:/ sound.
55. Grew /gru:/ the past tense of grow was missed pronounced sounding as “griw”.
56. Further /'fʊ:ðə/ as “further”
57. Bless as “blas”

Someone has shared this anecdote in one of the meetings:

Speaker 1: “Oh, you are still studying?”

Speaker 2: “No, yesterday I pass away”.

Speaker 1: “Ok, may God blas you!”

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study the L2 speakers are of different levels: students, teachers, and professors. The data has revealed that the mistakes and errors committed in English are from all levels of the L2 speakers. For instance, words like ‘sword, interference, martyr...’ were pronounced wrongly even by L2 speakers who have received a high degree-Ph D.

As we have seen in the review of literature Ama (2019) has pointed out that teachers themselves (in general) commit mistakes while speaking and teaching, especially in pronunciation. Moreover, English is picked up from other teachers and other sources such as friends, pictures, and from the street. Therefore, learning and speaking English for the L2 (or L3) can be very difficult; especially, for those who have had their earlier education in the rural regions.

Speakers who start learning and speaking English when they passed adolescence can become very hard for them to be fluent in speaking, get the right words to express, the acceptable grammar, and the acceptable pronunciation. It is observed that second language speakers of all levels have some challenges in speaking English. Therefore, whenever the second language/ English is weak their mother tongue takes over.

Second language speakers of English do face issues with using the right word or expression at times; in a similar way, some L2 speakers have problems in using grammatical, acceptable structures. But with sufficient period of time, they can learn. On the other hand, pronunciation seems to be much harder than vocabulary and grammar. However, this is not really surprising; even established writers, “one example is Joseph Conrad, who wrote novels in English that became classics of literature, but whose English retained the strong Polish accent of his L1” (Yule, 2008, pp. 163-164).

The question is can we cure ourselves from bad pronunciation? The answer could be ‘yes’! perhaps we can, if we know the “elementary principles of phonetics and the organs of speech” (Jones, 2008, p. 13). Korneev (2020) who is the CEO and co-founder of EWA advises that today learners have the advantage by using the internet, learners can find someone who is a fluent speaker of English and practice learning and speaking in English. In fact, today it has become easier to cure our incorrect pronunciation; we can refer to Google in our handset, it only takes a few clicks and for those who need explanation, Jones (2008) advises that there are many helpful books

and they can also join an elocution class which is one of the best methods to improve pronunciation.

What is important to note is we do not have to pronounce like the British or the American speakers or try to copy their accent; for if we do, many of us will sound funny and artificial and it might become harder for the listener to digest. What we need to remember is we can come out of our local peculiarities by eliminating the MT or our regional dialect and (for us who are Indians can) speak the acceptable, Indian, educated English also known as the standard Indian English.

As the saying goes, “It takes a thief to catch a thief”. In other words, it is easier for a thief to catch a thief. Similarly, we can use or include the mistakes and errors of the L2 speakers in a syllabus and if needed in a remedial class to help and correct those who face challenges, to help them realize their problems and strive for better English and to understand the nature of the English language.

Abbreviations and symbols

EWA	an app for learning English
CEO	chief executive officer
ESL	English as a second language
IPA	international phonetic alphabet
L1	mother tongue
L2	second language
Para.	paragraph
Pl	plural
RP	British Received Pronunciation
Sg	singular
V	verb
-en	participle ending form
*	the word/phrase is probably not acceptable
/ /	the transcribed acceptable pronunciation
'	main stress/accent placed before the prominent syllable
[]	words which are not in the original writing but words of the present author

References

- Ama, J. A. (2019). *Challenges Encountered by Learners of English as a Second Language*. Retrieved from <https://owlcation.com> on Dec. 18, 2021.
- Hornby, A. S. (1983). *Guide to Patterns and Usage in English*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hyltenstam, K., & Abrahamsson, N. (2003). *Age of Onset and Ultimate Attainment in Near-Native Speakers of Swedish as a Second Language*. Retrieved from researchgate.net/publication/303813117_Age_of_onset_and_ultimate_attainment_in_near-native_speakers_of_swedish_as_a_second_language on Jan. 25, 2022.
- Jones, F. (2008). *How to Speak Fluently: A Handbook of Every Pronunciation*. 2nd eds. New Delhi: Indiana Publishing House.
- Korneev, M. (Dec. 28, 2020). “The 5 Most Common Challenges ESL Learners Face (and how to solve them).” Retrieved from news.elearninginside.com on Dec. 17, 2021.

- O'Connor, J.D. (1980). *Better English Pronunciation*. 6th edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Saraswathi, V. (2006). *English Language Teaching: Principles and Practice*. Rep. Hyderabad: Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd.
- Talang-Rao, E. (2021). "The Issues of Spelling and Pronunciation" *Langlit*. Vol. 8, issue 1. Retrieved from www.langlit.org on June 15, 2022.
- Verma, S. K., & Nagarajan, H. (2006). *An Interactive Grammar of Modern English*. Rep. New Delhi: Frank Bros. & Co. Ltd.
- Verma, S. K., & Krishnaswamy, N. (2009). *Modern Linguistics: An Introduction*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Winkler, E. G. (2021). *Understanding Language*. 2nd edn. New Delhi: Bloomsbury, Pvt. Ltd.
- Yardi, V. V. (1994). *Teaching English in India Today*. 3rd edn. Aurangabad: Parimal Prakashan.
- Yule, G. (2008). *The Study of Language*. 3rd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Author Biography



Dr. Esther Talang-Rao is a Professor in the Department of English, at Spicer Adventist University, Pune, India. She completed her M.Phil. from the University of Pune and her Ph.D. from Deccan College. She has published articles in International Journals. Her specializations are on English Language and Literature Teaching (ELLT) and Sociolinguistics. She had attended many Seminars, Conferences and Workshops; she has also attended 48 Webinars, national and international and has presented papers at the state level and international level.