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INVESTIGATING THE ENGLISH GRAMMAR LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AMONG ELEMENTARY-LEVEL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

English being a secondary language, most of the students feel difficulty in learning English grammar in our schools. Main focus of the study was to identify the difficulties faced by students in learning English grammar and to diagnose the effects of difficulties faced by students on their learning at elementary level as perceived by students. This study was quantitative in nature. A sample size of 80 teachers and 400 students was selected randomly. Two questionnaires on five-point Likert scale were developed. One was for students and second was for teachers. All necessary formalities for data collection were taken into consideration. Data was analyzed by using SPSS Software. Results highlighted that students faced maximum problems in pronunciation of English language and minimum problems in structure of sentences according to the perception of students. On the bases of findings, it is recommended that majority of the students faced pronunciation problems in English language, therefore, practicing teachers should focus on phonetics and phonology in English language teaching. Almost all the categories of students who faced low level of English language learning problems depicted high achievement, so, policy makers should include curriculum regarding effective teaching of English language to minimize students' problems.

INTRODUCTION

To sum up, it can be claimed that instruction should not only encourage beliefs that are backed by the evidence but also aim to strengthen students' capacity to obtain the evidence and judge its sufficiency for themselves. When teaching students how to use their skills, the teacher helps them understand the rationale behind their actions and exhorts them to use their skills in a thoughtful and reflective manner (Alfayad, & Arif, 2017). Teachers anticipate that even if the environment may influence how students behave, they will act in accordance with their ideas of what is appropriate. Instead, then merely teaching kids how

to think, feel, and act, it is crucial to build their ability for rational freedom of choice in order to prepare them for life (Singh, Malik & Singh, 2016).

Teaching has been described by Zhang (2019) as a science to explain "the components of predictability" in instruction and as an art to explain "what constitutes successful instruction." When we consider teaching to be an art, we imagine it to be rich in feelings, emotions, ideals, and zeal and difficult to extrapolate rules, principles, or generalization from. A series of activities referred to as teaching are intended to encourage learning via interpersonal interactions. It fulfils social and professional functions. The ultimate goal of education is a child's development. Being both scientific and artistic in character, teaching is a multifaceted phenomenon.

Teaching as a science to explain "the components of predictability" in instruction and as an art to explain "what constitutes successful instruction." When we consider teaching to be an art, we envision it as being rich in sentiments, feelings, values, and zeal and difficult to extrapolate norms, ideas, or generalizations from (Deem, & Baird, 2020). Humans employ this pattern of behavior to learn new things. You may remember that there have been occasions when you have felt as though you are unable to learn something vital, while using the same strategy as your parents, peers, or teachers have advised. But you eventually succeeded in trying to learn that on your own. It suggests that you might have a unique learning style.

Learning style is the preferred way that a learner assimilates, integrates, comprehends, and retains knowledge. Learning occurs in a variety of ways for different people, including hearing, observing, working alone or with others, using reasoning and intuition, as well as memorizing and visualization. Since everyone is unique, it is crucial for teachers to comprehend how various learners learn in order to incorporate best practices into their daily routines, curricula, and evaluations (Li, 2011).

We can solve issues with the educational processes by having a clear understanding of the nature of the learning process. Therefore, it's crucial to comprehend how people learn if you want to become a competent teacher. Psychologists have different perspectives on how the learning process works. On the other hand, they draw attention to the reality that learning is more or less a permanent adjustment of behavior that comes about as a result of activity training or observation.

When a person engages with the learning scenario, learning occurs that has a clear aim (Ahmed, & Labuan, 2015). There are some circumstances that affect how well students learn. Examples of such influencing factors include the learner's maturity level and the types of curriculum teaching methods. Even though maturation and learning are two distinct processes, both are crucial for a child's healthy development.

The ability to transmit knowledge is one of learning's key qualities. However, the transfer's size varies. Learning cannot be fully transferred from one subject to another. If the context, the process, and the attitudes and ideals are all the

same, the transfer across two situations is conceivable. Learning can be transferred from one subject to another and from the classroom setting to real-world settings. Transfer hence aids in maximizing learning (Hannum, Kong, & Zhang, 2009).

Hu, (2012) states in Teaching of English that "the actual work of mind training is being undertaken in the teaching of class subjects. The tools and weaponry needed to carry out the task of mind training are being created throughout the early English lessons. Language is something we learn over time. This explains the method or approach used to teach language in the classroom. Possibly the greatest human achievement is language. It is a vital study tool for linguists since it provides a thorough and in-depth summary of the research. As a result, the current unit will shed light on several English teaching principles in the school curriculum.

Language serves a variety of purposes that improve communication. It communicates intent, motivation, feelings, and beliefs. Speech sounds and utterances serve as symbols for or symbolize a variety of things, concepts, and events, making language a symbolic system. The only way to avoid being alone in the world and maintain social touch is through it. Language is largely vocal and composed of vocal sounds solely, which are created by the human body's physiological articulatory system.

A youngster learns to speak before they learn to write, and throughout their lifetime, a man speaks considerably more often than he writes (Hu, 2005). A child picks up the language of the social structure in which he or she grows up. Language is a kind of social conduct, and children learn to speak the language of the community in which they are put (Kaplan, & Richard, 2011). The difficulties facing English language instructors in India are significant and obvious. For students to become capable of interacting with one another and obtaining knowledge anywhere in the world. Language teachers in India currently face a variety of obstacles, thus it's important for them to adapt in order to fulfil the demands of daily life.

The majority of the class period will be spent on activities and drills that deal with grammar and pronunciation while using conventional methods. Consequently, it is thought that teaching English is a difficult undertaking (Kirkpatrick, 2011). As a result, in order to successfully teach English in the modern world, English should first and foremost not be viewed as a subject but rather as a tool for communicating with people around the globe. The majority of the class period will be spent on activities and drills that deal with grammar and pronunciation while using conventional methods. These techniques were primarily utilized to improve the fundamental language learning skills of hearing, speaking, reading, and writing; but, because pupils were unable to use their language in real-world situations, listening and speaking skills were neglected (Iskandar, & Heriyawati, 2015).

Language is our main form of communication. Every country has a common language that all of its residents can understand and use, as well as a number of regional tongues. Some languages are spoken by millions of people, while fewer

people speak others (Wei, 2011). Numerous people are able to speak and understand English even outside of nations like the USE and the UK. A billion individuals worldwide are thought to speak English, if you count those who do so as a second language. In addition, there are 27 countries where English is used as a secondary official language, making English the language of 67 nations.

The British Empire grew and governed over numerous nations, including the majority of the ones previously mentioned and many more (Shapiro, 2004). Speaking English means more than just being able to communicate with people who speak it natively because it is extensively used second language. In many corporate and cultural environments that are now dominated by countries that actively supported British imperialism, English is now widely used (Coppola, 2014).

Data was collected personally by the researchers, via registered mail with a return envelope and tickets and via Whatsapp by creating a link to a Google form. To ensure the accuracy of the data, all necessary formalities for data collection were taken into consideration. Data was analyzed by using SPSS Software. The tool diagnosed three components i.e. syntactic component (arrangement of words in a sentence), sematic component (the study of meanings of sentence) and phonetics component (possible sounds of words in a sentence). The detail of data analysis and results is given below:

Table 1. Challenges faced by students during learning grammar as perceived by students.

Challenges	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Syntactic Component	367	2.898	.438
Semantic Component	367	3.715	.775
Phonetics Component	367	3.935	.494
Overall Grammar difficulties	367	3.537	.397

There are multiple aspects in which students can face problems but here three components were considered i.e. syntactic component (arrangement of words in a sentence), sematic component (the study of meanings of sentence) and phonetics component (possible sounds of words in a sentence). Data analysis showed that students faced syntactic problems at lowest level (M=2.898, SD=.438), semantic problems at middle level (M=3.715, SD=.775) and phonetic problems at high level (M=3.935, SD=.494) as perceived by students at elementary level. This highlighted that students faced maximum problems in pronunciation of English language and minimum problems in structure of sentences according to the perception of students.

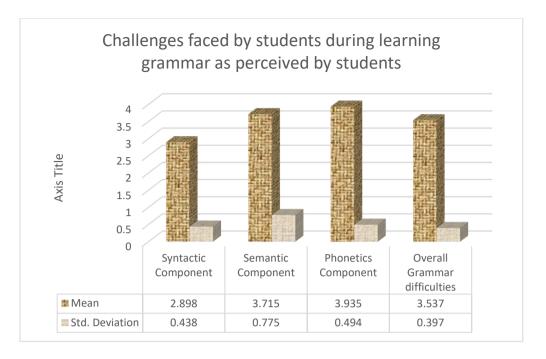


Figure I: Challenges faced by students during learning grammar as perceived by students.

Table 2. Challenges faced by male students during learning grammar as perceived by students.

Challenges		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Syntactic Component		186	2.851	.375
Semantic Component		186	3.683	.777
Phonetics Component		186	3.946	.495
Overall	Grammar	186	3.515	.382
difficulties				

There are multiple aspects in which male students can face problems but here three components were considered i.e. syntactic component (arrangement of words in a sentence), sematic component (the study of meanings of sentence) and phonetics component (possible sounds of words in a sentence). Data analysis showed that male students faced syntactic problems at lowest level (M=2.851, SD=.375), semantic problems at middle level (M=3.683, SD=.777) and phonetic problems at high level (M=3.946, SD=.495) as perceived by students at elementary level. This highlighted that male students faced maximum problems in pronunciation of English language and minimum problems in structure of sentences according to the perception of students.

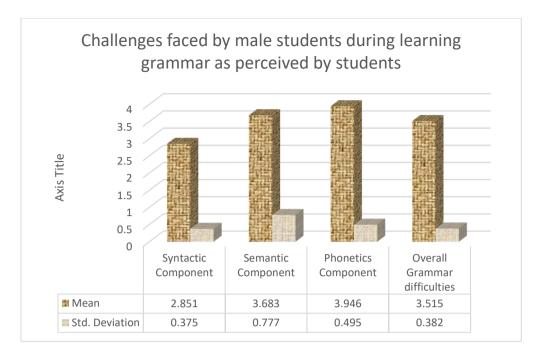


Figure II: Challenges faced by male students during learning grammar as perceived by students.

Table 3. Challenges faced by female students during learning grammar as perceived by students.

Challenges		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Syntactic Component		181	2.946	.491
Semantic Component		181	3.747	.773
Phonetics Component		181	3.923	.494
Overall	Grammar	181	3.559	.411
difficulties				

There are multiple aspects in which female students can face problems but here three components were considered i.e. syntactic component (arrangement of words in a sentence), sematic component (the study of meanings of sentence) and phonetics component (possible sounds of words in a sentence). Data analysis showed that female students faced syntactic problems at lowest level (M=2.851, SD=.375), semantic problems at middle level (M=3.683, SD=.777) and phonetic problems at high level (M=3.946, SD=.495) as perceived by students at elementary level. This highlighted that female students faced maximum problems in pronunciation of English language and minimum problems in structure of sentences according to the perception of students.

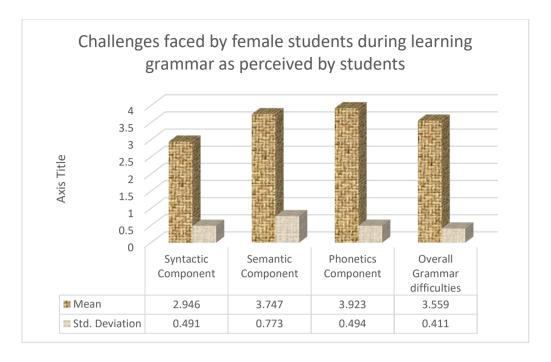


Figure III: Challenges faced by female students during learning grammar as perceived by students.

Table 4. Challenges faced by model town students during learning grammar as perceived by students.

Challenges		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Syntactic Component		250	2.904	.464
Semantic Component		250	3.687	.780
Phonetics Component		250	3.924	.530
Overall	Grammar	250	3.531	.412
difficulties				

There are multiple aspects in which model town students can face problems but here three components were considered i.e. syntactic component (arrangement of words in a sentence), sematic component (the study of meanings of sentence) and phonetics component (possible sounds of words in a sentence). Data analysis showed that model town students faced syntactic problems at lowest level (M=2.904, SD=.464), semantic problems at middle level (M=3.687, SD=.780) and phonetic problems at high level (M=3.924, SD=.530) as perceived by students at elementary level. This highlighted that model town students faced maximum problems in pronunciation of English language and minimum problems in structure of sentences according to the perception of students.

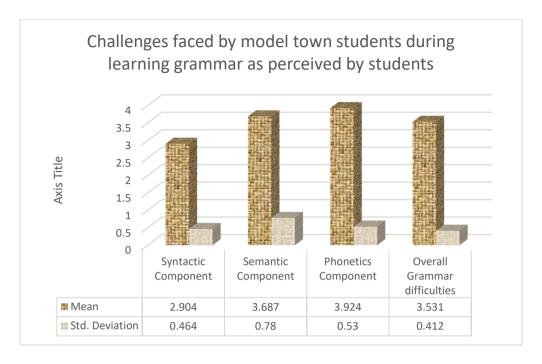


Figure IV: Challenges faced by model town students during learning grammar as perceived by students.

Table 5. Challenges faced by cantonment board students during learning grammar as perceived by students.

Challenges		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Syntactic Component		117	2.885	.377
Semantic Component		117	3.775	.763
Phonetics Component		117	3.958	.407
Overall	Grammar	117	3.550	.362
difficulties				

There are multiple aspects in which cantonment board students can face problems but here three components were considered i.e. syntactic component (arrangement of words in a sentence), sematic component (the study of meanings of sentence) and phonetics component (possible sounds of words in a sentence). Data analysis showed that cantonment board students faced syntactic problems at lowest level (M=2.851, SD=.375), semantic problems at middle level (M=3.683, SD=.777) and phonetic problems at high level (M=3.946, SD=.495) as perceived by students at elementary level. This highlighted that cantonment board students faced maximum problems in pronunciation of English language and minimum problems in structure of sentences according to the perception of students.

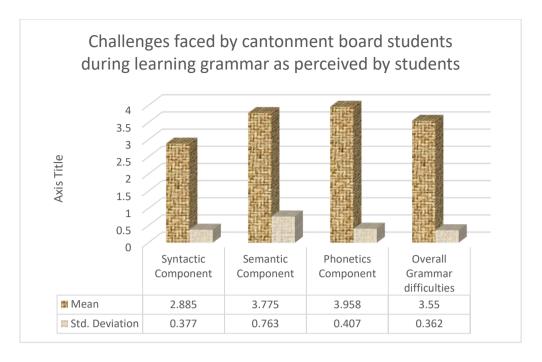


Figure V: Challenges faced by cantonment board students during learning grammar as perceived by students.

Table 6. Effect of syntactic problems on the students' learning of English at elementary level as perceived by students

Marks	Category	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sig.
English subject marks	Low level problems	49	69.184	17.618	.793
	High level problems	318	68.513	16.454	
Total marks	Low level problems	49	572.225	99.281	.037
	High level problems	318	540.383	98.775	

Table indicates effect of syntactic problems faced by students on their learning of English and total marks at elementary level. Syntactic problem (sentence structural) were further divided into two levels as perceived by students i.e. low level syntactic problems and high level syntactic problems. Above results provided a comparison between students' learning who faced low level syntactic problems and students who faced high level syntactic problems. Analysis depicted that students who faced low level syntactic problem have high achievement level in English subject (M = 69.184) as compared to students who faced high level of syntactic problems (M = 68.513) but the difference between both groups was not significant (p = .793) as perceived by students. On the other side, students who faced low level syntactic problem have high achievement level in (M = 572.225) as compared to students who faced high level of syntactic problems (M = 540.383) but the difference between both groups was y significant (p = .037) as perceived by students. So, it can be concluded that

students who faced low level of syntactic problems had high learning achievement as compared to other students who faced high level syntactic problems at elementary level as perceived by students.

Table 7. Effect of syntactic problems on the male students' learning of English at elementary level as perceived by students

Marks	Category		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sig.
English subject marks	Low l problems	level	174	65.713	17.758	.757
	High l problems	level	12	64.583	8.382	
Total marks	Low 1 problems	level	174	612.494	97.389	.298
	High l problems	level	12	588.583	72.896	

Table indicates effect of syntactic problems faced by male students on their learning of English and total marks at elementary level. Syntactic problem (sentence structural) were further divided into two levels as perceived by students i.e. low level syntactic problems and high level syntactic problems. Above results provided a comparison between male students' learning who faced low level syntactic problems and male students who faced high level syntactic problems. Analysis depicted that male students who faced low level syntactic problem have high achievement level in English subject (M = 65.713) as compared to male students who faced high level of syntactic problems (M=64.583) but the difference between both groups was not significant (p=.793) as perceived by students. On the other side, male students who faced low level syntactic problem have high achievement level in (M = 612.494) as compared to male students who faced high level of syntactic problems (M = 588.583) but the difference between both groups was not significant (p=.298) as perceived by students. So, it can be concluded that male students who faced low level of syntactic problems had high learning achievement as compared to other male students who faced high level syntactic problems at elementary level as perceived by students.

Table 8. Effect of syntactic problems on the female students' learning of English at elementary level as perceived by students

Marks	Category	N	Mean	Std.	Sig.
				Dev.	
English subject marks	Low lev	vel 157	75.045	15.439	.252
	1	vel 24	72.792	10.236	
Total marks	Low level problems	vel 157	500.262	81.676	.211
	High lev	vel 24	482.945	58.470	

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problems		

Table indicates effect of syntactic problems faced by female students on their learning of English and total marks at elementary level. Syntactic problem (sentence structural) were further divided into two levels as perceived by students i.e. low level syntactic problems and high level syntactic problems. Above results provided a comparison between female students' learning who faced low level syntactic problems and female students who faced high level syntactic problems. Analysis depicted that female students who faced low level syntactic problem have high achievement level in English subject (M = 75.045) as compared to female students who faced high level of syntactic problems (M=72.792) but the difference between both groups was not significant (p=.252) as perceived by students. On the other side, female students who faced low level syntactic problem have high achievement level in (M=500.262) as compared to female students who faced high level of syntactic problems (M = 482.945) but the difference between both groups was not significant (p=.211) as perceived by students. So, it can be concluded that female students who faced low level of syntactic problems had high learning achievement as compared to other female students who faced high level syntactic problems at elementary level as perceived by students.

Table 9. Effect of semantic problems on the students' learning of English at elementary level as perceived by students

Marks	Category		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sig.
English subject marks	Low le problems	vel	331	72.389	10.712	.042
	High le problems	evel	36	68.190	17.071	
Total marks	Low le problems	evel	331	546.644	100.363	.240
	High le problems	evel	36	526.158	88.080	

Table indicates effect of semantic problems faced by students on their learning of English and total marks at elementary level. Semantic problem (meaning of sentence) were further divided into two levels as perceived by students i.e. low level syntactic problems and high level syntactic problems. Above results provided a comparison between students' learning who faced low level semantic problems and students who faced high level semantic problems. Analysis depicted that students who faced low level semantic problem have high achievement level in English subject (M=72.389) as compared to students who faced high level of semantic problems (M=68.190) and the difference between both groups was significant (p=.042) as perceived by students. On the other side, students who faced low level semantic problem have high achievement level in (M=546.644) as compared to students who faced high level of semantic problems (M=526.526) but the difference between both groups was not significant (p=.240) as perceived by students. So, it can be concluded that

students who faced low level of semantic problems had high learning achievement as compared to other students who faced high level semantic problems at elementary level as perceived by students.

Table 10. Effect of semantic problems on the male students' learning of English at elementary level as perceived by students

Marks	Category	N	Mean	Std.	Sig.
				Dev.	
English subject	Low leve	1 40	70.825	17.351	.012
marks	problems				
	High leve	1 146	63.110	16.963	
	problems				
Total marks	Low leve	1 40	592.850	73.140	.496
	problems				
	High leve	1 146	580.568	101.467	
	problems				

Table indicates effect of semantic problems faced by male students on their learning of English and total marks at elementary level. Semantic problem (meaning of sentence) were further divided into two levels as perceived by students i.e. low level syntactic problems and high level syntactic problems. Above results provided a comparison between male students' learning who faced low level semantic problems and male students who faced high level semantic problems. Analysis depicted that male students who faced low level semantic problem have high achievement level in English subject (M = 70.825) as compared to male students who faced high level of semantic problems (M=63.110) and the difference between both groups was significant (p=.012) as perceived by students. On the other side, male students who faced low level semantic problem have high achievement level in (M = 592.568) as compared to male students who faced high level of semantic problems (M=580.850) but the difference between both groups was not significant (p=.496) as perceived by students. So, it can be concluded that male students who faced low level of semantic problems had high learning achievement as compared to other male students who faced high level semantic problems at elementary level as perceived by students.

Table 11. Effect of semantic problems on the female students' learning of English at elementary level as perceived by students

Marks	Category		N	Mean	Std.	Sig.
					Dev.	
English subject	Low	level	37	73.892	9.769	.418
marks	problems					
	High	level	144	72.194	15.947	
	problems					
Total marks	Low	level	37	504.232	43.436	.026
	problems					
	High	level	144	472.578	84.739	

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Table indicates effect of semantic problems faced by female students on their learning of English and total marks at elementary level. Semantic problem (meaning of sentence) were further divided into two levels as perceived by students i.e. low level syntactic problems and high level syntactic problems. Above results provided a comparison between female students' learning who faced low level semantic problems and female students who faced high level semantic problems. Analysis depicted that female students who faced low level semantic problem have high achievement level in English subject (M=73.892) as compared to female students who faced high level of semantic problems (M=72.194) and the difference between both groups was not significant (p=.418) as perceived by students. On the other side, female students who faced low level semantic problem have high achievement level in (M = 504.232) as compared to female students who faced high level of semantic problems (M=472.578) and the difference between both groups was significant (p=.026) as perceived by students. So, it can be concluded that female students who faced low level of semantic problems had high learning achievement as compared to other female students who faced high level semantic problems at elementary level as perceived by students.

Table 12. Effect of phonetics problems on the students' learning of English at elementary level as perceived by students

Marks	Category	N	Mean	Std.	Sig.
				Dev.	
English	Low level problems	77	72.299	14.215	.015
subject marks	High level	290	67.621	17.056	
	problems				
Total marks	al marks Low level problems		548.657	81.379	.004
	High level	290	518.877	103.251	
	problems				

Table indicates effect of phonetics problems faced by students on their learning of English and total marks at elementary level. Phonetics problem (pronunciation of words) were further divided into two levels as perceived by students i.e. low level phonetics problems and high level phonetics problems. Above results provided a comparison between students' learning who faced low level phonetics problems and students who faced high level phonetics problems. Analysis depicted that students who faced low level phonetics problem have high achievement level in English subject (M = 72.299) as compared to students who faced high level of phonetics problems (M = 67.621) and the difference between both groups was significant (p=.015) as perceived by students. On the other side, students who faced low level phonetics problem have high achievement level in (M = 548.657) as compared to students who faced high level of phonetics problems (M=518.877) and the difference between both groups was significant (p=.004) as perceived by students. So, it can be concluded that students who faced low level of phonetics problems had high learning achievement as compared to other students who faced high level phonetics problems at elementary level as perceived by students.

Table 13. Effect of phonetics problems on the male students' learning of English at elementary level as perceived by students

Marks	Category	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sig.
English	Low level problems	27	65.704	16.886	.762
subject marks	High level problems	159	64.610	17.410	
Total marks	Low level problems	27	626.667	79.127	.032
	High level problems	159	583.830	97.457	

Table indicates effect of phonetics problems faced by male students on their learning of English and total marks at elementary level. Phonetics problem (pronunciation of words) were further divided into two levels as perceived by students i.e. low level phonetics problems and high level phonetics problems. Above results provided a comparison between male students' learning who faced low level phonetics problems and male students who faced high level phonetics problems. Analysis depicted that male students who faced low level phonetics problem have high achievement level in English subject (M = 65.704) as compared to male students who faced high level of phonetics problems (M=64.610) and the difference between both groups was not significant (p=.762) as perceived by students. On the other side, male students who faced low level phonetics problem have high achievement level in (M = 626.667) as compared to male students who faced high level of phonetics problems (M = 583.830) and the difference between both groups was significant (p=.032) as perceived by students. So, it can be concluded that male students who faced low level of phonetics problems had high learning achievement as compared to other male students who faced high level phonetics problems at elementary level as perceived by students.

Table 14. Effect of phonetics problems on the female students' learning of English at elementary level as perceived by students

Marks	Category	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sig.
English	Low level problems	22	73.455	17.938	.760
subject marks	High level problems	159	72.415	14.475	
Total marks	Low level problems	22	505.409	79.325	.639
	High level problems	159	496.936	79.238	

Table indicates effect of phonetics problems faced by female students on their learning of English and total marks at elementary level. Phonetics problem (pronunciation of words) were further divided into two levels as perceived by students i.e. low level phonetics problems and high level phonetics problems. Above results provided a comparison between female students' learning who faced low level phonetics problems and female students who faced high level phonetics problems. Analysis depicted that female students who faced low level

phonetics problem have high achievement level in English subject (M=73.455) as compared to female students who faced high level of phonetics problems (M=72.415) and the difference between both groups was not significant (p=.760) as perceived by students. On the other side, female students who faced low level phonetics problem have high achievement level in (M=505.409) as compared to female students who faced high level of phonetics problems (M=496.936) and the difference between both groups was significant (p=.639) as perceived by students. So, it can be concluded that female students who faced low level of phonetics problems had high learning achievement as compared to other female students who faced high level phonetics problems at elementary level as perceived by students.

MAIN FINDINGS:

- 1. Students faced the highest level of difficulties in the phonetics component (pronunciation of words) and the lowest level of difficulties in the syntactic component (arrangement of words in a sentence) during learning grammar.
- 2. Male students faced similar challenges as the overall student population, with the highest difficulties in phonetics and the lowest in syntax.
- 3. Female students faced similar challenges as well, with the highest difficulties in phonetics and the lowest in syntax, just like the overall student population.
- 4. Among the components, semantic problems (meaning of sentences) were perceived to be at a middle level of difficulty for all student groups.
- 5. In terms of learning achievement, students who faced lower levels of syntactic and semantic problems had higher overall marks in English compared to those who faced higher levels of these problems.
- 6. The difference in learning achievement between male students who faced low and high levels of syntactic and semantic problems was not significant.
- 7. Among female students, those who faced lower levels of semantic problems had higher learning achievement compared to those who faced higher levels of semantic problems.
- 8. Phonetics problems had a significant impact on learning achievement for both the overall student population and female students, but not for male students. *Conclusions:*

The study reveals that students, especially female students, face the most significant challenges in pronouncing English words correctly. However, their difficulties in understanding the sentence structure and meaning are comparatively lower. This suggests the need for focused efforts on improving phonetics skills during language learning. Additionally, addressing semantic challenges can benefit students' learning outcomes. It is also evident that male students' learning achievements are not significantly affected by syntactic and semantic problems. Nonetheless, targeted interventions for phonetics difficulties are essential for female students to enhance their English language learning outcomes. These findings can inform educators and curriculum developers to design more effective strategies for teaching grammar and improving language proficiency in elementary-level students.

Keeping in view the findings it is recommended:

- 1. Introduce targeted phonetics training and pronunciation practice to improve students' phonetic skills and pronunciation accuracy during grammar learning.
- 2. Incorporate context-based learning activities and vocabulary building strategies to enhance students' understanding of sentence meanings and address semantic challenges effectively.

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