Dr. Seema Rani
Associate Professor,
Department of English
S.G.H.S. College, Jiwan Nagar,
Haryana, India

Influence of Native Language on English Language Acquisition

Dr. Seema Rani

Abstract
English holds a significant position in India as a language of education, business, and communication. This paper investigates the complexities of acquiring English in a multilingual and diverse country like India. With English being widely used as a second language in the country, this study examines the factors that influence its acquisition and the hurdles faced by learners. It explores the challenges learners face and the potential opportunities for enhancing English language proficiency. Through the analysis of examples, it highlights the unique linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic dynamics that impact English language learning in India. The influence of non-native speakers' native languages on their learning of English can lead to unique challenges. A person's mother tongue, also known as their native language or first language, can have a significant impact on their learning of a second language like English. The influence of the Hindi language on learning English, like any native language's influence, can manifest in various ways. Hindi is a widely spoken language in India and has its own unique features that can impact how individuals learn and use English. With a focus on language interference, pronunciation, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural differences, the paper aims to shed light on the multifaceted challenges that hinder effective communication and comprehension. By examining the root causes of these challenges and their implications for language learning, educators and learners can gain insights into strategies for overcoming these obstacles.

Keywords: Mother Tongue, Multilingual, Communication Skills, Dynamics, Proficiency

Introduction

The English language occupies a distinctive position in India due to its colonial history, globalization, and unique linguistic landscape. India, a land of diverse languages and cultures, has long recognized the pivotal role of the English language in shaping its destiny. The importance of English in India cannot be overstated, as it transcends linguistic boundaries and significantly influences various aspects of education, economy, communication, and cultural exchange. The importance of English in India cannot be denied, as it influences education, commerce, culture, and diplomacy in profound ways. Its role as a unifying force in a linguistically diverse country is evident, while its significance in a globalized world continues to grow. Today, English stands as a language that connects regions, enabling communication among people who speak different native languages. In a globalized world, English serves as a lingua franca for international trade, business communication, and diplomacy. India's burgeoning economy relies on English for seamless interaction with foreign investors, multinational corporations, and customers worldwide. The information technology and outsourcing industries, in particular, thrive due to the English language, making India a hub for IT services and software development. The paper explores the diverse functions and implications of English across different sectors, considering its evolution from a colonial legacy to a tool of empowerment and access to global opportunities.

Historical Evolution and Linguistic Landscape: The historical evolution of the English language is a complex and fascinating journey that spans more than a millennium. The earliest form of English, known as Old English, was heavily influenced by Germanic languages and featured inflected word forms and a complex grammatical structure. The Norman Conquest of England in 1066 brought about significant changes to the language

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Seema Rani
Associate Professor,
Department of English
S.G.H.S. College, Jiwan Nagar,
Haryana, India

During this period, English underwent simplification in terms of grammar, and many French words were incorporated. Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" is a notable literary work from this era. The introduction of the printing press by William Caxton in the late 15th century played a crucial role in standardizing the English language. The works of William Shakespeare, who wrote during this period, are iconic examples of Early Modern English. The language continued to evolve, with the simplification of inflections and the establishment of more consistent spelling and grammar rules. The late Modern English period saw the expansion of the British Empire and the widespread influence of English across the world. The vocabulary of English grew significantly during this time, as it borrowed words from various languages due to exploration, trade, and colonization. The 20th century marked the rise of American English as a major global variant, largely due to the influence of the United States in various fields. The proliferation of mass media, especially television and the internet, further accelerated the spread of English. English has become a lingua franca for international communication, business, science, and diplomacy. Throughout its history, English has absorbed vocabulary from many languages, including Latin, French, Dutch, Spanish, and more recently, from non-European languages as well. This diverse linguistic landscape has led to English being one of the most lexically rich languages in the world. The linguistic landscape of English is also influenced by sociopolitical factors. Variations in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar can reflect social class, geography, ethnicity, and other cultural aspects. The establishment of English as an administrative language during British rule left a lasting impact on India's education, governance, and culture.

Language Policies and Language Diversity in India: India is an incredibly linguistically diverse country with hundreds of languages spoken across its vast territory. The Indian Constitution recognizes this linguistic diversity and provides a framework for language policies that balance the promotion of a unifying language (Hindi) with the protection of regional languages. The Indian Constitution recognizes Hindi as the official language of the central government, and English as an associate official language. However, due to the linguistic diversity of the country, the Constitution also allows individual states and union territories to choose their own official languages for administrative and educational purposes. As a result, different states have chosen languages from various linguistic families, such as Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, and others, as their official languages. The government of India has promoted a "three-language formula" for education. It suggests that students should learn their mother tongue (or a regional language), Hindi, and English. Education policies vary across states in terms of the medium of instruction. Some states use the regional language as the medium of instruction, while others use a mix of regional languages, Hindi, and English.

English-Medium Education and Social Mobility in India: English has historically been associated with prestige, especially in post-colonial societies like India. Proficiency in English is often seen as a marker of education, urbanization, and upward mobility. As a result, parents aspire to provide English-medium education to their children as it is believed to increase their chances of success in various fields. English is the primary language of international business, science, technology, and diplomacy. Proficiency in English can provide individuals with access to global opportunities, including jobs, higher education, and collaboration on international projects. In many sectors, proficiency in English is a key requirement for employment. As India's economy continues to diversify, English proficiency becomes increasingly important, especially in service sectors like IT, BPOs, hospitality, and customer service. Many of India's top universities and institutes of higher education use English as the medium of instruction. This has led to a situation where students from English-medium backgrounds may have an advantage in terms of accessing higher education opportunities. English-medium education in India can indeed offer significant advantages in terms of social mobility and access to opportunities.

Hybridization of Language and Culture: The hybridization of language and culture in India, particularly in relation to the English language, is a fascinating phenomenon that reflects the complex dynamics of a multicultural society. In India, the practice of switching between two or more languages or dialects within a single conversation, and blending elements of different languages within a sentence or phrase are common occurrences, especially when using English along with regional languages. This linguistic phenomenon highlights the seamless integration of English vocabulary and phrases into daily conversations, often to express ideas that may not have direct equivalents in the local language. English used in India often incorporates vocabulary and expressions from various regional languages. For example, words like "bungalow," "veranda," and "avatar" have been adopted from Indian languages. English in India also includes cultural idioms, metaphors, and references that are uniquely Indian. These references may be drawn from religious texts, folklore, historical figures, or local traditions, creating a fusion of English and Indian cultural elements. The media, including movies, television shows, music, and literature, play a significant role in shaping the hybridization of language and culture. Indian media often portrays characters who speak a blend of English and regional languages, reflecting the reality of daily communication.

Language learning is a complex and individualized process, and the effect of one language on another can vary widely depending on the learner's background and approach to learning. The influence of the Hindi language on learning English, like any native language's influence, can manifest in various ways. Hindi is a widely spoken language in India and has its own unique features that can impact how individuals learn and use English.

Here are some examples of how the Hindi language can influence the learning of English

Word Order and Sentence Structure: English has a complex system of verb tenses and aspects, which can be challenging for Hindi speakers to master. Hindi, on the other hand, has a somewhat different system of expressing time and aspect, which might require adjustment when learning the corresponding concepts in English. Hindi follows a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) word order, while English uses Subject-Verb-Object (SVO). Hindi speakers might initially construct English sentences with a similar structure, leading

to sentences that sound awkward or incorrect. For example: In Hindi: "मैं घर जा रहा हूँ" (I am going home) In English (literal translation): "I home am going." This difference in word order often leads to changes in sentence structure when translating between the two languages.

Tense and Verb Forms: In Hindi, tense and aspect markers are often added to the verb, indicating when an action took place. In English, auxiliary verbs are used for tenses, which can lead to the incorrect usage of auxiliary verbs in English sentences by Hindi speakers. Hindi verb conjugation depends on tense, aspect, mood, and gender/number of the subject and changes more significantly to indicate tense, aspect, and mood, English verbs generally have simpler conjugations and rely more on auxiliary verbs (like "have," "do," etc.) to convey different tenses and aspects. In Hindi: "मैंने किताब पढ़ी" (I read the book) In English (literal translation): "I did read the book." It is clear that English verb conjugation is more structured around tense and subject-verb agreement.

Pronunciation and Phonetics: Hindi has a relatively consistent sound-to-letter correspondence, where each Devanagari script character usually represents a specific sound. Hindi has 11 vowels, which can be short or long, and has several consonant sounds. English phonetics can be more complex due to the variety of sounds and the influence of historical spelling patterns. English has a larger vowel inventory and a wide range of consonant sounds. One major challenge for Hindi speakers learning English pronunciation is the presence of sounds that do not exist in Hindi. English's aspirated "p," "t," and "k" sounds, as well as the "th" sounds (as in "think" and "this"), can be difficult for Hindi speakers to differentiate and pronounce accurately. Hindi doesn't distinguish between the English "v" and "w" sounds. Hindi speakers generally pronounce "v" as "w" and vice versa, leading to confusion between words like "very" and "wary." They might pronounce "victory" as "Wictory." Additionally, the English stress patterns, intonation, and syllable structures might differ significantly from Hindi. Hindi speakers might carry over certain speech patterns and stress patterns from Hindi into their English speech, leading to non-standard pronunciation or word stress.

Vocabulary and Idioms: Vocabulary is the foundation of language, and while there might be some shared words due to historical and cultural interactions, Hindi and English have distinct vocabularies. Idioms often don't translate directly between languages, and learning the idiomatic expressions of a language requires understanding the cultural context and the figurative meanings behind the phrases. Direct translation of idioms does not make sense in English and often results in confusion. For example, in Hindi, we have an idiom उल्टा चोर कोतवाल को डांटे If a Hindi-speaking person translates it literally, he will say: The upside-down thief scolds the constable, whereas the actual idiom is: The guilty person blames someone else. Similarly, English also has numerous idiomatic expressions. For example, "Don't cry over spilled milk" means Don't worry about something that has already happened and can't be changed. Understanding and using idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms in English can be challenging for Hindi speakers. They might take idioms like "raining cats and

dogs" literally instead of understanding their figurative meanings.

Issues with Direct Translation: Direct translation between Hindi and English can often lead to confusion due to differences in grammar, syntax, idiomatic expressions, and cultural distinctions. The structure and vocabulary of Hindi can influence the learning of English. In Hindi, we often use the expression: "आजकल कलयुग है" and its literal translation is: Nowadays is the age of Kalyug. And it means that the world has become corrupt. But this expression doesn't have any direct English equivalent as it's rooted in Hindu mythology. Hindi often uses the past tense for indirect speech, even if the event is in the future. For example, in Hindi, it is said, "उसने मुझे कहा कि वह आएगा" and the direct translation in English will be: "He told me that he will come." Directly translating such constructs to English can lead to grave discrepancies.

Hindi nouns are often gendered (masculine, feminine, or neuter), and articles (like "the" in English) must agree with the gender. Hindi speakers may find it challenging to use English articles correctly, as English does not have gendered nouns. Hindi, like many languages, distinguishes between formal and informal forms of address. English typically does not have this distinction, so Hindi speakers may use overly formal language when necessary or struggle with informal expressions.

Individual Motivation and Learning Strategies: Language acquisition is a gradual process, and setbacks and mistakes are a natural part of learning. Staying motivated and employing effective learning strategies can help learners make steady progress in acquiring English, despite the influence of their native Hindi language. Individual motivation and learning strategies play a crucial role in overcoming the challenges of language acquisition, including the influence of Hindi on English language learning. Having a genuine interest in English language and culture can be a strong motivator. Learners who are passionate about English are more likely to invest time and effort in their language studies. Recognizing the practical benefits of English proficiency, such as improved job prospects or access to international education, can provide strong motivation. A fascination with English-speaking cultures, including movies, music, and food, can motivate learners to better understand and communicate in English. Consistency is key. Daily or regular practice, whether it's reading, writing, listening, or speaking in English, helps reinforce language skills. Creating an English-speaking environment as much as possible, even outside of formal lessons, can accelerate language acquisition. Actively expanding one's vocabulary by learning new words and phrases is essential. Focusing on English grammar rules and practicing sentence construction can improve overall language fluency. Partnering with a native English speaker who is learning Hindi (or another language you speak) can be mutually beneficial for language practice. Seeking feedback from teachers, language exchange partners, or language tutors can help identify and correct language errors.

Conclusion: The challenges faced by Hindi-speaking students in using English are multi-faceted and require a nuanced approach for effective resolution. The prominent

issues stemming from language interference, pronunciation disparities, syntax variations, vocabulary differences, and cultural nuances have been discussed in detail. It is evident that these challenges can hamper not only the accuracy but also the confidence of Hindi-speaking students when communicating in English. These influences are not insurmountable obstacles but rather aspects that can affect the language acquisition process. With practice, exposure, and dedicated language instruction, Hindi speakers can overcome these challenges and become proficient in English. To address these challenges, educators and institutions need to adopt a comprehensive strategy that combines focused language instruction, interactive learning techniques, and cultural awareness. By integrating contextual learning into the curriculum, students can grasp the practical application of English language skills in real-world scenarios. Encouraging active listening, engaging in meaningful conversations, and providing exposure to diverse accents can contribute to improving both listening and speaking skills. Educators must emphasize the importance of self-expression and foster an environment where making mistakes is viewed as a stepping stone to improvement rather than a setback. Offering consistent constructive feedback can guide students toward refining their pronunciation, grammar, and overall language proficiency. Requires a holistic approach that combines linguistic, communicative, and cultural dimensions. With the right tools, strategies, and support, educators can empower these students to overcome these challenges and develop into proficient English language users, poised to thrive in a globally connected world. Making significant improvements in English communication skills requires a combination of focused effort, consistent practice, and a strategic approach, especially for non-native speakers.

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