

THE CURIOUS CASE OF ENGLISH: HOW LINGUISTIC PECULIARITIES CHALLENGE LEARNERS AND TEACHERS

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Annotation. English is a language that is well known for its extent, as well as its exceptions. Silent letters, unpredictable verbs, and idioms that perplex native speakers as well - the language is rich in exceptions to common sense. English's most prominent idiosyncrasies are explored in this article with regard to how they affect second-language learners. Drawing on historical, phonological, grammatical, and cultural contexts, the article argues that while as rich and flexible as the English language's idiosyncrasies are, they also demand more sensitive pedagogies.

Keywords: English language, irregular grammar, pronunciation challenges, idiomatic language, second-language acquisition, teaching strategies.

Annotatsiya. Ingliz tili o'z ichiga qator o'ziga xos xususiyatlarni olgan til bo'lib, bu xususiyatlar o'qituvchilar va o'quvchilar uchun katta qiyinchiliklarga sabab bo'ladigan xususiyatlardir. Mazkur maqolada ingliz tili o'ziga xosliklarining lisoniy o'ziga xosliklari, ayniqsa bu o'ziga xoslikning ikkinchi tilni o'rganayotgan o'quvchilar uchun ta'sirlari bor yoki yo'qligi hisob qiilinadi. Ingliz tilidagi o'zgaruvchanlikning fonologik sabablari va tarixiy sabablari, o'quvchilarning vujudga keladigan qiyinchiliklari va ularni yengish uchun pedagogik strategiyalari tahlillanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Ingliz tili, lisoniy o'ziga xosliklar, noto'g'ri grammatika, talaffuzdagi qiyinchiliklar, ikkinchi tilni o'rganish, ta'lim strategiyalari.

Introduction

A Language Full of Surprises For anyone who has tried to learn English on the fly, one discovers that the language is full of surprises. Rules are in place only to be broken. Spelling is unpredictable, pronunciation unclear, and common sayings difficult to interpret. English can be the universal key to communication, but it is not always a straightforward code to crack. These idiosyncrasies, stemming from the history and ongoing evolution of the language, present unique challenges for the learner as well as the teacher.

The idiosyncrasies of English begin with its history. English is a language patchwork unlike most other languages, which developed alone, largely in isolation. The Old English basis was heavily influenced by Norse in the Viking raids and later transformed again by Norman French after 1066. Latin also influenced it heavily, particularly in learned and religious terms (Crystal, 2003). English thus has a number of words to describe one idea, each with subtle distinctions—ask, inquire, and interrogate, say—depending on tone, formality,

and situation. This double coverage by vocabulary gives expressiveness to English, but complicates the task of learning to spell without background or contextual knowledge.

English spelling is notoriously unpredictable. Compared with Spanish or Italian, in which letters stand generally for stable sounds, English spelling can be maddening. Why does knight start with a soundless "k"? Why then, however, and bough all end in "-ough" but don't sound the same? It is because of the reluctance of the language to alter its spelling system when the sounds changed. Through the Great Vowel Shift that occurred around 1400 to 1600, the pronunciations of most vowels changed. Yet the spelling stayed very much the same as it had been previously (Aitchison, 2012). For students, this means that there are no reliable rules for pronunciation. Instead, they must be taught word spellings and sounds individually—an exercise that requires practice, practice, and exposure. Pronunciation Pitfalls English is not a predictable language when it comes to the relationship between letters and sounds. English has more vowel sounds than it has vowel letters, and words that look similar can sound quite different. Moreover, intonation and stress can completely turn around the meaning of a sentence. Consider the sentence "I never said she stole my book." Stressed differently on each occasion, it alters the implication. They not only need to acquire vocabulary and grammar but also need to listen to stress, pitch, and rhythm — something that is hardly done in first language courses. Also, the sounds /θ/ in think or /ð/ in this do not exist in most other languages. Pupils tend to replace them with sounds that are similar in their own languages, which may lead to perpetual pronunciation errors (Jenkins, 2015).

On the surface, English grammar does not look too complex. There are virtually no noun genders, and verb conjugation is straightforward enough compared to, say, French or Russian. But that seeming simplicity is misleading. English has many irregular verbs: go – went – gone, buy – bought – bought, bring – brought – brought. The plurals such as mouse – mice or tooth – teeth do not show one single pattern. Modal verbs and conditionals make it even harder to learn, normally requiring learners to distinguish between very subtle shades of mood and probability. And then there are phrasal verbs—turn on, give up, look into—which are entirely different in meaning based on the added preposition. These phrases usually do not literally convey anything and must be memorized in blocks.

Idioms are perhaps the most mysterious part of English. They are highly culture-bound, and tend to imply meanings quite other from a literal take on their words. Idioms such as "raining cats and dogs" or "hit the sack" leave students stumped if interpreted literally word for word. Idioms swiftly evolve with the passage of time and carry distinct implications in distinct nations where English is spoken. These expressions bring variety to the language but need intimate context knowledge and to be steeped in cultures in order to learn to use them effectively.

English is not a single standard language but a collection of dialects and variations. British, American, Australian, Indian, and Nigerian English each have their own vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation standards. This can be liberating but also confusing to learners.

Knowing English's idiosyncrasies is essential to teaching language effectively. Maybe memorizing rules won't be enough in a language that's full of exceptions. Instead, teaching should emphasize exposure, contextual use, and critical thinking. Adding real materials—films, news articles, podcasts—and having students watch for patterns can be a means of building deeper understanding. Educators also must legitimate student frustration over irregularities and offer comfort and strategies for managing confusion. A good student learns not to fight the disorder, but rather to expect it, accommodate it, and even enjoy it.

English is a language of paradoxes—direct on the surface but full of inconsistencies. They are a result of its mixed and chaotic history, and although they provide English with a dynamism and adaptability which no other language has, they complicate it for learning as well. Becoming skilled in English for learners then means not just acquiring words and rules of grammar but also acclimatising oneself to accepting exceptions and doubt. For teachers, it therefore means taking itself beyond the teaching of rules and adopting procedures that reflect the complexity of the language. In the end, English's quirks are all part of what make it such an engaging—and sometimes infuriating—language to study.

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