

PROBLEMS FACED BY TEENAGERS WHEN LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: Purpose. *The aim of this study is to highlight the major problems teenagers face when learning a foreign language and to analyze the factors contributing to these challenges.*

Method. *A qualitative analysis was carried out based on observations of language learning practices and a review of the existing literature on teenage language acquisition difficulties.*

Result. *The findings reveal that teenagers commonly struggle with motivation, anxiety, peer pressure, limited exposure, and traditional teaching methods. Interference from their native language and cognitive overload also pose significant barriers.*

Conclusion. *Addressing these challenges through supportive teaching, relevant materials, and practical exposure can significantly improve language learning outcomes for teenagers.*

Introduction

Learning a foreign language is a complex and challenging process for many teenagers. As young individuals step into the world of foreign languages, they encounter various psychological, social, linguistic, and cultural obstacles that can hinder their progress. One of the fundamental challenges is related to motivation. Teenagers often struggle with maintaining a high level of motivation throughout the language learning journey. At this particular stage of development, they are exposed to various distractions such as social media, entertainment, academic pressure, and personal matters, which can make it difficult to consistently focus on language acquisition. As a result, their enthusiasm may quickly fade, and their progress may slow down. Another significant issue is anxiety. Many teenagers experience a fear of making mistakes while speaking or writing in a new language. This fear can grow into language anxiety, which often prevents them from actively participating in classroom activities. Some students become afraid to express their thoughts in front of their classmates, worrying about negative judgment from peers and teachers alike. This lack of confidence and self-doubt makes it difficult for them to practice and improve their speaking and writing skills. Learning a language requires consistent practice, but anxiety and shyness can become major obstacles to achieving fluency.

Main part

The impact of peer pressure is undeniable during teenage years. As teenagers are highly influenced by their peers, a lack of encouragement or even negative attitudes from classmates can severely affect their interest in learning a foreign language. In many cases, teenagers may feel embarrassed if they are perceived as less proficient than others, or they might feel uncomfortable showing enthusiasm if learning has not become a popular trend among their friends. There is also the challenge of constant comparison with classmates, which can result in frustration if one's progress does not match others'. Teenagers often face issues related to the methods and materials used in the classroom. Traditional approaches, which may rely heavily on memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules, can lead to boredom and disengagement. If language lessons are not interactive or aligned with teenagers' interests, they may perceive learning as tedious and irrelevant. Furthermore, outdated textbooks or lack of access to authentic resources can further diminish their motivation and potential for improvement. Modern learners require dynamic, interactive activities that relate to real-life situations, but many educational institutions struggle to provide such materials or adapt to changing trends in language teaching [1].

The influence of a teenager's native language is particularly strong at this stage of life. Interference from the mother tongue often causes difficulties in pronunciation, sentence structure, and word usage. Young learners may subconsciously transfer grammatical patterns from their first language to the foreign language, resulting in errors that can be hard to correct. This interference can also impact listening comprehension, as unfamiliar sounds and intonations in the new language can be difficult to recognize and reproduce. The process of overcoming these deep-rooted habits requires time, patience, and specialized guidance, which may not always be available to every learner. Memory limitations pose another significant challenge. Teenagers face the reality of balancing language acquisition with numerous other academic subjects and extracurricular commitments. Retaining new vocabulary, phrases, and grammar points can become overwhelming, especially when students are expected to memorize large amounts of information within short periods. Over time, this cognitive overload may reduce the willingness to study and lead to superficial learning, where understanding is replaced by rote memorization and rapid forgetting [2].

The role of the teacher is a crucial factor that can either facilitate or hinder language learning for teenagers. Effective teaching requires patience, adaptability, and understanding of students' individual needs. If teachers are unable to empathize with the difficulties that teenagers face, or if they rely too much on punitive or critical approaches, students may lose interest or develop negative attitudes towards the language. On the other hand, enthusiastic and supportive teachers can inspire teenagers to persist despite difficulties and challenges. Teacher-student rapport, clear communication, and constructive feedback all contribute to a positive learning environment in which teenagers feel valued and understood. The amount of exposure to the target language outside the classroom also plays a vital role in language

acquisition. Teenagers often have limited opportunities to practice speaking, listening, and reading in the foreign language beyond school settings. The absence of immersive language environments makes it hard for them to apply what they have learned in practical, real-world situations. This lack of exposure potentially slows down their language development and keeps them confined to the theoretical aspects of the language rather than enabling true communicative competence [3].

Technological advancements present both opportunities and challenges for teenagers learning a foreign language. While access to online resources and language learning applications can enhance the learning experience, the sheer abundance of materials available can be overwhelming. Without proper guidance, teenagers may become lost among various platforms, unsure which resources are most effective or appropriate for their level. Additionally, the frequent use of social media and instant messaging in their native language may reduce the likelihood of consistent practice in the foreign language. Parental involvement is another influencing factor. The support, encouragement, or lack thereof from parents plays a major role in shaping teenagers' attitudes towards foreign language learning. Parents who actively participate in their children's language development, show interest, and create opportunities for practice at home generally foster a more conducive environment for language mastery. However, many teenagers do not receive such support, possibly due to parents' busy work schedules, lack of language knowledge themselves, or limited awareness of the importance of multilingualism. The broader educational system can also present obstacles. In some cases, foreign language education is not given sufficient importance or is introduced too late in the curriculum. Large class sizes reduce the possibility of individual attention, and the focus on exam preparation often overshadows the communicative aspects of language learning. When success is measured solely by test results, teenagers may prioritize memorizing grammar rules over real-world language use, which limits their ability to communicate effectively in authentic situations. Cultural differences present another dimension of complexity. Language and culture are deeply connected, and understanding cultural nuances is an essential part of language proficiency. Teenagers may find it difficult to adapt to cultural expectations, norms, and values embodied in a foreign language, which influences the appropriateness and effectiveness of their communication. Lack of cultural awareness can lead to misunderstandings, discomfort, or misinterpretation of meaning, further complicating the language learning process [4].

The process of developing skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing requires substantial time and persistence. However, modern teenagers may struggle with time management due to the pressures of school, hobbies, and personal responsibilities. Balancing language learning with other commitments is often difficult, and teenagers may not be able to allocate sufficient time for consistent practice and improvement. This intermittent effort can cause them to plateau at a certain level and prevent them from achieving greater fluency or mastery. Another obstacle is related to assessment and evaluation. Standardized tests and

grades are used to measure progress, but they might not accurately reflect a teenager's comprehensive abilities in real-life communication. The emphasis on correct answers and formal structures may discourage creative or spontaneous use of language. When students focus solely on satisfying exam requirements, they may miss the broader purpose of language learning, which is successful and meaningful communication [5].

The emotional development of teenagers adds another layer of complexity to language learning. Adolescents undergo rapid psychological and emotional changes that shape their attitudes, self-esteem, and willingness to engage in challenging activities. Emotional fluctuations can influence their approach to language learning, making it a non-linear process with periods of progress and regression. Emotional support and encouragement from teachers, peers, and family members are essential for sustaining motivation and resilience throughout this journey.

Conclusion

In conclusion, teenagers face a multitude of challenges when learning a foreign language, ranging from personal and psychological obstacles to systemic and environmental factors. Each individual's journey is influenced by a unique combination of motivation, self-confidence, teaching methods, curriculum design, availability of resources, and social support. Overcoming these barriers requires a comprehensive approach that addresses not only language skills but also the emotional, cognitive, and social needs of young learners. Encouragement from teachers, peers, and family, along with learner-centered instruction and meaningful real-world practice, can significantly enhance teenagers' ability to master a foreign language. By recognizing and addressing the diverse issues faced by teenagers, educators and policymakers can create more effective and engaging language learning experiences that nurture students' confidence, proficiency, and appreciation for the richness of foreign languages and cultures.

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