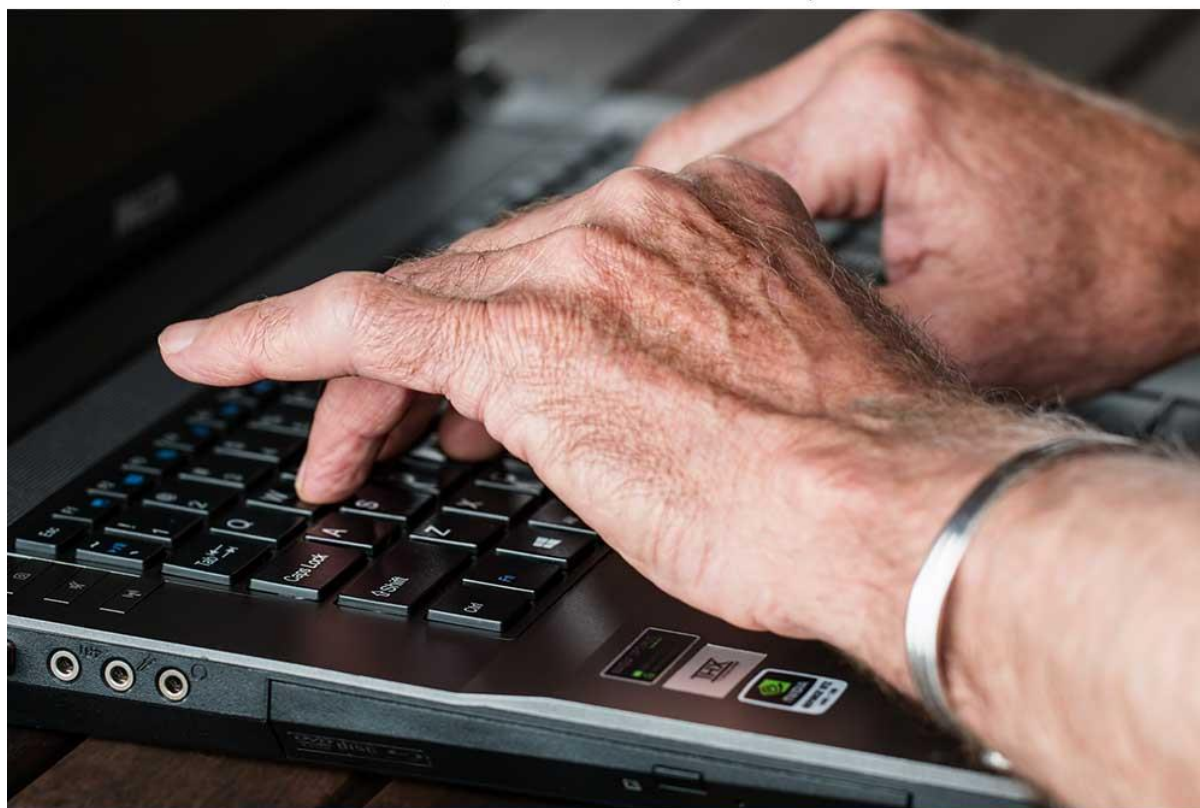


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"Open Up Your World of Opportunity by Learning English Efficiently"

Some Basic Points for The Non-Native Speakers of The English Language To Begin.

Abstract

Language is an integral part of human life like the air we breathe. It is the main means of communication. Quite early in life, we start imbibing automatically the language of the community in which we grow up without our being aware of the complexity of its nature and structure. For instance, an English child brought up in Kerala in the linguistic environment of Malayalam will automatically learn to speak Malayalam like a native speaker of Malayalam. That means the language is not genetically transmitted but acquired from the environment. Now the real question comes, what will happen to a Malayali child who is not grown up in the linguistic environment of English, while trying to learn English? To some extent, he can use the language but undoubtedly not like the former one. So here I am going to give some valuable points to the non-native speakers of English to speak and write English efficiently.

Main points

1. Inconsistency of English pronunciation
2. English spelling errors

3. Conclusion

Inconsistency of English pronunciation

Inconsistency of English pronunciation and spelling is a great challenge for a non-native speaker of English. Before starting to learn a language, one should understand the alphabets and speech sounds of that language. Language is a system of symbols primarily of vocal symbols. Our speech is composed of sequences of sounds produced by our vocal organs. Language can be represented using graphic symbols also i.e. in the written form. In the English language, there are 26 alphabets and 44 speech sounds. That means each alphabet has more than one speech sounds. Moreover, there is no one to one correspondence between spelling and pronunciation. If we look at the languages like Malayalam and Hindi, we can see that each letter of the alphabet represents a particular sound. We called such languages as non-inflected language. But this not the thing with the English language. English is an inflected language - one alphabet has more than one speech sounds. Before learning a new language, the understanding of its speech sounds is necessary. The following are the speech sounds of the English language.

Phonetic Symbols (44 Speech Sounds): Vowel Sounds: 20 (12 pure vowels and 8 diphthongs)
and Consonant Sounds: 24

ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

Vowel sounds

EnglishRadar

Consonant sounds

Pure Vowels and Diphthongs

PURE VOWELS			DIPHTHONGS		
S.No.	Phonetic Symbol	Key Words	S.No.	Phonetic Symbols	Key Words
1	ɪ	Feel, meal, seal	1	eɪ	Play, day, take
2	ɪ	Fill, mill, sill	2	aɪ	My, sigh, tie
3	e	Net, set, met	3	əʊ	Go, soak, coke
4	æ	Mat, rat, fat	4	aʊ	Now, shout, vow
5	ɑ:	Car, farm, all	5	ɔɪ	Boy, coil, toy
6	ɒ	Hot, got, shot	6	ɪə	Fear, here, beer
7	ɔ:	Caught, born, sought	7	eə	Pair, rare, share
8	ʊ	Pull, book, bush	8	ʊə	Poor, cure, tour
9	u:	Pool, rule, tool			
10	ʌ	Cut, null, dull			
11	ɜ:	Girl, dirt, firm			
12	ə	About, ago, China			

Consonants

<u>S.No.</u>	<u>Phonetic Symbol</u>	<u>Key Words</u>	<u>S.No.</u>	<u>Phonetic Symbols</u>	<u>Key Words</u>
1	p	Pat, pit, pull	13	s	Sill, sat, sun
2	b	Bat, bill, bull	14	z	Zip, zeal, zero
3	t	Tap, tin, tone	15	ʃ	Sugar, shoe, show
4	d	Done, din, dog	16	ʒ	Vision, pleasure, measure
5	k	Kite, king, car	17	m	Man, male, mill
6	g	Gun, gate, goal	18	n	Not, nail, know
7	tʃ	Chair, charm, chin	19	ŋ	Thing, dung, bang
8	dʒ	Judge, jar, gin	20	h	Hall, how, hen
9	f	Fan, fill, phone	21	l	Low, line, lane
10	v	Van, vine, vote	22	r	Road, ram, rug

11	θ	Think, thank, thin	23	w	Water, win, won
12	ð	The, this, then	24	j	Yes, you, yolk

Because of the 26 letters but 44 speech sounds in the English language, there is no interdependence between the spelling and pronunciation of words; as a result spelling or letters can be pronounced in more than one way. Letters are the marks of sound, the first element of written language. Here are the letters or single characters: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z. and the Compound characters (distinct sounds): ch, sh, th, ng

Vowels and Consonants: The letters are of two kinds, vowels, and consonants. The letters, *a, i, o, u, y* represent vowel sounds. These vowel-letters can make many different sounds.

- The vowel letter- '*a*' makes different sounds such as:

mat - /mæt/ lane - /leɪn/ calm - /kɑ:m/ any - /'eni/
tall - /tɔ:l/ watch - /wɒtʃ/ sofa - /'səʊ.fə/

- The vowel letter '*e*' sounds as follows:

met - /mɛt/ met - /met/ her - /hər/
clerk - /klɑ:k/ pretty - /prɪtɪ/

- The vowel letter '*i*' sounds as follows:

sit - /sɪt/ mind - /maɪnd/ police - /pəli:s/

- The vowel letter '*o*' sounds as follows:

note - /nəʊt/ rot - /rɒt/ move - /mu:v/
woman - /wʊmən/ women - /wɪmɪn/ money - /mʌni/

- The vowel letter '*u*' sounds as follows:

truth - /tru:θ/ but - /bʌt/ bush - /bʊʃ/ busy - /bɪzi/

- The vowel letter '*y*' sounds as follows:

chyle - /kaɪl/ synonym - /sɪn ə nɪm/ pity - /pɪt i/

The consonant-letters of the alphabet represent the 24 consonant sounds (RP) which are shown with the help of phonetic symbols (IPA) in the following table:

Consonant-letters and their corresponding sounds

Articulators (Manner)	VOICED			VOICELESS		
	Alphabet-Letter(s)	Phonetic Symbol	Examples	Alphabet-Letter(s)	Phonetic Symbol	Examples
Plosives/ stops	b	/b/	bull	p	/p/	pull
	d	/d/	din	t	/t/	tin
	g	/g/	goat, gun	k, c	/k/	king, coat
Affricates	j, g	/dʒ/	judge, gin	ch, tu	/tʃ/	chair, nature
Fricatives	v	/v/	van, vote	f, ph, gh	/f/	fan, phone, tough
	th	/ð/	then, this	th	/θ/	thin, thank
	z, s	/z/	zip, rose	s, c	/s/	sill, cell
	sio, su	/ʒ/	vision, pleasure	s, sh, sio, tio, ch	/ʃ/	sugar, show, mission, motion, chef
				h	/h/	hall, hat
Nasals	n, ng	/ŋ/	bank, thing,	m	/m/	man, moon
				n	/n/	nose, net
Lateral				l	/l/	late, line
Semi-vowels	w	/w/	win, wall	y	/j/	yes, young,
Frictionless continuant	r	/r/	rate, run			

English spelling errors

There are many common spelling errors made by non-native speakers of the English language. According to the applied linguist Vivian James Cook, there are four main types of spelling errors made by a non -native speakers of the English language;

1. Omission= the deletion of same letters.
2. Substitution=replacing one letter with another
3. Insertion = adding extra letters.
4. Transposition= reversing the position of letters

Examples of spelling errors

Type of error	Examples	Actual Word
Insertion	Amaizing	Amazing
	Bullding	Building
	Spaicy	Spicy
Omission	Indan	Indian
	Unversity	University
	Conflict	Conflict
Substitution	Stady	Study
	Compere	Compare
	Gatecories	Categories
Transposition	Beutifual	Beautiful
	Natrual	Natural
	Chinees	Chinese

Study the following consonant sounds: - some common spelling patterns based on letters or groups of letters.

- The letter ‘C’ sounds

(a) hard like /**k**/, when it is followed by *a, o, u* as in *case, coat, cut*, and soft like /**s**/, before *e, i, y* as in *cell, circle, cylinder*. (b) at the end of words it is always hard like /**k**/, as in *public*, and before the vowels, *e, i*, the syllable slides into the sound of /**ʃ**/ as in *cetaceous, gracious, social*.

- The letter string- ‘Ch’ is heard the sound of /**tʃ**/ in words of English origin, as in *chip, chain*; the sound of /**ʃ**/ in some words of French origin, *machine, parachute*; and some words of Greek origin, the sound of /**k**/, as in *chaos, chorus*.
- The letter string- ‘Sc’ is pronounced like /**sk**/, before *a, o, u, r* as in *scale, scoff, sculpture, scribe* and it is soft /**s**/, before *e, i, y*, as in *scene, science, scythe*.
- The letter ‘G’ has two sounds hard /**g**/ and soft /**dʒ**/, (a) always it’s hard sound before *a, o, u*, as in *gate, got, gum*, and before *e, i, y*, it has the same hard sound in some words like, *get, gear, give, gynaecology*. (b) the soft sound /**dʒ**/ is also heard as in the words, *gem, giant, gym, age, general*. All these varieties of pronunciation are to be learnt only by practice, observation, and a dictionary.
- The letter string- ‘Gh’ sounds like /**f**/, as in *laugh, cough*, or silent as in *bought, light*.
- The letter string- ‘Ph’ also sounds like /**f**/, as in *phone, philosophy*, except in the word, *Stephen*, where it sounds like /**v**/, as in *of, move*.

- The letter string- 'Ng'- is a nasal sound of /ŋ/ , as in *English, sing, bang*.
- The letter string- 'Th'- produces two different sounds, /ð/ as in *then* and /θ/ as in *thin*

Study the following vowel sounds.

Cruttenden, in 1994, noted that the inconsistency of English vowels cause difficulties for other language learners of English e.g. if we take for instance 'o' in some words like some, move, home, women, in each word it has different pronunciation as /ʌ/, /u:/, /əu/, /i/ so the English learners who don't have the mastery of the pronunciation of such words will also face difficulties. On the other hand words such as book, butcher, could, wolf etc. in all these words the letters oo, u, ou, o are all pronounced the same /u:/, so in the first example we have same letters with different pronunciation, and in the other one we have different letters with the same pronunciation. For more examples of the different pronunciations of the letter 'a' consider water, same, fat, the letter (a) has three different pronunciations, as /ɔ:/, /ei/, /æ/ so many of the non-native speakers of English tend to pronounce /ei/ instead of /æ/ e.g. /feit/ for /fæt/. Also in words such as rich, symbol, English, private, women the letters i, y, e, a, o all of them are pronounced as /i/ so we have /ritʃ/, /simbl/, /ɪŋɡlɪʃ/, /praɪvɪt/, /wɪmɪn/. Each of the letters we use to show pronunciation may stand for more than one sound for instance, in banana /bəna:nə/, bathers /beɪðə(r)/, man /mæn/, many /meni/, the letter (a) stands for five different vowel sounds; if the learner has no knowledge about this inconsistency, this will lead him to wrong pronunciation (O'Connor, 2003).

Conclusion

There is no single most excellent way of learning foreign languages. The following are some of the ways we can use to learn a foreign language;

1. Learning should focus on both recognition and production i.e. the learners could recognize the pronunciation errors and correct them.

2. Teaching English through phonetic sounds, and it should start from the pre-primary section onwards.
3. Pre-primary teachers should be trained for teaching phonetic sounds correctly.
4. Keep a copy of the English phonetic-meaning dictionary.
5. Computers and language teaching should go hand to hand. Learning with technology can be taken as an effective tool for getting fluency in a foreign language.

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