

## English as an Additional Language

Children who come to Dolphin School with English as an additional language tend to flourish in our friendly and welcoming small classes where they have plenty of opportunities to hear and speak English. All Dolphin pupils have frequent conversations with members of staff and therefore children learning English have ample opportunities to benefit from excellent native speaker models. Our daily reading sessions for children of all ages also give them an opportunity to read to an adult outside of lesson times. Dolphin School has a very positive attitude towards foreign language learning and all of our children from Nursery to Year 8 learn one or more languages as part of their curriculum. This means that learning a language is seen by children and staff to be a very natural part of school life and so they are all ready to help those learning English as they can empathise with a fellow language learner. Every year we mark the European Day of Languages where language diversity across our school, country and continent is celebrated by a variety of whole school events.

Reviewed: January 2019

Next review: January 2022

### Summary of differences between English and other languages

#### English and Russian

Grammar - Verb/Tense: Russian and English convey meaning through the verb systems in different ways. The Russian system is based in the concept of *aspect*: actions are either completed or not completed. This is shown by appending affixes to the verb stem. There are few auxiliary verbs (I **have** played, I **am** going, I **do** think). This contrasts with English which has progressive (I am playing, I have been thinking) and perfect tense forms (I have played), and avoids the need for affixation (making new words by adding to a word e.g. nation – nation-al) or inflection (complex conjugation of verbs) by the extensive use of auxiliaries.

These differences result in problems in many areas. For example beginning learners often omit the auxiliary in questions or negatives: *How you do that? / I no have it*. The present simple is commonly used where the progressive form or perfect is needed: *She has bath now / How long are you in Germany?* In comparison with Russian the modal verb system in English is very complex. Mistakes such as *Must you to work on Friday? / I will not can come*, etc. are common among beginners. The lack of a basic linking verb such as the verb *to be* in Russian leads to errors such as *She good teacher*.

Grammar - Other: Russian has no articles. This causes significant problems because the whole concept of article use is alien to Russian learners of English, and the English article system itself is extremely complex. All Russian nouns are one of three genders. This results in problems such as: *Have you seen my book? I put her on the table*.

Russian has variable stress patterns, as English. However Russian learners may give undue prominence to words that English native speakers would swallow; for example *as* and *has* in the following sentences: *He's as strong as an ox / She has 3 brothers*.

Russian learners may ask questions with falling instead of rising intonation, which does not sound polite to English native speakers.

## English and Finnish

Although Finland is often bracketed together with Sweden, Denmark and Norway, its language is entirely different. Finnish is part of the Finno-Urgic branch of the Uralic language family. As such it is related to Hungarian and Estonian. This means that there are no cognates (words that are the same) to help Finnish learners of English.

The Finnish and English sound systems are quite different. Finnish has a sound pattern called *vowel harmony*, in which front vowels cannot appear in the same word as back vowels. English words such as *phoning* or *yellow* that contain a combination of both types of vowel can be fairly difficult for Finnish learners. Other vowel problems include the failure to discriminate the short and long vowel sounds in words such as *sit-seat* / *pip-peep*.

Finnish invariably places primary stress on the first syllable of a word. This is in stark contrast to English, which has fairly unpredictable stress patterns. It is not surprising, therefore, that beginning learners may fail to make themselves understood even if the grammar and vocabulary of their message is correct. Finnish intonation is typically falling. This can make it difficult for them to produce the rising tone of English questions.

Finnish is an agglutinative language. This means, for example, that verbs show tense change by successive addition of suffixes. This is in contrast to English, which makes heavy use of auxiliary verbs. This fundamental difference often results in Finnish beginners having trouble forming questions or negatives in English.

Finnish does not have a progressive verb form, leading to mistakes such as: *I watched television when they arrived.* (correct = *was watching*). In general, Finnish uses its tenses to express similar meanings as the corresponding tenses in English. For example, the present perfect and past perfect tenses are used in much the same way in the two languages. One difference is the use in Finnish of the present tense to talk about the future, where English speakers would use the auxiliary *will*. This leads to mistakes such as: *I tell him when I see him.*

Finnish uses tone a lot to convey meaning and does not require the position of an element to convey meaning as in English. This can lead to errors in the structure of the English sentences that Finnish learners write, particularly the positioning of adverbials and the order of words in the subordinate clauses of reported speech.

There are two further areas of difference that may result in negative transfer. Firstly, Finnish does not have separate pronouns for *he* and *she*. Beginning Finnish learners may cause confusion by mixing these up in spoken or written English. Secondly, Finnish does not use the definite or indefinite article, so mistakes in this aspect of English are common.

Since politeness in Finnish is often conveyed by tone and use of the appropriate pronoun rather than through words such as *please* or expressions such as *Would you be so kind as to ..* , Finnish learners may seem a little abrupt in English conversation.

## English and French

French is an Indo-European language and part of the Romance family. The English language was strongly influenced by the introduction of French at the time of the Norman Conquest. As a result the two languages

share many grammatical features and contain many cognates. The big problem, however, is the significant number of false friends. Here are just a few examples. The French word is listed first, followed by the correct English equivalent: *cave / cellar; isolation / insulation; demander / ask; sensible / sensitive; ignorer / not know; librairie / bookshop.*

The French alphabet pronounces some letters in a similar way to English but for different letters, therefore beginners commonly write **i** when the teacher says **e** or **g** when they hear an English **j**.

A typical pronunciation problem is the inability to correctly articulate the vowel sounds in minimal pairs such as *ship / sheep, live / leave, full / fool*. Because the tip of the tongue is not used in speaking French, learners often have problems with words containing the letters *th (/θ/ /ð/)*, such as *then, think* and *clothes*. Another common feature is the omission of the /h/ sound at the beginning of words. This sound does not exist in French and leads to problems such as *'Ave you 'eard about 'arry?*, or overcompensation by pronouncing the /h/ in words like *hour, honour*.

A typical problem is the wrong choice of tense. The French do not have our progressive tenses and therefore find their use complex. French is also very logical in its use of tenses so an action started in the past and continuing will be rendered in the present tense (*I live in London since last year*) and an action that cannot be completed until another action in the future has taken place will also be rendered in the future (*I will tell you as soon as I will know*).

Because French does not use the auxiliary *do*, learners may have problems in asking questions. For example, they may simply make a statement and use question intonation: *He is rich?*, or they may invert subject and verb: *How often see you her?*

## English and Hindi/Urdu

Hindi is the major language of India. Linguistically and in its everyday spoken form Hindi is virtually identical to Urdu. The two languages are often jointly referred to as Hindustani. The differences between them are Urdu is written in a form of Arabic script, Hindi is written left to right in a script called *Devangari*. Furthermore, much Urdu vocabulary derives from Persian / Arabic, while Sanskrit is the major supplier of Hindi words. Most of what is listed applies to both Hindi and Urdu .

One pronunciation difficulty is distinguishing phonemes in words such as *said / sad; par / paw; vet / wet*, etc. Words containing the letters *th (this, thing, months)* will cause Hindi learners problems too. The **s** in *pleasure* is missing in Hindi and so pronunciation of such words is difficult. Consonant clusters at the beginning or end of words are rarer in Hindi. This leads to errors in the pronunciation of words such as *straight (istraight), fly (faly), film (filam)*.

Hindi learners have considerable difficulty with the irregular stress patterns of words such as **photograph / photographer**. Hindi learners are disinclined to 'swallow' unstressed syllables such as the first syllables in the words *tomorrow, intelligent, remember*, etc., and will often try to clearly articulate short, common words that are usually weakly stressed in English: *has, and, was, to*, etc. In Hindi emphasis is accomplished by higher pitch rather than by the heavier articulation that typifies English. The result of this is the sing-song effect that English spoken by Hindi learners often has on native-English speakers.

Hindi has tenses that are similar to those used in English: present simple, past continuous, etc., but there is a lack of correspondence in their use to express various meanings. This leads to the very common overuse by Hindi learners of the present continuous when in English the present simple is required: *I am always playing golf on Sundays. / I am not knowing the answer.*

Since Hindi does not have the auxiliary *do*, learners find forming questions difficult other than by using intonation : *She has a brother?* Hindi typically uses a subjunctive in polite requests, which have the word order of statements rather than questions. Interference results in problematic requests such as: *You will tell me the time please*, or *You may lend me your dictionary*.

There is no definite article in Hindi, and the number *one* is commonly used where in English the indefinite article is needed.

There are two aspects of word order that are different in Hindi and English. Firstly, the standard word order is in Hindi **Subject-Object-Verb** as against **Subject-Verb-Object** in English. Hindi native-speakers also have problems with the correct choice of the English preposition itself. Mistakes such as *They were sitting on (at) the table* are typical.

## English and Spanish

Spanish is a Romance language and part of the Indo-European language family with English which results in a number of cognates and false friends.

Spanish uses the Latin alphabet, but beginning Spanish students may make mistakes with the English vowels *a*, (Spanish *e*) *e* (Spanish *i*), *i* (Spanish *ay*). The consonants *g*, *h*, *j*, *r*, *y*, *z* may also cause trouble, since they have significantly different names in Spanish.

Beginners, however, may be tempted to punctuate questions or exclamations as follows, since this is how it is done in Spanish: *¿What is your name?* / *¡What a goal!* Punctuation of direct speech may also be a problem because quotation marks are not used in Spanish.

It is generally said that European Spanish speakers find English pronunciation harder than speakers of any other European language. Spanish learners may have great difficulty in producing or even perceiving the various English vowel sounds. Specific problems include the failure to distinguish the sounds in words such as *ship/sheep*, *taught/tot*, *fool/full* or *cart/cat/cut*. They may have problems in the following aspects:

- failure to pronounce the end consonant accurately or strongly enough ; e.g. *cart* for the English word *card* or *brish* for *bridge* or *thing* for *think*
- problems with the /v/ in words such as *vowel* or *revive*
- difficulties in distinguishing words such as *see/she* or *jeep/sheep/cheap*
- the tendency to prefix words beginning with a consonant cluster on s- with an /ε/ sound; so, for example, *school* becomes *eschool* and *strip* becomes *estrip*
- the swallowing of sounds in other consonant clusters; examples: *next* becomes *nes* and *instead* becomes *istead*.

Meaning or information usually conveyed in English by the combination of stress, pitch and rhythm in a sentence is flattened or evened out by the Spanish learner making comprehension difficult.

The major problem for the Spanish learner is that there is no one-to-one correspondence in the use of the tenses. So, for example, a Spanish learner might incorrectly use a simple tense instead of a progressive or a future one: *She has a shower* instead of *She's having a shower*; *I help you after school* instead of *I'll help you after school*. Problematic for beginners is the formation of interrogatives or negatives in English. The absence of an auxiliary in such structures in Spanish may cause learners to say: *Why you say that?* / *Who he saw?* / *Do you saw him?* / *I no see him.* / *I not saw him.*

A specific problem concerns the spelling of English words with double letters. Spanish has only 3 double-letter combinations *cc*, *ll*, *rr*. English, in comparison, has 5 times as many. Spanish learners often reduce English double letters to a single one, or overcompensate by doubling a letter unnecessarily; for example *hopping* for *hoping*.

## English and Hebrew

Hebrew is a Semitic language in the Afro-Asiatic family, and shares many features with Arabic. It is therefore from a completely different language family to English and so there are no cognates despite the borrowing of many words into Modern Hebrew. The significant differences in the writing systems impair the possibility of recognizing English/Hebrew cognates when reading.

Hebrew is written horizontally from right to left, like Arabic. Books open to what, for English native speakers, would be the last page. Since the basic Hebrew alphabet does not consist of vowels, it is not surprising that some Hebrew learners of English omit them when beginning to write English. Beginners may also have problems following the words from left to right as they read.

The lack of discrimination in Hebrew between long and short vowels results in the familiar problem of correctly pronouncing English words such as *ship/sheep* or *bit/beat*. As with many learners of English, Hebrew native speakers struggle with the (/θ/ /ð/) sounds, such as in the words *then*, *think* and *clothes*. They may also have difficulties with the /w/ and /v/ sounds, pronouncing *vine* as *wine*, or vice versa.

Hebrew usually stresses the last or penultimate syllable in a word. This contrasts with English where syllable-stress is much more random. This may lead to Israeli students using intonation patterns that mark them as non-native speakers of English.

Hebrew verb grammar is similar to English in that it has past, present and future tenses, conditionals, imperatives and infinitives. There are some minor differences, however, than can lead to incorrect English verb use. For example, Hebrew does not use the copula *to be* in the present tense as in English, so beginners may say sentences such as *I happy today!*

Hebrew word order is more flexible than the rigid **Subject-Verb-Object** syntax of the English language. Written and spoken Hebrew sentences will often start with the verb, followed by the subject. Adjectives generally come after the noun they modify.

Hebrew has no indefinite article, and use of the definite article does not coincide exactly with English usage. This results in typical mistakes such as *Do you have dog?*

## English and Portuguese

Portuguese is a Romance language and part of the Indo-European language family like English so there are cognates and false friends of which we must be aware. Here are just a few of the many that wait to trap the Portuguese learner of English: *parents* <> *parentes* (=relatives) / *familiar* <> *familiar* (=respectable) / *local* <> *local* (=place).

The following pronunciation issues are common

- failure to distinguish minimal pairs such as *rich/reach*, *pack/puck* or *head/had*

- inaudibility of unstressed vowels at the end of a word, e.g., *part* (for *party*)
- problems with diphthongs such as in *hear/hair*
- the inclusion of vowel sounds before, between or following consonants, e.g., *estrap* (for *strap*) or *monthes* (for *months*)
- nasalization of the final /m/ or /n/, so *ran*, for example, becomes *rang*
- problems with words such as *then*, *think* or *breathe*
- failure to discriminate between words such as *pig/big* or *gale/kale*
- substitution of *ear* for *hear* or *high* for *I*.

Much of the English verb system will be familiar to Portuguese learners since the same features exist in their own language. However, some significant differences exist, which may lead to mistakes of negative transfer. For example, interrogatives in Portuguese are conveyed by intonation. This results in questionable English such as *You like me?* or *He came to school yesterday?* The use of the double negative in Portuguese leads to such errors as *I don't know nothing*.

The main area of difficulty lies in the choice of the appropriate present tense. Mistakes in this area include: *He has a bath .. (= he's having a bath ..) / She is knowing .. (she knows ..) / It is ages since I don't play tennis .. (=It's ages since I have played tennis*. Beginners also make errors in using modal verbs. Sentences such as *I must to go now* are common.

English prepositions are difficult for Portuguese learners since their own language has far fewer, and there is no simple correspondence between those that do exist and their English equivalents. There is a single possessive pronoun for *his/her* which agrees in gender with the item 'possessed'. This can lead to ambiguity in sentences such as: *She's having lunch with his brother (= her brother)*. Personal pronouns, especially direct object pronouns, are often omitted in Portuguese, which gives rise to mistakes such as *I told (=I told him)*. There is only one question tag in Portuguese, in contrast to English which has several different ones depending on the tense and form of the opening words. Errors such as *She's coming tomorrow, isn't it?* are the result.

### English and Dutch

Dutch is part of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family and is, therefore, closely related to English. Cognates abound and there are relatively few false friends. Example: *I need some actual information* (the Dutch word *actueel* means *current, up-to-date*).

Mispronunciation of vowel sounds may occur, however, in minimal pairs such as *sit-seat / sit-set / set-sat / not-nut / caught-coat*. Many English words end with voiced consonants, for example /b/ (*rub*) or /d/ (*bird*). This feature does not exist in Dutch, so such words may be pronounced *rup* or *birt*. The English consonant sound /w/ is problematic for some Dutch learners, leading them to say *vine* instead of *wine*. Predictably, the /θ/ and /ð/ sounds are difficult; *think* may be pronounced *sink* or *tink*, and *than* pronounced *dan*.

A common problem for beginners, however, is giving too much stress to words that English speakers swallow; for example: *than* and *but* in the following sentence: *She's taller than her sister but shorter than her mother*.

The Dutch verb system has similar tenses to English and is similarly uninflected. There are differences, however, that may result in negative transfer. For example, Dutch does not use the auxiliary *do* in questions or negatives, so beginners may produce sentences such as: *Where you come from? / I drink not beer*. There is no progressive form in Dutch, leading to errors such as: *I had a bath when he phoned*. The lack of correspondence between the tenses in which certain meanings are expressed in Dutch causes problems. For example, English requires the past simple where Dutch uses the present perfect or the present perfect where Dutch uses the present simple. Mistakes such as the following are common: *I have played tennis yesterday / I am in Germany since 2003*. Similarly, Dutch uses the present simple where English requires the auxiliary *will*: *I meet you at the gate after school*.

Dutch follows the same basic **Subject-Verb-Object** as English but there are many differences in the positioning of adverbials. Furthermore, Dutch shares with German the need to invert subject and verb if an adverbial or other element starts the sentence. Like German, it also sends the verb to the end of the clause after modal verbs or if the clause is subordinate one. Mistakes such as the following are common: *I play often chess with my friend / I play everyday chess / That have I said already / I didn't think that he his homework had done.*

Dutch does not distinguish between adjective and adverb forms, resulting in interference errors such as *She sings very beautiful.*

Differences in conversation conventions may make the Dutch speaker of English seem uninterested or even impolite. For example: *This film is good! - Yes.* (instead of *Yes it is. / Yes, you're right.*)