

Problems Encountered during the Teaching of English in Secondary Schools

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Abstract

English can be taught in different forms by teachers or methodologists. Sometimes the teaching or learning process does not lead to positive results because certain obstacles make learning English more difficult. One of the main reasons may be the chosen method, since there are still teachers who prioritize the read-and-translate principle. This is a very old approach that relies only on grammar and vocabulary, and it prevents the development of speaking and listening skills. Another problem may be the limited use of technological tools. Without proper tools used effectively, it is impossible to achieve the desired progress. In addition, when a real communicative environment is not created during lessons, artificially memorized words and phrases hinder learners from expressing themselves fluently and freely. Moreover, differences between sentence structures in the native language and in English as a second language often cause confusion for students. Nevertheless, these problems can be solved through the right choice of method and the teacher's interactive approach.

Keywords: communication, teaching, interactive, modern technologies, language skills

1. Introduction

Communication, which is one of the essential demands of our time, is becoming increasingly important these days. Especially in establishing intercultural connections and in the understanding between people of different nationalities and cultures, foreign languages play a main role. At such a time, teaching these languages to students and turning them into skills becomes an important task. English is today the most widely spoken language in the world and is recognized as a means of international communication. English, in addition to being a medium of international communication, is also considered a key tool in the fields of science, technology, culture, and education. In our country, the English language has also been included in the school curriculum, and its teaching has been defined as one of the main directions of state strategies. For

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this reason, special importance is given to the teaching of English in our education system. Compared to the past, this language is now kept more in focus. However, a number of noticeable difficulties arise during the teaching of this language in secondary schools.

Recent research shows that the existing difficulties negatively affect language learning and slow down its acquisition. In addition to making teachers' work harder, it also creates certain insecurity and discouragement among students. One of these difficulties is the lack of teaching resources. In many schools, old and outdated textbooks are still being used. These textbooks either do not develop all language skills simultaneously or do not meet modern language requirements. It can also be noted that these textbooks do not match the interests and age characteristics of the students. We can also note that these textbooks are insufficient, because they do not take into account students' interests and age characteristics. The language structure, vocabulary, and topic selection of such textbooks are far from contemporary realities. Within the context of English teaching in secondary schools, teachers encounter a wide range of opinions and expectations voiced by parents, governing bodies, colleagues, and other stakeholders. Addressing these perspectives requires the English teacher to integrate, discuss, challenge, confirm, or negotiate them as appropriate. In a constantly changing environment, the National Curriculum should be regarded as a broad framework rather than an absolute authority. While it presents itself—and indeed aims to present itself—as fully authoritative, in reality it serves as a set of guiding reference points. The true essence of the subject must be continually rediscovered and redefined by those most actively engaged in the teaching process (Fleming and Stevens, 2014).

2. Methodology

Since a number of teaching methods in the traditional education system are based more on grammatical foundations and writing tasks, speaking and listening skills remain in the background. As a result, the ability to communicate, which is the primary function of language, cannot progress. Skills such as interacting with others and listening and understanding each other remain passive skills due to lack of development. Likewise, Ahmad, Khan, and Munir highlight (2013) a tension between modern teaching methodologies and the traditional methods still widely used in Pakistan. Although innovations in approaches and techniques have transformed English language teaching globally, many teachers in Pakistan continue to rely on conventional practices such as grammar-translation or rote learning. Importantly, these traditional methods are applied uniformly to all types of students, regardless of their level or learning needs. Contemporary pedagogy and didactics emphasize the subjectivity of the student, recognizing him/her as the most important link in the education process. Since the knowledge becomes outdated very quickly, it is much more important to equip students with such skills as acquiring and processing information, creative problem solving, cooperation in a group, or the ability to



learn effectively. To provide students with these skills, it is very important to choose the right teaching approach (Iskandarova, 2022).

Moreover, the absence of a practical language environment is also one of the main factors. Since students do not have the opportunity to communicate in English in a practical environment, they quickly forget what they have learned and cannot use it actively because they are unable to apply the language at school and in their daily lives. Preventing such situations and creating an effective language environment is a very important responsibility for teachers. Developing students' language skills requires regular communication in this language and participation in discussions so that they become active language users. By continuing these activities, it is possible to strengthen speaking and listening skills. A teacher's development of a command of English should be a life-long hobby as well as a professional obligation. Of course, a knowledge of the rules and terminology of English grammar and vocabulary is also useful. But teaching, especially language teaching, is much more than just the transfer of knowledge. If teachers use English most of the time in every class, including beginners' classes, this means that their learners constantly experience the real communicative use of English. It increases their exposure to the language through listening comprehension, and gives them opportunities to speak English (Davies & Pearse, 2000)

When learning any language, it is essential to have motivation and patience at the initial stage to achieve the goal and master the language well. In this educational landscape, motivation emerges as a pivotal factor that not only influences student engagement and resilience in facing academic challenges but also significantly impacts the quality of their learning outcomes (Hajiyeva, 2024). If this is not the case, that is, if there is a lack of motivation, students' interest in the language decreases. One of the reasons for this is that most students do not fully realize the importance of the English language and approach lessons passively. When they have no interest or purpose in learning, the results are also weak. To increase students' interest and motivation, teachers can relate lessons to everyday life and adapt them to real situations. It is possible to make lessons more enjoyable through modern technologies and games, thereby raising students' interest. According to Babayev's findings (2025), several participants emphasized that songs helped them grasp cultural values, emotional expression, and storytelling traditions within English-speaking communities. This cultural engagement not only enriches learners' understanding but also strengthens their motivation and comprehension. In his study, integrating music into language teaching transforms the process into a holistic experience, where students connect with both the linguistic and cultural dimensions of English. By playing role-playing games with students, their ability to assume roles, vocabulary, and creativity skills can also be developed. Role plays, group discussions, and problem-solving activities — created real-world contexts that encouraged students to use English for genuine interaction rather than mechanical repetition (Naghiyeva, 2025). An important difference between language games and other



activities can be considered as the element of success that occurs within the scope of the course activity. Games organized regarding the subjects of study in any language teaching or learning activities mean that what is learned is realized through joyful experiences, in a sense (Ismayilli, Mammadova, & Asadova, 2025). On the other hand, it is important to inform students about the opportunities that learning a language will create for them in the future. Sometimes students begin to withdraw because they do not know why they are learning this language. Therefore, teachers should always keep motivation high and constantly inform their students about the benefits of the English language.

English is a language with a rich vocabulary and grammatical foundations. To master this language perfectly and be able to communicate, a sufficient vocabulary and grammatical knowledge are needed. A lack of grammatical knowledge and vocabulary directly affects the main skills of the language: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. By systematically teaching grammar rules and structures, learners gain a solid foundation in the mechanics of the target language (Naghiyeva, 2025). A student with a weak vocabulary struggles to express their thoughts, which reduces their self-confidence. To prevent this and to increase students' confidence, new words should be taught in every lesson, and these words should be used in sentences and context. The interaction between different vocabulary strata plays a crucial role in both written and spoken communication. It affects how messages are conveyed, received, and interpreted, thus holding a pivotal significance in effective communication (Alisoy, 2023).

With the introduction of English language instruction in Azerbaijan, questions arose regarding whether the teaching process should be teacher-centered or student-centered (Mehdizade, 2025). When English lessons are taught in schools, teachers sometimes do not take into account that this language is different from Azerbaijani, which causes certain problems for students in understanding the language. The grammatical system of English differs from Azerbaijani due to a number of changes. As a result, English may seem difficult for students. For example, the tense system is multifaceted – there are more than 12 main tense forms, which creates confusion among students. Meanwhile, Azerbaijani grammar has comparatively very few tense forms. In Azerbaijani, the category of tense is also a system of three-member opposeemes such as *gəlir-gəldi-gələcək* or *gəlir-gəlmişdi-gələr*. However, there is a great difference due to the number of tense forms. In English three tenses are expressed by sixteen tense forms, while in Azerbaijani three tenses are realized in five forms (Nuriyeva, 2025). In addition, topics such as the use of articles, auxiliary verbs, and the second and third forms of verbs often cause difficulties. When learning new words, there are also memory challenges and problems distinguishing between synonyms and antonyms. At the same time, when developing speaking skills, the different word order in sentences sharply creates problems for students. Modern English expresses these relations primarily by means of word order, prepositions, and auxiliary verbs. At the same time, it continues to expand its vocabulary through ongoing morphological innovation



(Nuri, 2025). In Azerbaijani, the position of the predicate is at the end of the sentence. If the position of the verb in Azerbaijani is at the end of the sentence, in English it is placed right next to the subject. To overcome these difficulties, it is necessary, first of all, to convey these differences to the students.

3. Results

One of the most common problems in English lessons is the limited application of modern teaching methods. Some teachers still prefer grammar-oriented and memorization-based teaching. This limits students' opportunities to actively use the language. The grammar-translation method has maintained a foothold in language instruction, particularly in regions where reading and writing skills are prioritized over speaking and listening (Naghiyeva, 2024). One of the main reasons for this is the lack of communicative methods. The absence of a communication-based approach in lessons leads to weak development of students' speaking skills. Considering that language is more useful for communication, teaching lessons in this direction is more appropriate. On the other hand, the limited use of modern technologies during English teaching is also one of the noticeable factors. The limited use of interactive boards, multimedia resources, and online platforms makes lessons boring and monotonous. By using multimedia tools that match students' interests and the topic, lessons can be made more engaging, and students' modern language skills can be developed. Related to this fact, Ashrafova's study shows that incorporating real-world financial scenarios into ESL courses makes learning more engaging and relevant for students. By working with case studies and current financial events, learners see not only the theoretical but also the practical application of language. This approach enhances motivation, strengthens comprehension, and equips students to use English more effectively in the finance sector (Ashrafova, 2023). According to the demands of the era, teaching students to use technology tools correctly is also one of the main criteria. For example, AI tools create interactive learning environments that encourage active participation. Students can engage in conversations with chatbots, complete gamified tasks, and receive instant responses. Such activities make language learning more engaging and less stressful compared to traditional classroom settings (Orujova, 2026). Instead of perceiving AI as a threat or a benefit, it is more reasonable to discuss how learners deal with it (Mammadova, 2026). Thus, by using this equipment, it is possible to provide students with this as a skill.

4. Discussion

At the global level, knowledge of the English language plays an important role in exchanging information, education, technology, tourism, and achieving success in the business world. Another problem for those learning this language in the educational process is the lack of a real language environment. Since English is used little in daily life, social relations, and public



spaces, students are limited to examples in textbooks. As a result, the natural fluency and liveliness of the language are not felt. Students cannot transfer the new words and expressions they learn to long-term memory because they do not hear them frequently or use them in their speech. By integrating authentic materials into lessons, teachers expose learners to real language use and encourage them to engage with genuine texts. In contrast, artificially created texts often lack natural coherence and cohesion. Because of this, students cannot fully observe how a text's structure is formed, which limits their understanding of how language operates in real contexts (Pietilä, 2009). Consequently, fluent speech cannot develop, and students are unable to express their ideas and thoughts freely. Fear of making errors is one of the most prevalent obstacles to speaking in a second language (Orujlu & Guliyeva, 2026). They sometimes even refrain from expressing their thoughts for fear of making mistakes while speaking. The absence of a speaking environment particularly negatively affects the development of communicative skills. In order to turn English into a spoken language in schools and to develop it as a skill in students' daily lives, it is necessary to find certain solutions to overcome this difficulty. For example, in secondary schools, speaking skills can be improved by organizing 'English corners,' 'language clubs,' and 'role-playing activities.' By regularly involving students in discussions and debates, it is possible to motivate them. Additionally, this obstacle can be overcome by establishing exchange projects with teachers and students living in foreign countries.

5. Conclusion

The teaching and learning of English in secondary schools face a range of challenges, from outdated resources and grammar-translation methods to the absence of authentic communicative environments. These obstacles hinder the development of essential skills such as speaking, listening, and fluency, while also reducing student motivation. Since language teaching is a process that requires patience, responsibility, and perseverance, the teacher must always find ways to solve problems during this process. The best support for learners is to teach them by helping them learn from their mistakes and to keep them constantly motivated. In this way, students will begin to learn with patience, confidence, and enthusiasm. At this point, the methods used by the teacher play a highly significant role. In the modern era, language learning has become more accessible because both teachers and students use technological tools to learn new ideas and apply them in practice. Role play, discussions, and other methods suggested by the teacher make lessons more engaging and memorable.

Declarations

Author's Responsibility- The author declares full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and academic integrity of the article.



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