

## The challenges of learning English as a second language and how to solve them

By

عقيل مرتضى عثمان

الهيئة العامة للتعليم التطبيقي والتدريب - الكويت

Email: AKeliano@live.com

## Abstract

What is true value beyond learning English language? more people are now dedicating time to studying English as a second language so most countries are trying to include English and their school syllabus and encourage ING children to learn English at younger age

Actually learning English as a second language can help you progress in life both professionally and personally as English has become more important since the British Empire which covered 25% of the earth service during colonial times obliged people in those countries to speak the English language and abandon their own native language so English has made an essential mark on trade media and business

## Keywords

Challenge- international language- solutions- role – government- institutions - effective learning- foreign- second language

## ملخص البحث

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة التحديات التي يواجهها متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ثانية. وقد تناولت خلاله دراسة أهمية اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة عالمية والصعوبات التي تواجه المتعلمين في الوطن العربي عامة وفي دولة الكويت خاصة. وتم إلقاء الضوء على دور المؤسسات الحكومية غير الحكومية في ضرورة إيجاد حلول عملية وفعالة لتحسين وتطوير تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية حتي يستفيد منها الدارسون سواء عند إكمال دراساتهم العليا في الدول الأجنبية أو عند استلام بعض الوظائف التي تتطلب ضرورة إجادة الحوار والكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية.

إن هذا البحث بمثابة وصفة علمية موجزة وشاملة لكل من يهتم بدراسة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في وقت أصبح تعلمها بمثابة ضرورة حتمية.

الكلمات الافتتاحية: التحديات – لغة عالمية -الحلول -دور -المعاهد الحكومية -التعليم الفعال –  
أجنبي – لغة ثانية.

## **The elements of the study**

- 1- The definition of English language
- 2-English as an international language
- 3-Common challenges of learning English as a second language
- 4-Difficulties in learning English in the Middle East
- 5-Problems faced by Kuwaiti learners and learning English
- 6- The role of the government and non - governmental institution in learning English language.
- 7-Recommendations

\*\*\*\*\*

### **1- The definition of language**

A language is any system by which human beings or animals you would signs or sounds to tell one another what their thoughts are. when we think of language, we usually think of the spoken or written sounds by which human beings expressed their thoughts.

All men have developed spoken languages, and whatever there has been any kind of civilization a written language has finally developed too. linguists have compared the language spoken by different races and nations of men and have divided them into families, most of which go back many thousands of years to times long before men had taught themselves no write.

Languages change gradually over the course of the years. Any group of men who live together will invent new words that no other group knows. they will also change the way they pronounce spoken words and the way they spell written words. Two groups living apart and speaking the same language at the start after a few hundred years will probably be speaking languages that sounds quite different. After thousands of years the languages will be so different that only a scientist can tell that they are were once the same.

If language didn't exist, neither human beings nor animals could tell one another their thoughts. Life would be simply a series of question marks. Spoken language is probably man's greatest achievement because it makes civilization and culture possible. it may have originated when early men imitated the sounds they heard.

From the earliest language many other languages developed. Today there are more than 2000 different language. Some of these languages are spoken by millions of people, others be only a few dozen number of all only tribe. Even individual language change dramatically. for this reason, English as it is spoken in Ireland is very different from English which is spoken in England, and the Arabic spoken in Morocco it's completely different from Arabic as it is spoken in Kuwait.

## **2 - English as an international language**

English is considered an international language that has over 20% of the world's population who speak English as native or as a second language, many countries use English as a mother tongue or speak it for

communication with other speakers of other languages in some places where English is not the major language.

There is an increased demand for learning English as countries such as India or China grow stronger in the world's economy so many people would like to communicate in English to value things from different perspectives, as a result they would get deeper understanding of other cultures.

Moreover, many people who can speak more than two languages obviously have more active minds and open mentalities. Statistics shows that over 400 million people speak English around the world, not only that but it is listed as one of the most important official language in more than one quarter of the world's countries.

English is considered one of the most widely spoken language from 6,500 languages in the world so it is the most useful language you can learn to be able to communicate with people all over the world especially all different countries using English now.

One main reason beyond learning English is the opportunity of getting good job as companies are becoming more international listing English as an essential skill for the job.

In addition, most organizations nowadays conduct all their business in English no matter the place or the country they are based on.

Moreover, learning English language will definitely help anyone in travel as you can notice that train timetable, aero planes announcements, street signs or emergency information are translated

into English language. So, it will be easier to find someone who understands some English in case you can't find any travelers that speak your mother tongue.

The most important reason of the importance of English language is that it is now the language of media all over the world, thanks to the Internet as most of the contents are written in English.

Many of the world's newspapers, magazines, TV or radio programs are produced in English. Also, some of the most important effective movies in cinema, pop music and TV shows are doubtly in English. So, English is the international language of the arts and media all over the globe.

As for education you can figure out that most scientific papers are written in English language in the last century. So, having good knowledge of English is incredibly a need to those who work in scientific fields. Moreover, this knowledge of English will allow people to access to multiple cultures not to mention the fact that huge number of books from all over the world are translated into English.

### **3-Common challenges of learning English as a second language**

Generally, the process of learning English as a second language is facing many challenges that make this process not satisfactory and here are some of these challenges:

### - **learning English is not exactly easy to acquire**

Sometimes, native speakers themselves recognize that the English language can be confusing as you will discover many exceptions to a seemingly endless number of grammatical rules. You have to use appropriate punctuation, the verb and subject must agree, commas are used in a specific instance, we are not allowed to use more than one negative in one sentence. So, learning to speak English language would be step one and learning how to write and spell correctly is Step two. learning English as a foreign language can be difficult but studying as if you are immersed in the language and its culture can make this process a bit easier.

### - **Pronunciation of words**

As we all know that English is not a phonetic language as we aren't saying the word the same, we spell it for example the verb **read** in the present or past the same spelling, but different pronunciation and we have numerous words like this which can be confusing to the learners

### - **Colloquialisms and slang language**

This problem reflects from the slang language which refers to casual language more commonly used in daily conversations. So, being a part of the local culture will enable you to have plenty of chances to catch on. Thus, you can make use of pop culture like TV shows or radio programs so the learner can pick up cues like the voice or nonverbal clues

## - Spelling of lexical items

Many words sound the same but sometimes they have different spelling, for example, the sound **pair** for people and **pair** for fruit they sound the same but there is spelling is completely different and their meaning as well.

Fortunately, we have just to worry about spelling when writing English language, but there are important differentiators that you will have to master to be effective written communicator.

## - Fluent spoken English as a serious problem

Any learner should be fully immersed in an environment with English speakers as he can. As it is the best way to overcome the challenge of interrupting spoken English.

## - Grammar

The grammar in English language is a little bit difficult to remember and master it is used logically. Sometimes using grammar can be tricky especially when you have a conversation with people speaking at an alarmingly fast pace.

In fact, we can say that learning grammar is like learning how to drive, you will learn all of the theory, regulations, and rules but you will not be able to master it unless you practice it as a second nature to you.

The incorrect use of grammar while talking can really confuse whom you are talking with, even it could change the meaning of what you are exactly saying. So, as native speakers are incredibly proud of their

English language and look negatively on people who are using it incorrectly.

#### - Variations in English language

The different use between using formal and informal language or between spoken and written language can often be difficult to understand. Students usually write words phonetically as how they say it rather than how it is actually spelt, and sometimes when they use informal language it seems as slang that they have picked up in some formal situations, which may be viewed negatively.

#### 4-Difficulties in learning English language in the Middle East

To learn a second language is never easy task to do, especially learning English as a second language in the Middle East where you can learn outside of an English- speaking country. As the Arab countries face a lot of challenges, as English is not the native language of the countries there, they always face the following challenges:

- **Unqualified teachers of English language**

It's one of the most important problem and it is difficult to solve, since many communities are English language learners, so, they will not be able to determine who is a good English teacher and who isn't as whatever the teacher says if it is correct or not will be taken as correct by his learners.

Actually, this causes confusion to most of the learners because different teachers tell them different things. Also, the teachers face difficulty in translating from their native languages as some sounds in English are not even exist in the sound system of many Arab languages. So, teachers have problems pronouncing them.

- **Limited English learning environment**

Many learners of English language are trying their best to speak proper English in the class or the center they are learning English, and especially when they are under supervision. But you don't hear people around them speak proper English in their own environment, so as a result it will be more difficult to learn correct English.

As some students tend to learn English from movies they watch on TV, they learn the wrong way as movies contain slang and dialects which are not suitable in many forms of communication.

- **students don't study seriously**

Some students won't take learning English seriously, as they don't care about the use of grammar accurately. Therefore, they don't get fully educated or pass their exams. Students just speak and learn English just inside the English class, but outside the class they don't study pronunciation or make an effort to learn new lexical items and they even don't study essay writing.

- **Over-use of native language inside classrooms**

Only students learn English language as a second language better when they are forced to use it. Teachers must oblige learners to communicate in English even when they are not inside the class to make requests and respond to questions in English, this problem is springs from the cultural demands of their societies

- **Learners depend a lot on the teacher**

To learn any language effectively you have to know how to solve problems yourself. Students will never learn if they go to the teacher with every little problem they face. The teacher should encourage students to depend on themselves and forget about the idea that they don't know how to say or how to do something on their own

## **5- Problems faced by Kuwaiti learners and learning English**

As a beginning Kuwait is a mono-cultural country and the majority of its residents shares the same customs and traditions. The Arabic language is the country's formal language, and 70% of students are using it in their learning and English is taught mainly as a second language in many schools and educational centers. Learners of English in Kuwait face many difficulties such as:

- **the content of textbook**

Most books students learn English from at schools in Kuwait are written in English which students will use to teach and conduct examinations. So, students are obliged to obtain high competency in English to understand such books as they are adapted for English learning and were written for native English speaking students, which put a burden on the Kuwaiti learners to double their effort to understand the context ,lexical and language terms included in the text books.

**- Kuwaiti students have no interest in English**

Many students admit that their desire in learning English is not one of their priorities, as at least 90% of students don't consider English as their favorite subject and 30% of students enjoy learning classes, knowing its importance to their future careers. So, almost Kuwaitis don't consider English as the main gateway to their academic prosperity and future careers.

**- The sufficiency in Arabic language**

Many Kuwaiti students believe that despite the importance of English in their future, their competence in Arabic is sufficient for them in order to achieve their academic goals and have a good job. And This is why Most Kuwaiti students are still weak in learning English language.

### - **The feeling of embarrassment**

Many Kuwaiti learners feel embarrassed when talking in English, as they feel like they can't express themselves properly. To conquer this feeling of embarrassment students should practice a lot as much as possible to feel more confident in their ability to speak, and they can start practicing this alone then step number two they can practice this with other native speakers of English language.

### - **Learning the language without a special goal**

Many learners of English in Kuwait don't have a specific goal for learning the language, they should at least have a personal goal for why they want to learn English. Students have to be passionate about learning the language so to be committed to learning it.

learners must write a list of all the reasons why learning English is important to them, to guide students throughout the journey of learning English, honestly it will make all the difference.

### - **Students don't dedicate enough time for learning**

Most Kuwaitis who learn English language don't have enough time to dedicate to learning English. students should sit a special time for learning English daily, maybe 15 minutes to practice and give themselves a reward if they have committed to the time they dedicated to practice.

## **6- The rule of government and non-governmental institutions in learning English language**

The government should follow certain steps towards improving learning English in Kuwait such as the following:

- 1- the government should dedicate special institutions to help learners of English to master comprehensive vocabulary, as it is essential for students to focus on memorizing lists of words in English and their definitions.
- 2- the government have to hold academic workshops and seminars for teachers to obtain the required qualifications for them, in addition making frequent exams to promote teachers in the future career. The government should give the chance to have a scholarship abroad for teachers to complete their higher studies to get the best qualifications for teaching English in Kuwait.
- 3-The Kuwaiti government must raise the awareness of students of the importance of the English language as an international language which is essential for travelling abroad communicating with other people and to get better job for the future.
- 4-The non-governmental institutions should play an integral part with the government in holding special courses for students in the summer holiday to enable them to improve their English language. Also, they should help Kuwaiti learners to pass exams like TOEFL and IELTS to be

able to travel and work in and international companies in Kuwait and abroad.

5-The government have to give some recommendations to the Ministry of Education in Kuwait to develop the syllabus of English in all stages from primary to secondary to be adequate and suitable to the level of Kuwaiti learners.

6-The Ministry of Education in Kuwait has to use new technological methods in teaching English in schools and use audio and visual methods which attract the learner's attention and help them to get effective English learning.

7-Making splendid rewards for the excellent students who are distinguished in English such as bestowing free scholarship for them or going for a trip abroad to communicate with foreigners to encourage other students to exert more effort in learning the language.

## **7-Recommendations**

There are some steps for students and the government to be done to improve learning English as a second language:

1- learners have to make deliberate effort to learn without a class teacher and try to depend on themselves and solve their own problems to acquire more skills in learning the language.

2-students must get audio and visual materials so they can hear and watch correct pronunciation of sounds and words correctly and should practice this daily to acquire the language easily and comprehend English effectively.

3-learners must be sure to use correct material recommended to them by a reliable teacher of English who will give them an honest advice of what they have to do regarding their learning.

4-School administrators must consider introducing in-house training programs which will be important to enhance the teachers' skills and competence is in English.

5-It is vital to enhance the instruction of English as a second language which necessitate the development of English syllabus emphasizing vocabulary, listening, speaking skills and grammar.

6-The Kuwaiti minister of education should modify the medium of instruction policy in order to incorporate both Arabic and English.

7-The current policy in teaching English language should be improved to enable students to get a proper foundation of the English language.

8-Concerning teachers they should have proper training in short, they can successfully handle the different literacy levels of learners.

Thus, after studying all elements in detail relating to learning English as a second language it's important that you don't give up as you may not learn to speak and write English fluently overnight.

learning English language can be so exciting experience and you will be better and better each day, as you allow yourself to make lots of mistakes and learn from them to be a professional at reading writing and speaking English fluently.

## References

- Wald James B-(2006) Regis University” difficulties in learning English as a second or foreign language “
- El -Assa, A Dahan (2011) “global English and endangered Arabic issues of language culture and identity “.
- Bolton, K, Graddol. (2011) “Towards developmental world English “
- Jacob A, Ama (2022)” challenges encountered by English learners”
- Bose, M, N, K (2007) “a textbook of English language teaching”.
- James, Cherian. (1996) “an analysis of selected problems that confront students and teachers of second language”
- Bollinger, Dwight. (1968) “aspects of language” New York
- Arril . Buchman.(2015) “solving difficulties for English learners”