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***NEW VISTAS IN ELT:  
EMPOWERING ENGINEERS FOR EMPLOYMENT***

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**L2 in L1 Teaching in Dindigul-Based Rural Areas**

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**Abstract**

Students learning English in India, especially in rural villages (at the college level), lack competence in English, The teaching of English in India at all three levels is still fraught with a

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multitude of difficulties and obstacles. Reasons are many. When a child enters school at the primary level, he or she is being taught English language as a subject not a language, and they are taught the alphabet only in LKG when they are 4 years old. Then they begin to memorize every question and answer till they reach the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. When the medium of learning is not English, the school teaches English as one of the subjects and students do not learn the second language properly. When these learners enter the secondary level they are competent enough in writing and memorizing English class answers, and this is cramming, not any learning based on creativity. To overcome this language learning barrier, teachers need to find a way to help students understand academic concepts and to learn the L2 academic language properly. This paper will attempt to study the mother tongue influence upon the learners of the English language, and show the resulting interference of mother tongue L1, Tamil upon the acquisition of the second language L2, which is English.

**Key words:** Teaching English, Learning Language, Memorizing English, Learning Barriers

## **Introduction**

Even after twelve to fifteen years of learning English, learners in India at the college level lack competence in English. The teaching of English in India at all three levels, primary, secondary and college level is still fraught with a multitude of difficulties and obstacles. Realizing the demand and importance of English, in almost all the states of India, English is taught as a compulsory language from the very first standard. Yet the outcome is totally unsatisfactory. Here I am not questioning the intelligence of the learners, they are intelligent enough, showing good results in other subjects, but feel uncomfortable with the English language. And those who show excellent results in the English exams, totally depend on cramming and rote learning.

## **Barriers to Language Learning**

Apart from a lack of instructional resources – a general problem in a number of developing countries – many other problems have often been the bane of the Indian education system. Class size is most often very large comprised of a wide range of initial proficiency and learning needs. Over-centralization of educational policies, academic inflexibility of the system

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not only stifle innovative and pragmatic deviation, but also create a flow with the current, pacifistic resignation among resourceful and well motivated educators. Teachers have very little say in the designing of the curriculum, in the choosing of the materials and textbooks, or in the developing of assessment technique.

### **Mother Tongue Influence**

Second language learners seem to accumulate structural entities of the target language, but demonstrate difficulty in organizing this knowledge into appropriate and coherent structures. When writing or speaking the target language L2, second language learners are inclined to depend on their native language L1 grammar and structures to produce a response. If the grammar and the structures of the two languages are distinctly different, then one could expect a relatively high frequency of errors to occur in L2, thus indicating an interference of L1 on L2 acquisition.

### **Study and Findings**

The data substantiating the discussion came from an empirical study of errors in descriptive essays written by 2<sup>nd</sup> year students in 3 colleges in Dindigul. The findings of the study indicate that in spite of having gone through 12 years of learning English in their schools, the learners were still having difficulty in writing.

Students start their education in their L1 the language they know best. They learn to read and write in L1 and build their confidence in using both oral and written L1 to communicate their thoughts and ideas.

Students begin learning oral L2 at the same time that they are learning to read and write in L1. Then, with their good foundation in speaking, listening, reading and writing L1 plus their growing confidence in using oral L2, they are ready to begin L2 literary studies.

Students begin using L2 as one of the subjects of study starting in Grade 2 or 3. As students continue to build confidence to using “everyday” L2 they also need to begin learning “academic” L2. The language they will use to learn abstract concepts as they move into higher grades.

## Teachers' Role

Teachers need a way to help students understand academic concepts and to learn L2 academic language. In the “L1-L2-L1” approaches described below, teachers.

1. Introduce a new concepts in L1
2. Introduce a new L2 concepts in words
3. Summarize the lessons in L2 and then
4. Check comprehension in L1

The timing for introducing L2 as one of the languages of instruction will be different in each context, depending on the facts such as whether the school is an English medium school or mother tongue medium school. The above formulae are suggested steps for two kinds of L1-L2-L1 lessons. The first two could be used by school teachers in grades 1 and 2 who have L1 “activity books” but no L2 textbooks. The 3rd and 4<sup>th</sup> could be used in schools where the students have L2 textbooks starting even from LKG, or the 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

## Conclusion

English was introduced in colonies like India basically for the study of the literature and culture. However, English for professional purposes like facing interviews, writing resumes, writing reports, conducting campaigns, writing letters, participation in meetings, seminars, conferences and discussions, etc. are now required. English for communication is the mantra everywhere. So, we need to reconsider the focus of learning English and change our syllabus suitably.

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