

## GENERAL ISSUES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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**Abstract:** This article examines some of the key issues faced by learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), drawing on reports, surveys, and studies from various countries to highlight common problems and the evolving solutions.

**Key Words:** language, learning, communication, speaking, listening, lingua franca, reading, writing, accents, dialects.

In the globalized world of the 21st century, English has emerged as the lingua franca of international communication, business, science, technology, and diplomacy. As a result, learning English has become a priority for millions of people across the globe. However, despite its widespread importance, foreign language learning, especially English, is not without its challenges.

A critical issue in English language learning is the unequal access to quality education and resources. While English is taught in many parts of the world, the quality of instruction can vary dramatically depending on the country, region, and even the specific school. In many low-income countries, access to qualified teachers, up-to-date materials, and modern teaching methods is limited. This can lead to

ineffective language learning experiences, which are compounded by large class sizes, outdated curricula, and insufficient opportunities for practice. In countries such as India and Indonesia, English education often focuses on grammar rules and rote memorization, with limited emphasis on practical communication skills such as speaking and listening.

Many learners from non-English-speaking countries experience a sense of cultural tension when learning English. In some cases, learners feel that acquiring proficiency in English means adopting Western ideals and distancing themselves from their native cultures. This is particularly evident in countries with strong linguistic identities, such as Japan, where English is often seen as both a tool for international communication and a threat to the preservation of the Japanese language.

There is a growing recognition of the importance of cultural diversity in language teaching. Many modern English language programs now incorporate elements of intercultural communication, aiming to promote not only linguistic fluency but also cultural awareness. By emphasizing the global nature of English and recognizing the various accents, dialects, and forms of English used around the world, teachers can help learners develop a more inclusive and flexible approach to the language.

The role of teachers in language acquisition cannot be overstated. Effective language teaching goes beyond merely imparting knowledge; it involves creating an environment that encourages active participation, critical thinking, and communication. However, many teachers of English as a foreign language face challenges due to a lack of professional development, training in communicative language teaching methods, and exposure to modern educational technologies.

While grammar and vocabulary remain essential components of language learning, many learners find it difficult to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, such as casual conversation or professional workplace. This results in an

emphasis on formal language skills, with less attention given to spoken fluency, pronunciation, and the nuances of cross-cultural communication.

As English learning has become more widespread, so too has the reliance on standardized testing to assess language proficiency. While standardized tests offer a clear benchmark for measuring language skills, they have also been criticized for focusing heavily on academic reading and writing, often at the expense of listening and speaking abilities. Often many students who excel in written English struggle with oral communication, as these tests do not adequately measure real-life conversational skills. This has led to calls for more balanced testing systems that reflect the full range of language competencies required in real-world situations.

In the context of English learning, it can be broadly categorized into two factors: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic factors stem from personal interest and a genuine desire to learn, while extrinsic factors are driven career advancement, academic success, or social mobility. The perceived economic benefits of learning English, often outweigh intrinsic motivations. In many countries, such as South Korea, China, and Brazil, English proficiency is seen as a gateway to better job prospects, higher salaries, and access to global markets. However, the focus on extrinsic factors can sometimes undermine the long-term sustainability of language learning, as learners may not develop a deep, lasting interest in the language itself.

On the other hand, countries with a more ingrained cultural appreciation for English, such as the Netherlands and Sweden, tend to exhibit higher levels of intrinsic interest. Students in these countries, who often have a natural exposure to English media and culture, tend to be more engaged in their language learning, and exhibit better language retention.

The rise of digital tools has transformed the landscape of language learning. Online platforms, apps, and AI-powered tools have made learning English more accessible than ever before. Platforms like Duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise have

democratized language learning, offering learners an interactive and flexible way to practice their skills, with innovative ideas, at their own pace.

**Conclusion:** English's position as the global lingua franca has led to a surge in the demand for English education, particularly in non-English-speaking countries. It is estimated that more than 2 billion people are currently learning the language. This global demand, however, has given rise to various challenges in both language learning and teaching, the issues surrounding its acquisition are complex and multifaceted. Interest factors, access to quality resources, the role of teachers, language proficiency testing, cultural identity, and the influence of technology all contribute to the varied experiences of English learners worldwide. As the world continues to globalize, addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach—one that combines innovative teaching methods, equitable access to resources, and an understanding of the diverse cultural contexts in which English is learned.

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