

# Obstacles and challenges faced in teaching English language for primary school students

العوائق والتحديات التي تواجه تعليم اللغة الانجليزية لطلاب المرحلة  
الابتدائية

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## Abstract

This work examines the challenges and problems that arise to the teachers when teaching English language to primary school children. Teaching English language to primary school children can present a number of challenges for educators. The purpose of this study is to examine the difficulties teachers have teaching English to primary school students, particularly those from non-English backgrounds. Both descriptive and qualitative researches are used in this study. Data collected from various researches and previous analysis is thoroughly studied and conclusions are drawn based on the research questions and methodology applied through literature review. As per the results, it can be said that teaching English language to primary school children can present a number of challenges for educators. This article discusses the main difficulties that many primary school teachers encounter, such as short student attention spans, difficulties with grammar and sentence structure, a lack of materials and resources for teachers, as well as a lack of support and opportunities for professional development. The challenge teachers have in deciding which tactics and approaches are effective. On the other hand, a teacher's training and experience with the language, their family background and level of basic knowledge, their lack of enthusiasm for teaching English, their lack of motivation and proper guidance, and their lack of parental support can all contribute to a poor teaching experience. Despite these challenges, this article helps in understanding the problems and finding appropriate solutions as it is important to provide primary school students with a strong foundation in English language skills in order to set them up for success in their future education and career. **Keywords:** English language-obstacles and challenges-primary grades-teacher and students-cultural level and environment.

## الخلاصة

يبحث هذا العمل في التحديات والمشكلات التي تظهر للمدرسين عند تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لأطفال المدارس الابتدائية. يمكن أن يمثل تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لأطفال المدارس الابتدائية عددًا من التحديات للمعلمين. الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو فحص الصعوبات التي يواجهها المعلمون في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لطلاب المدارس الابتدائية، وخاصة من خلفيات غير إنجليزية. تم استخدام البحث الوصفي والنوعي في هذه الدراسة. يتم دراسة البيانات التي تم جمعها من مختلف الأبحاث والتحليلات السابقة بدقة ويتم استخلاص النتائج بناءً على أسئلة البحث والمنهجية المطبقة من خلال مراجعة الأدبيات. وفقًا للنتائج، يمكن القول أن تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لأطفال المدارس الابتدائية يمكن أن يمثل عددًا من التحديات للمعلمين. تناقش هذه المقالة الصعوبات الرئيسية التي يواجهها العديد من معلمي المدارس الابتدائية، مثل فترات انتباه الطلاب القصيرة، والصعوبات في قواعد اللغة وتركيب الجمل، ونقص المواد والموارد للمعلمين، فضلاً عن نقص الدعم وفرص التطوير المهني. التحدي الذي يواجهه المعلمون في تحديد التكتيكات والأساليب الفعالة. من ناحية أخرى، فإن تدريب المعلم وخبرته في اللغة، وخلفيته العائلية ومستوى المعرفة الأساسية، وافتقارهم إلى الحماس لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية، وافتقارهم إلى الحافز والتوجيه المناسب، وافتقارهم إلى الدعم الأبوي يمكن أن يساهم جميعها في خبرة تعليمية سيئة. على الرغم من هذه التحديات، تساعد هذه المقالة في فهم المشكلات وإيجاد الحلول المناسبة حيث أنه من المهم تزويد طلاب المدارس الابتدائية بأساس قوي في مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية من أجل إعدادهم للنجاح في تعليمهم وحياتهم المهنية في المستقبل. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** اللغة الانجليزية-الصعوبات والتحديات-المراحل الابتدائية-المعلم والتلميذ-المستوى الثقافي و البيئي.

## Introduction

English has long been considered a universal language, and multilingual people all over the world frequently utilise it as a common code. The main advantage of learning a foreign language at the elementary level is typically ascribed to the fact that learners at this age can utilise the natural process of acquiring the language to some extent. The majority of definitions of language acquisition state that it is a process in which students pick up facts, rules, or skills subconsciously while being completely oblivious of the learning process and disconnected from formal instruction. Children are expected to acquire a language that is only used in the school setting and is not utilised outside of it in this situation. The length of time allotted for teaching languages at the primary level is the first issue. This period of time hardly qualifies as enough, and Lightbown and Spada (1999, p. 165) refer to it as a "drip-feed technique." On the other hand, despite the fact that there isn't much time for language instruction, what teachers do to encourage the learning of the target language in the classroom appears to be the most crucial. Teachers deal with a variety of issues that slow down and weaken the process. Teachers are forced to choose between dealing with the

difficulties of teaching pupils for the sake of their future or dealing with these issues. The instructors who work in primary schools face a variety of obstacles and challenges as they carry out their duties such as Cognitive Development: Primary school students are still in the early stages of cognitive development, which means they may not have fully developed the cognitive skills necessary to learn a second language. Limited Vocabulary: Primary school students have a limited vocabulary in their first language, which can make it difficult for them to understand and learn new words in a second language. Attention Span: Young students have shorter attention spans and may struggle to maintain focus during longer lessons or activities, making it harder for them to learn and retain new material. Cultural Differences: English may not be the primary language spoken at home or in their community, which can make it difficult for students to understand the cultural context and relevance of the language. Lack of Confidence: Primary school students may lack confidence in their language abilities, especially if they are not exposed to English outside of the classroom. Pronunciation: The pronunciation of English can be difficult for non-native speakers, and it can be challenging for students to understand and produce the correct sounds. Pedagogy: Effective ESL teaching requires specialized pedagogical techniques and materials that may not be readily available or understood by all primary school teachers. Overall, teaching English language to primary school students can be challenging but with proper techniques and strategies, these challenges can be overcome, and students can develop effective language skills and in this article, some of the common reasons why primary school teachers may find it difficult to teach English to primary school children are mentioned and potential solutions to these challenges are discussed.

## Objectives of the study

The goal of the study is to

- Identify and describe the specific challenges that ESL teachers of primary school may encounter in the classroom.
- Examining the causes of these challenges and how they can affect the teaching and learning process of primary school pupils.
- Providing suggestions and strategies for addressing and overcoming these challenges, such as effective lesson planning, classroom management techniques, and cultural sensitivity training.

## Research questions

- In order to accommodate the different language and cultural backgrounds of ESL students in elementary schools, how should teachers modify their teaching strategies?
- How must teachers assess the language proficiency of primary school ESL pupils and how does this impact their teaching strategies?
- What support systems should be made available to teachers who are facing difficulties teaching ESL to primary school pupils?
- How could teachers involve parents and guardians in the ESL learning process of primary school pupils?
- What teaching methods have been proven to be successful in addressing the special needs of ESL students in primary schools?
- How do teachers need to address the social and emotional needs of primary school ESL pupils who may be struggling with language acquisition?
- How do teachers have to collaborate with other educators, such as ESL specialists and language support staff, to ensure effective ESL instruction for primary school pupils?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study is both descriptive and qualitative research. For this, data is collected from previous teaching methods and various researches such as Jim Cummins, Ali Shehadehm and Rebecca Oxford along with previous analysis and studies as well as grammar problems that are faced by teachers who teach ESL are mentioned and solutions have been provided. The conclusions drawn are presented in results and explanation. The first step in this research methodology will be to conduct a thorough literature review on the subject of teaching English to primary school children. This will involve searching for relevant studies, articles, and reports on the topic, and analyzing the findings to identify the main challenges and difficulties faced by teachers in this context. The questions in research questions will be answered and solutions will be analyzed. Once the data is collected, the data will be used to identify the main challenges faced by

teachers in teaching English to primary school children and to identify possible solutions to these challenges.

## Literature review

The earlier methods that have been used to solve the problems of teaching English language for primary school students were: Grammar Translation Method: This method is based on teaching grammar rules and translation of words and sentences. It is a traditional method that relies heavily on memorization and repetition. Direct Method: This method emphasizes the use of English as a spoken language. It focuses on teaching vocabulary, pronunciation, and conversation skills through the use of visual aids, gestures, and miming. Audio-lingual Method: This method emphasizes the use of audio recordings and drills to help students develop their listening and speaking skills. It is a behaviorist approach that encourages repetition and reinforcement. Reading Method: This method focuses on reading as a way to improve students' language skills. It involves reading stories, poems, and other texts to help students improve their vocabulary and comprehension skills. Communicative Language Teaching: This method focuses on developing students' ability to communicate effectively in English. It encourages students to engage in meaningful interactions with others using the language. It also involves the use of role-playing, group work, and project-based activities. But it is pretty different when it comes to the present teaching methods. The current study's topic is distinctive as many teachers report that they face many difficulties teaching English to primary school children because of lack of access to suitable materials that are tailored to the needs of ESL students (Chen, 2018). This can make it difficult for teachers to provide their students with the support they need to succeed in learning English. Additionally, many teachers report that they do not have access to professional development opportunities that would help them to improve their skills in teaching ESL (Hua, 2019). Another major challenge that teachers face when teaching ESL at primary schools is limited understanding of the cultural backgrounds of their students. Many teachers claim they don't fully comprehend the cultures of their ESL pupils, which might make it challenging for them to deliver effective instruction (Chung, 2020). This may cause misconceptions and confusion, which could hinder pupils' ability to learn English successfully. Additionally, teachers might not be aware of the difficulties associated with the kids' various socioeconomic origins. In addition to these challenges, teachers may also experience lack of support from school administration. According to a study by Kim and Kim (2016), many teachers believed that they did not receive enough assistance from their school officials when it comes to teaching ESL pupils. This lack of support can make it difficult for teachers to access the resources and support they need to be successful in teaching ESL. Despite these challenges, there are strategies that teachers can use to overcome these difficulties. For example, providing teachers with professional development opportunities that focus on teaching ESL can help them to improve their skills and knowledge in this area (Kim, 2017). Additionally, providing teachers with access to resources and materials that are tailored to the needs of ESL students can help them to provide appropriate instruction (Chen, 2018). Furthermore, teachers can collaborate with other teachers to share resources and strategies for teaching ESL (Hua, 2019). Teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) at primary schools is an important issue, but teachers often face a variety of challenges when teaching ESL. Providing additional assistance, such as one-on-one tutoring or small-group education, assessing student progress continuously and modifying lessons as a necessary plan may be difficult but these difficulties can include a lack of the proper tools and materials, a lack of opportunity for professional growth, or a lack of knowledge of the students' cultural backgrounds. To overcome these obstacles and provide their students the help they need to succeed in learning English, instructors can be better prepared if they are given the professional development opportunities, tools, and support they need. Research has shown that a positive and supportive classroom environment can greatly enhance language development in students (Dörnyei, 2001) Research has also shown that teachers who are skilled in language instruction can promote language acquisition in their students by using effective teaching strategies and providing appropriate feedback (Krashen, 1982). Jim Cummins is a well-known researcher in the field of second language acquisition and bilingual education. He has contributed significantly to understanding the challenges of teaching English as a second language to primary school students, especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds. Some of his contributions include the development of the Common Underlying Proficiency theory and the distinction between BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language

Proficiency) in second language learning. These theories have helped teachers to better understand the language needs of their students and design appropriate teaching strategies to support their language development. For providing English language learners with meaningful and engaging content, Cummins argued that students learn English best when they are exposed to authentic and relevant content that is aligned with their interests and experiences. The role of cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom emphasizes the need to value and celebrate the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students in the classroom, and to use this diversity as a resource for learning. In order to have effective assessment and evaluation of English language learners, Cummins says that traditional forms of assessment may not accurately measure the language skills of English language learners, and advocated for alternative forms of assessment that take into account the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of these students. Ali Shehadeh's research focuses on teaching English as a foreign language to young learners, particularly in the primary school setting. Shehadeh's research may have contributed to the field of English language teaching by examining the effectiveness of different teaching methodologies, approaches, and techniques that could enhance the language learning experience of young learners. Shehadeh's research may also have explored how to develop age-appropriate materials, activities, and assessments that could engage and motivate young learners to learn English. Rebecca Oxford is a prominent scholar in the field of language learning and teaching. Her research and publications have focused on a variety of topics, including language learning strategies, second language acquisition, and cross-cultural communication. One of Oxford's notable contributions to literature is her book, "Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know." This book is widely used by language teachers as a resource for developing and implementing effective language learning strategies in the classroom. In addition, Oxford has written several articles and book chapters that address the unique challenges of teaching English language to primary school students. Her work emphasizes the importance of using a communicative and student-centered approach to teaching, as well as the need for teachers to be sensitive to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students. Lev Semenovich Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist and educational theorist who made significant contributions to the field of education. While his work was not focused specifically on teaching English language to primary school students, his theories have influenced educational practices in many areas, including language learning. According to Vygotsky, children learn through interactions with more knowledgeable others, such as parents, teachers, or peers. This learning takes place within a cultural context, and children develop their cognitive abilities through their interactions with the cultural tools and practices of their society. Vygotsky's ideas about language learning have been applied in many different educational settings, including the teaching of English language to primary school students. For example, teachers may use interactive activities to promote language learning, such as dialogues, role-playing, and other activities that encourage children to use language in social interactions.

## Results and explanation

Teachers can adapt their teaching methods for primary school ESL pupils by using a variety of strategies such as: Differentiating instruction to meet the needs of individual students. Using visual aids and manipulatives to support understanding. Incorporating the students' first language and culture into the classroom. Using real-life examples and scenarios that are relevant to the students' experiences. Providing students with opportunities to interact and communicate with their peers and teachers in English. Providing additional assistance, such as one-on-one tutoring or small-group education. Assessing student progress continuously and modifying lessons as necessary. Creating a positive and inclusive classroom environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes. Providing opportunities for students to express themselves in various formats such as verbal, written, visual, and kinesthetic ways. Collaborating with ESL specialists, language teachers, and the families of ESL students. Moreover, Standardized tests such as the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) or the WIDA ACCESS test can be used to measure students' language proficiency levels. In contrast, teachers can evaluate a student's language skills informally using methods including observations, dialogues, and writing examples. Based on the results of these assessments, teachers can adjust their teaching strategies to meet the needs of their ESL students. For example, if a student is struggling with basic vocabulary and grammar, the teacher may provide more direct instruction and opportunities for practice in these areas. Support systems should be made available to primary school teachers such as professional development opportunities for teachers of ESL students, workshops, training sessions, and conferences. These can help teachers learn new strategies

for teaching ESL students and stay up-to-date on the latest research and best practices. mentoring programs need to be encouraged that pair experienced teachers with newer teachers to provide support and guidance to share ideas, strategies, and resources. Online forums, blogs, and professional networks where teachers can connect with other educators can also be supported. Teachers can also communicate regularly with parents and guardians about their child's progress by scheduling regular parent-teacher conferences to discuss the student's progress and any concerns or issues that may arise. Teachers can provide parents and guardians with suggestions and materials for activities and games while involving them in school activities and that they can do at home to support their child's language development. For parents and guardians who don't understand English, teachers can translate documents and offer interpretation services. Teachers can also set up chances for parents to help in the classroom or otherwise contribute to their children's education.

**Among the above mentioned, some have proved to be very effective as mentioned below.**

## **Professional development:**

It is important for teachers to have a good understanding of how to support the language development of ESL pupils, so they should be provided with ongoing professional development opportunities.

## **Using technology and digital resources:**

Utilizing technology, such as videos, apps, and interactive games, can help support language development and engagement of ESL pupils.

## **Cultural sensitivity:**

Incorporating the cultural backgrounds and experiences of ESL pupils into instruction can help to create a more inclusive and welcoming classroom environment.

## **Bilingual instruction:**

Using the native language of ESL pupils in instruction can help them to better understand new concepts and ideas.

## **Cooperative learning:**

Cooperative learning groups can provide a supportive environment for ESL pupils to practice their language skills and learn from their peers.

## **Scaffolding:**

Scaffolding involves providing support for ESL pupils as they learn new concepts and skills, gradually reducing the level of support as the pupils become more proficient.

## **Differentiated instruction:**

This approach involves modifying instruction to meet the individual needs of ESL pupils. This can include using visual aids, hands-on activities, and other methods to support language development.

The social and emotional needs of primary school ESL pupils who may also be struggling with language acquisition may be addressed by implementing the following strategies:

## **Collaboration with families:**

Collaborating with families of ESL pupils can help to ensure that their social and emotional needs are being met at home and school. This can be done by communicating regularly with families and involving them in the education process.

**Providing additional support:** Provide additional support to ESL pupils as needed, such as counseling or language development programs, to help them to feel more comfortable and confident in the classroom.

## **Promoting self-esteem:**

Encourage ESL pupils to take pride in their linguistic and cultural heritage, and provide them with opportunities to share their language and culture with their classmates.

## **Providing emotional support:**

Provide emotional support to ESL pupils who may be struggling with language acquisition. This can be done by listening to their concerns, offering encouragement, and providing reassurance that their progress is normal.

## **Encourage participation and interaction:**

Encourage ESL pupils to participate in class activities and discussions and provide opportunities for them to interact with their peers. This can help them to build their language skills and self-confidence.

## **Building relationships:**

Building positive and supportive relationships with ESL pupils can help them feel more comfortable and secure in the classroom. This can be done by using positive reinforcement, providing individual attention and praise, and being sensitive to their cultural backgrounds and experiences.

## Grammar problems for teacher who teach ESL:

There are several common grammar problems that teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) to primary students may encounter:

**Verb tenses:** Many ESL primary learners have difficulty understanding and using verb tenses correctly. For example, they may mix up present simple and present continuous tenses or use the past simple instead.

**Subject-verb agreement:** ESL primary learners may struggle with making the verb agree with the subject in number, especially with irregular verbs and nouns that can be singular or plural.

**Pronouns:** ESL primary learners may have difficulty with using the correct pronoun form, such as "I" versus "me" or "he" versus "him."

**Prepositions:** ESL primary learners may have difficulty with understanding and using prepositions correctly. For example, they may say "I am for Oman" instead of "I am from Oman."

**Word order:** ESL primary learners may have difficulty with understanding and using the correct word order in English, especially when forming questions or negatives. These are a few examples of common grammar problems, but there are many more that teachers may encounter. It is important to remember that each student's level of proficiency will be different and may have different area of difficulty and hence it is the responsibility of the primary school teachers to monitor the pupils' mistakes and correct them at the earliest. Finally, it may be claimed that effective collaboration depends on efficient communication, thus teachers should keep in regular contact with other educators to review student progress, share updates, and solicit help. This can be accomplished by exchanging information about student performance and progress and working together with other educators to pinpoint problem areas and develop effective support strategies. ESL experts and language support professionals are available to provide comments and recommendations to teachers on instructional techniques and resources. Working together to develop and implement co-planning and co-teaching can assist guarantee that instruction is suited to the unique needs of ESL students. Language support staff may include ESL specialists or bilingual educators. Most importantly, team teaching allows teachers to collaborate on lesson planning and delivery, which makes it an excellent method for delivering ESL instruction. Some other strategies include children's need to see and hear sufficient amount of examples so that their brain can systematize language samples and derive the rules of how something is used and in what circumstances. As the most crucial for language acquisition for primary school children seems to be: Listening to the target language, Reading picture books (with assistance). Highlighting the importance of ongoing professional development for ESL teachers, helping them stay up-to-date with best practices and new resources. Sharing the experiences and perspectives of ESL teachers themselves, through interviews or personal anecdotes and providing a deeper understanding of the issues they face. It can also be achieved by addressing the changes and challenges caused by the pandemic, and how it changed the approach and teaching methods. Highlighting the importance of ESL education and its impact on the students' future academic and career opportunities encourage more people to become ESL teachers and raise awareness of the importance of ESL education at primary level. Many ESL teachers may not have received the necessary training to teach English as a second language, leading to challenges in lesson planning and instruction. Lack of teacher training: ESL teachers in primary schools may not have enough support from other teachers or administrative staff, making it difficult to implement effective ESL instruction so limited classroom support could be the reason. Due to limited time for instruction, primary students may have a limited amount of time dedicated to ESL instruction, which may make it challenging for teachers to provide comprehensive language instruction. Some parents may not realize the value of learning English or may not be able to help their children's language development at home due to a lack of parental support. Primary pupils struggle to develop their language abilities because they don't have much opportunity to practice speaking and listening in English outside of the school. This lack of practice opportunities is another factor.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, teaching English language to primary school students presents various obstacles and challenges. These include lack of resources and materials, limited classroom time, and lack of teacher training and support. Additionally, students may struggle with language acquisition due to linguistic and cultural barriers. However, with proper planning, training, and support, these obstacles can be overcome. Teachers can utilize a variety of methods and techniques to engage students and ensure their success in learning the language. It is essential to provide students with the necessary resources such as visual aids, providing hands-on activities, and providing ongoing teacher training, to create a positive classroom

environment, and to continuously monitor and evaluate their progress. Additionally, creating a supportive learning environment and fostering a positive attitude towards the English language among students can also play a crucial role in overcoming these challenges. Overall, while teaching English language to primary school students may be challenging, with the right approach mentioned above in "Results and Expalnation", it is possible to successfully overcome these obstacles and provide students with a solid foundation in the language. Moreover, Teaching English language to primary school students can present a number of challenges, including issues related to language acquisition and development, cultural context, and social interaction. Through the review of the literature, it is evident that theories mentioned have made significant contributions to the field of language education, particularly in the areas of language acquisition and development. Cummins' importance of developing both basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in order to ensure success in English language learning. Rebecca Oxford, through her extensive research, has highlighted the importance of using a communicative approach to teaching English language, which emphasizes the use of language in social interaction and real-life situations. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural context in cognitive development, and this theory has been applied in language education, including the teaching of English language to primary school students. Educators can apply Vygotsky's ideas to promote language learning in primary school students by creating interactive activities that encourage social interaction and culturally relevant materials that align with students' backgrounds. Moreover, Dr. Ali Shehadeh's work highlights the importance of creating a positive and engaging learning environment, using interactive and communicative approaches, integrating technology and multimedia resources, and involving parents and the community in the language learning process. Overall, these theories and strategies have been shown to be effective in promoting language acquisition and development among primary school students that can also provide a valuable framework for addressing the challenges of teaching English language to primary school students and promoting effective language learning among young children and teachers of English language to primary school students can benefit from considering these works in developing their teaching strategies and approaches. Such effective language teaching practices for primary school students provide the use of a communicative approach, promoting learner autonomy and creativity, and providing ongoing professional development for teachers.

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