

Problems Faced by Students in Learning English at Elementary Level

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Abstract

This study looked into the problems that elementary students encounter while trying to learn English. This was a quantitative study, and the researchers went for a descriptive approach to gather their data through surveys. The research focused on all the elementary school students in Tehsil Kotli, AJ&K, and the researchers picked a sample of 219 students using a random sampling method. They used a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that they developed themselves to collect the responses. For crunching the numbers, they turned to SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The analysis included looking at frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to really get the full picture. The study found that students are dealing with a bunch of challenges while learning English. Some common issues included a lack of confidence, not speaking enough English during class, wrestling with vocabulary, and just finding grammar rules really tough to grasp. To tackle these problems, the study suggests that teachers may model proper pronunciation for students, encouraging them to repeat words and phrases regularly. The study also recommends that school authorities set up language labs where students can get more practice. Furthermore, the school administration may promote online learning resources to help students out in learning English. Overall, it is about creating a supportive environment to help these students thrive in their English learning journey.

Key Words

Problems, Learning English, Elementary Level, Education, Vocabulary

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Introduction

The importance of learning English has really skyrocketed recently as countries that do not primarily speak English start to adopt Western practices and work towards development. English instruction has become a key part of school curricula across the globe. Sure, this has helped a lot with global communication, but let us be honest — many students still find it tough to get the hang of the language, which can lead to some real communication issues in schools (Ahmed & Al-Ward, 2020).

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The importance of English as a worldwide language and the need for English for global contact have been known globally (Crystal, [1997](#)). English plays such a huge role in global communication and industry that it has become essential for people and countries alike to have good English skills (Rao, [2019](#)).

In some places, especially in developing countries, people often think that being good at English means you are smart. That is a pretty problematic belief, as it can lead to students who struggle with English being teased or bullied, which is just awful. Still, English is the go-to language for international communication, especially in fields like business and commerce. It is pretty much essential when you are trying to connect with folks from other countries (Heredia & Brown, [2006](#)).

These days, English is practically the international language of choice, spoken by nearly half the world's population. It pops up in all sorts of verbal and written communication, both formal and informal (Schmitt, [2000](#)). When it comes to picking up a native language, kids usually do it pretty naturally since they are surrounded by it all the time. But learning a second language is a whole different ball game. It takes a lot more effort, and sometimes, the exposure is not even that great, which can make things pretty tough (Akbari, [2015](#)).

English has turned into a critical skill not just for individuals, but for whole countries too, thanks to its massive role in global communication and industry. In classrooms, every student should get a fair shot, no matter where they come from (Alqahtani, [2015](#)).

For students to really learn effectively, schools need to have structured activities that promote growth. And let us not forget about teachers! They play such a vital role, acting as motivators and facilitators. The whole teaching and learning process is really about the interactions between teachers and students, all geared towards achieving specific goals (Anbreen, [2015](#)). It is about picking up knowledge and skills and having those tools ready to tackle whatever future challenges come your way (Crystal, [2012](#)).

To really master English, a person needs to work on listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. You cannot just wing it — these skills are built through dedicated learning. People learn English for different reasons: to chat with native speakers, write well, pass exams, or even to prepare for higher education (Mohammed, [2018](#)).

And let us talk vocabulary — it is super important when learning any language. English alone has thousands upon thousands of words! Even native speakers do not know all of them (Richards, [1976](#)). A lot of folks think that just studying grammar or memorising vocabulary will make them fluent, but it is not always that simple (Behraam et al., [2015](#)).

When it comes to learning English, elementary students really face quite a few challenges, even though it is such an important language around the world. There are all sorts of reasons for this. For instance, many kids do not get enough exposure to English outside of their classrooms. Plus, there is often a lack of teaching resources available. And let us not forget the fact that students come from different language backgrounds, which can complicate things.

Their vocabulary and grammar skills might be limited, too. And, honestly, if they don't get enough chances to practice, it makes it even harder. The level of support from parents may really vary — some kids have tons of encouragement, while others might not get much at all. All these factors definitely pile up and make learning English a tougher nut to crack.

Understanding the challenges that English learners face can really help teachers and school leaders craft more effective language learning programs and policies that cater to the diverse needs of their students (Alkhalil, [2012](#)). By digging into these challenges, educators can tailor their teaching methods to better meet the specific

struggles their learners encounter (Kim et al., [2019](#)). Furthermore, studying the difficulties faced by English language learners can lead to a deeper understanding of the cultural and linguistic diversity among students, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable approach to language education (Gan, [2013](#)).

Creating a supportive classroom environment is crucial for solving the issues that arise in the learning process (Anbreen, [2015](#)). This research is aimed at helping elementary school teachers enhance their students' English learning experiences. Interestingly, research shows there are some notable differences in how male and female students approach learning English (Sari, [2023](#)). For instance, in Pakistan, female students often explore a broader range of learning strategies and tend to have a more positive outlook when it comes to mastering English compared to their male peers (Askari et al., [2022](#)).

The focus of this research is to look into the challenges elementary students face when reading in English. So, this study is really about identifying and digging deep into the main obstacles that these elementary school students face on their path to mastering English. We are also looking into finding out the perceptions of students regarding their English learning. By shining a light on these issues, we hope to provide some valuable insights that could help improve the situation.

Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To check the perception of elementary level students regarding their level of learning English.
2. To examine the difficulties faced by elementary-level students in learning English.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions of the study.

1. What are the perceptions of elementary level students regarding their level of learning English?
2. What are the difficulties faced by elementary-level students in learning English?

Research Methodology

The study was all about numbers — a quantitative approach. The researchers used a descriptive method to gather information, employing survey techniques to collect data directly from students. The study focused on all the elementary schools in Tehsil Kotli, which is quite a lot — 517 schools in total. To pick the sample, they went with a simple random technique. The researcher ended up selecting 300 elementary students from that area. A questionnaire was developed based on a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," to gather insights. Before rolling it out, the researchers had the questionnaire validated by three experts, who found that the questionnaire passed the test. After pilot testing, the researchers also checked the reliability of their instrument using Cronbach's Alpha, with the help of SPSS, a statistical software. This was to ensure everything was clear and made sense. The reliability coefficient came in at 0.747, which is pretty solid for the tool they used. The researchers did not just sit back and wait for responses. They actually visited the elementary schools to collect data. After getting the necessary permissions from the school heads, they distributed the questionnaires to students. They even took the time to guide the kids on how to fill them out. Once all the data was in, it was time for analysis. They crunched the data using SPSS version 20, focusing on simple percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations.

Results

Objective 1: Perceptions Regarding English Learning

Table 1

I Enjoy Learning English

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	89	121	10	48	32	2.38	1.339
Percentage		29.7	40.3	3.3	16.0	10.7		

Table 1 indicates that 70 % (29.7% SDA+40.3% DA) of students disagreed with the statement, "I enjoy learning English". Moreover, the mean score = 2.38 and SD = 1.339 of students also show that they disagreed with the statement.

Table 2

Learning English is Important for My Future

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	5	12	14	165	104	4.17	.823
Percentage		1.7	4.0	4.7	55.0	34.7		

Table 2 indicates that 89.7% (34.7% SA+55.0% A) of students agreed with the statement, "Learning English is important for my future". Moreover, the mean score = 4.17 and SD = .823 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 3

English is Easy for Me to Learn

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	105	157	6	24	8	1.91	.962
Percentage		35.0	52.3	2.0	8.0	2.7		

Table 3 indicates that 87.3 % (35.0% SDA+52.3% DA) of students disagreed with the statement, "English is easy for me to learn". Moreover, the mean score = 1.91 and SD = .962 of students also show that they disagreed with the statement.

Table 4

I Feel Confident When I Speak English

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	21	39	27	149	64	3.65	1.157
Percentage		7.0	13.0	9.0	49.7	21.3		

Table 4 indicates that 71 % (21.3% SA+49.7% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I feel confident when I speak English". Moreover, the mean score = 3.65 and SD = 1.157 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 5

I Have Enough Opportunities to Practice Speaking English

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	43	60	0	86	111	3.54	1.502
Percentage		14.3	20.0	0	28.7	37.0		

Table 5 indicates that 65.7 % (37.0% SA+28.7% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I have enough opportunities to practice speaking English". Moreover, the mean score = 3.54 and SD = 1.502 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 6

I Feel Comfortable Asking questions in English Class

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	34	56	20	133	57	3.41	1.296
Percentage		11.3	18.7	6.7	44.3	19.0		

Table 6 indicates that 63.3 % (19.0% SA+44.3% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I feel comfortable asking questions in English class". Moreover, the mean score = 3.41 and SD = 1.296 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 7

My English Teacher Helps Me to Improve My Skills

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	33	51	29	121	66	3.45	1.301
Percentage		11.0	17.0	9.7	40.3	22.0		

Table 7 indicates that 62.3 % (22.0% SA+40.3% A) of students agreed with the statement that "My English teacher helps me to improve my skills". Moreover, the mean score of 3.45 and SD 1.301 of students also show that they agree with the statement.

Table 8

I Use English in My Daily Life Outside of School

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	10	27	33	154	76	3.86	1.004
Percentage		3.3	9.0	11.0	51.3	25.3		

Table 8 indicates that 76.6 % (25.3% SA+51.3% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I use English in my daily life outside of school". Moreover, the mean score = 3.86 and SD = 1.004 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 9

I Feel Motivated to Learn English

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	8	20	28	150	94	4.01	.957
Percentage		2.7	6.7	9.3	50.0	31.3		

Table 9 indicates that 81.3 % (31.3% SA+50.0% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I like to read English books and articles". Moreover, the mean score = 4.01 and SD = .957 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 10

I Like to Read English Books and Articles

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	98	109	6	41	46	2.43	1.449
Percentage		32.7	36.3	2.0	13.7	15.3		

Table 10 indicates that 69 % (32.7% SDA+36.3% DA) of students disagreed with the statement, "I like to read English books and articles". Moreover, the mean score = 2.43 and SD = 1.449 of students also show that they disagreed with the statement.

Objective 2: Problems of English learning

Problems Related to Listening Skills

Table 11

I Get Confused When I Hear Words with Similar Sounds but Have Different Meanings

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	10	27	16	155	92	3.97	1.011
Percentage		3.3	9.0	5.3	51.7	30.7		

Table 11 indicates that 82.4 % (30.7% SA+51.7 A) of students agreed with the statement, "I get confused when I hear words with similar sounds but have different meanings". Moreover, the mean score = 3.97 and SD = 1.011 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 12

I Struggle with Understanding Verb Tense in Spoken English

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	13	24	12	171	80	3.94	1.008
Percentage		4.3	8.0	4.0	57.0	26.7		

Table 12 indicates that 83.7 % (26.7% SA+57.0% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I struggle with understanding verb tense in spoken English". Moreover, the mean score = 3.94 and SD = 1.008 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 13

My Listening Comprehension is Affected by Background Noise or Accents

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	8	22	9	165	96	4.06	.939
Percentage		2.7	7.3	3.0	55.0	32.0		

Table 13 indicates that 87 % (32.0% SA+55.0% A) of students agreed with the statement, "My listening comprehension is affected by background noise or accents". Moreover, the mean score = 4.06 and SD = .939 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 14

I Have Trouble Understanding English Conversation

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	8	43	3	152	94	3.94	1.066
Percentage		2.7	14.3	1.0	50.7	31.3		

Table 14 indicates that 82% (31.3% SA+50.7% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I have trouble in understanding English conversation". Moreover, the mean score = 3.94 and SD = 1.066 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 15

I find it Hard to Understand New Words When My Teacher Speaks Quickly

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	12	18	4	160	106	4.10	.980
Percentage		4.0	6.0	1.3	53.3	35.3		

Table 15 indicates that 86.6% (35.3% SA+53.3% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I find it hard to understand new words when my teacher speaks quickly". Moreover, the mean score = 4.10 and SD = .980 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Problems Related to Speaking Skills

Table 16

I Feel Shy When I Have to Speak English in Front of Others

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	15	36	2	150	97	3.93	1.122
Percentage		5.0	12.0	.7	50.0	32.3		

Table 16 indicates that 82.3 % (32.3 SA+50.0% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I feel shy when I have to speak English in front of others". Moreover, the mean score = 3.93 and SD = 1.122 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 17

I Have Trouble pronouncing English Words

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	14	31	3	163	89	3.94	1.068
Percentage		4.7	10.3	1.0	54.3	29.7		

Table 17 indicates that 84 % (29.7% SA+54.3% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I have trouble pronouncing English words". Moreover, the mean score = 3.94 and SD = 1.068 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 18

I find it Difficult to Explain My Thoughts Clearly in English

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	10	24	4	161	101	4.06	.984
Percentage		3.3	8.0	1.3	53.7	33.7		

Table 18 indicates that 87.7 % (33.7% SA+53.7% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I find it difficult to explain my thoughts clearly in English". Moreover, the mean score = 4.06 and SD = .984 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 19

I Speak Very Slowly Because I am Afraid of Making Mistakes in English

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	101	136	2	36	25	2.16	1.246
Percentage		33.7	45.3	.7	12.0	8.3		

Table 19 indicates that 79 % (33.7% SDA+45.3% DA) of students disagreed with the statement, "I speak very slowly because I am afraid of making mistakes in English". Moreover, the mean score = 2.16 and SD = 1.246 of students also show that they disagreed with the statement.

Table 20

I find it Hard to initiate a Conversation in English

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	18	38	9	141	94	3.85	1.171
Percentage		6.0	12.7	3.0	47.0	31.3		

Table 20 indicates that 78.3% (31.3% SA+47.0% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I find it hard to initiate conversation in English". Moreover, the mean score = 3.85 and SD = 1.171 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Problems Related to Reading Skills

Table 21

I find it Difficult to understand the Meaning of New Words When Reading English Texts

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	12	47	10	147	84	3.81	1.127
Percentage		4.0	15.7	3.3	49.0	28.0		

Table 21 indicates that 77 % (28.0% SA+49.0% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I find it difficult to understand the meaning of new words when reading English texts". Moreover, the mean score = 3.81 and SD = 1.127 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 22

I lose Interest Quickly When Reading a Long Passage in English

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	21	33	11	146	89	3.83	1.174
Percentage		7.0	11.0	3.7	48.7	29.7		

Table 22 indicates that 78.4% (29.7% SA+48.7% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I lose interest quickly when reading a long passage in English". Moreover, the mean score = 3.83 and SD = 1.174 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 23

I Feel Unsure about the Pronunciation of Words Correctly

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	102	112	5	21	60	2.42	1.507
Percentage		34.0	37.3	1.7	7.0	20.0		

Table 23 indicates that 71.3% (34.0% SDA+37.3% DA) of students disagreed with the statement, "I feel unsure about the pronunciation of words correctly". Moreover, the mean score = 2.42 and SD = 1.507 of students also show that they disagreed with the statement.

Table 24

I Struggle with Identifying subjects and Predicates in sentences while Reading

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	8	21	11	151	109	4.11	.955
Percentage		2.7	7.0	3.7	50.3	36.3		

Table 24 indicates that 86.6 % (36.3% SA+50.3% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I struggle with identifying subjects and predicates in sentences while reading". Moreover, the mean score = 4.11 and SD = .955 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 25

I Feel Nervous or Anxious when Asked to Read Aloud in Class

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	19	34	8	143	96	3.88	1.166
Percentage		6.3	11.3	2.7	47.7	32.0		

Table 25 indicates that 79.7 % (32.0% SA+47.7% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I feel nervous or anxious when asked to read aloud in class". Moreover, the mean score = 3.88 and SD = 1.166 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Problems related to Writing Skills

Table 26

I Get Frustrated with English Spelling and Punctuation

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	29	37	19	136	79	3.66	1.258
Percentage		9.7	12.3	6.3	45.3	26.3		

Table 26 indicates that 71.6 % (26.6% SA+45.3% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I get frustrated with English spelling and punctuation". Moreover, the mean score = 3.66 and SD = 1.258 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 27

I Face Difficulty in Using English Grammar Rules Correctly

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	36	50	15	119	80	3.52	1.357
Percentage		12.0	16.7	5.0	39.7	26.7		

Table 27 indicates that 66.4 % (26.7% SA+39.7% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I face difficulty in using English grammar rules correctly". Moreover, the mean score = 3.52 and SD = 1.357 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 28

I Struggle to Write Coherent English sentences

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	25	38	15	141	81	3.72	1.225
Percentage		8.3	12.7	5.0	47.0	27.0		

Table 28 indicates that 74 % (27.0% SA+47.0% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I struggle to write coherent English sentences". Moreover, the mean score = 3.72 and SD = 1.255 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 29

I find it Hard to organise my Ideas in English Writing

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	23	32	13	140	92	3.82	1.200
Percentage		7.7	10.7	4.3	46.7	30.7		

Table 29 indicates that 77.4 % (30.7% SA+46.7% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I find it hard to organise my ideas in English writing". Moreover, the mean score = 3.82 and SD = 1.200 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Table 30

I Have Difficulty Using English Vocabulary in Writing

Responses	N	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Frequency	300	14	43	13	164	66	3.75	1.095
Percentage		4.7	14.3	4.3	54.7	22.0		

Table 30 indicates that 76.7 % (22.0% SA+54.7% A) of students agreed with the statement, "I have difficulty in using English vocabulary in writing". Moreover, the mean score = 3.75 and SD = 1.095 of students also show that they agreed with the statement.

Discussions and Conclusions

The study really shines a light on something important: a lot of elementary school kids are having a tough time with different parts of learning English. We are talking grammar, understanding what they hear in lectures, speaking up confidently, getting that pronunciation right, and even comprehending reading materials. It is pretty clear that they need some serious support and interventions to help boost their language skills. A lot of these students are struggling, especially when it comes to pronouncing words and just feeling confident when they talk. They have mentioned challenges in speaking fluently, which can really hold them back. Some find it hard to express themselves while writing something in English. Plus, there is the anxiety that creeps in during class — feeling nervous about speaking up, limited chances to practice, and not having enough resources or materials to work with.

All of this makes it super tough for them to finish assignments and really get involved in class discussions. There are plenty of obstacles they face: low self-confidence, trouble with vocabulary, and those pesky grammar rules. These issues can really impact how they perform academically, how well they understand things, and how they communicate overall.

Recommendations

To wrap things up, we have really got to tackle the challenges that elementary students face when learning English. One major way to do this is by offering solid language support services. The school administration may organise regular workshops, online platforms, group learning activities, personalised feedback, and language labs – all of these can make a huge difference.

And let us not forget the importance of online resources, tutoring, peer mentoring, and those helpful workshops or seminars focused on language skills. These tools can really enrich their learning journey. When schools and institutions invest in these types of support, it can lead to better outcomes for students, improve their academic performance, and even boost their confidence. Plus, it contributes to their overall well-being and success.

It is also crucial for educators and policymakers to make language support a top priority. This way, we can meet the diverse needs of our students and really promote effective English language learning. It is all about creating an environment where the students can thrive.

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