Comparison among Languages

Claudia Cappa
Jill Fernando
Sara Giulivi

Adapted for local contexts by Bulgarian, Czech, English and Welsh partners.

Please note that the original authors do not necessarily endorse all the adaptations made for the local context.
Dyslang Module 5 – Comparison among Languages
Edited by Jill Fernando and Dee McCarney
Cover illustration copyright Euroface Consulting 2012

Fair usage
This work is available under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported
(See http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0)

This means that the authors allow the work to be shared, copied and distributed as well as remixed and adapted provided that the following are respected:

Specific attribution: The authors permit adaptation to local contexts provided the original authors and material are acknowledged, and it is clear where the original unmodified version may be found. It should also be clear that the original authors may not endorse the derived version.

Non commercial use: This work is restricted to non-commercial use. However, it may be incorporated into commercial contexts, e.g. workshops or online course, provided it is clear that this material may be obtained freely and where it may be obtained.

For other uses, please contact the authors

Sara Giulivi at saragiulivi@gmail.com or
Claudia Cappa at claudia.cappa@cnr.it

This publication was produced by Claudia Cappa, Jill Fernando and Sara Giulivi as part of an EU funded project, Dyslang (www.dyslang.eu), Grant Agreement Number 2011-5070/001-001

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank those who agreed to prepare a language profile:

Sarah Pryor (Nepali) - pilot course participant
Saif Valli (Farsi) - volunteer for Multilingual Manchester
Yutong Yu (Malayalam) - volunteer for Multilingual Manchester

A big thank you too to Shami Mahmood, Wendy Albon, Kim Wigley, Liz Rose, Pavel Vesely and Sam Orton for providing examples of their learners’ writing.
Contents

Learning outcomes 4

Useful terminology 4

Introduction 5

5.1 Languages in the world 6

5.2 Consonant and vowel systems 7

5.3 Linguistic typology 10
  5.3.1 Morphological typology 10
  5.3.2 Syntactical typology 14

5.4 Examples of comparison between languages 16
  5.4.1 Turkish - English 16
  5.4.2 Turkish - French 18
  5.4.3 Final remarks 19

References 20

Links and further reading 20

Appendix A - Albanian 22
Appendix B - Arabic 23
Appendix C - Bulgarian 26
Appendix D - Chinese 29
Appendix E - Farsi (Persian) 31
Appendix F - Indo-Aryan languages of South Asia (with sub-sections on Hindi/Urdu and Bengali) 34
Appendix G - Malayalam 39
Appendix H - Nepali 41
Appendix I - Pashto 44
Appendix J - Polish 46
Appendix K - Portuguese 50
Appendix L - Romani 53
Appendix M - Somali 55
Appendix N - Tamil 57
Appendix O - Vietnamese 59
Learning outcomes

- Acquire basic knowledge of the main differences between languages and of the main difficulties plurilingual individuals may encounter, due to the differences between the languages previously acquired and the languages to be acquired.

Useful terminology

- **Diacritics**: symbols added to letters or characters to change their meaning, function or pronunciation.
- **Morphology**: the field of linguistics that studies the internal structure of words and the different forms that words can assume by adding affixes or by combining them with other words.
- **Morpheme**: the smallest meaningful unit of a word. Morphemes can be divided into lexical and grammatical. The former have a lexical meaning, e.g. nouns (cat, book, dragon), adjectives (red, big, jealous) and verbs (run, carry, tangle); the latter, e.g. articles (a, the), prepositions (in, under, before), endings (-ly, -s, -ful), etc., express grammatical functions and their meaning depends, at least partly, on their context. In addition, morphemes can be free or bound. Free morphemes can stand by themselves in a clause (e.g. today, yesterday, bar, we, you, that, of, then, etc.); while bound morphemes can’t stand alone and are always attached to other morphemes to add meaning (e.g. in Italian the -o ending for masculine singular nouns, the -i ending for masculine plural ones, and, in English, the -s ending to make singular nouns plural.) Bound morphemes are called affixes. These latter can be subdivided into prefixes, if they are added on the left of the word (e.g. ex-moglie, in-utile, unglaublich, doucement), infixes, if they are added in the middle of the word (e.g. parl-ott-are), suffixes, if they are added on the right of the word (e.g. dolce-mente, can-i, scriv- ono).
- **Phonetics**: the branch of linguistics that describes the physical characteristics of human sounds and languages. In other words, phonetics is the study of what we do while we speak and while we listen to someone talking.
- **Phonology**: the branch of linguistics that studies the linguistic function of the sounds, that is their capability to differentiate meanings. Phonology also covers how the sounds of a particular language combine together and how they can be modified in specific contexts.
- **Phoneme**: the smallest distinctive unit in the sound system of a language, that is the smaller unit (representation of speech sound) that can determine a change of meaning in two otherwise similar words, e.g. in English we know that /s/ and /ʃ/ are phonemes as they cause a change of meaning between the words /sun/ and /ʃun/.
- **Syntax**: the branch of linguistics that studies the principles that, in different languages, rule the combination of words into more complex structures.
Introduction

“A learner’s English is likely to carry the signature of his/her mother tongue, by virtue both of what goes wrong and of what does not.” (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. xi)

Although Swan and Smith’s quotation refers to English, this observation could be applied to learners of any language.

All pupils can be expected to experience some difficulties in certain aspects of learning an additional language. Where difficulties appear to be particularly severe or prolonged, it can be useful to compare pupils’ performance in the new language with their oral and literacy skills in their first language. In the case of monolingual children, this should not present significant difficulties as language teachers can talk to their colleagues and look at examples of pupils’ work. However, the situation can be quite different for multilingual children where the school may not have much information about pupils’ skills in their first language or indeed about the language itself. The purpose of this section is to familiarise teachers with some of the features of a number of first languages spoken by pupils in our schools. This will enable teachers to gain understanding about whether errors made in the additional language are likely to be dyslexic indicators or whether they could be attributed to features of pupils’ first language. Perhaps more importantly, it will highlight to teachers the areas of instruction which are likely to require particular attention.
5.1 Languages in the world

There are about 7000 known languages in the world. First of all, the number of speakers of each language is extremely variable. Some languages, like English or Mandarin Chinese, have a total of more than one billion speakers; others number just a few hundred people, for example some languages spoken by Australian Aboriginals or American Indians; some others are spoken by just a few dozen people and are at risk of disappearing forever.

However, the most macroscopic difference lies in the ‘sound shapes’, the distinctive combinations of sounds that form words used to express the same meaning in different languages. For example, the object that we usually drink water out of is called a “glass” in English, “bicchiere” in Italian, “verre” in French, etc. This relationship between sound and meaning is completely arbitrary.

Languages also differ in the range of possible sounds that they select from in order to form words and, in particular, in the sounds they use to distinguish different word meanings. The English language has a linguistic sound /th/, represented by the initial two letters in the word ‘that’, but this sound is not found, for instance, in either Italian or French. Similarly, many English words include an aspirated /h/ either at the beginning or in the middle of a word, a sound which is not included in Italian. As a result, many Italians, when pronouncing words like “head”, “hot”, “holiday”, “ahead”, very often drop this sound.

In this module we will investigate some of the differences that exist between the sounds of different languages. We will also look at some of the varied structural features languages use to convey meaning either at a morphological (single unit of meaning) level or at a higher syntactical level. These differences contribute to what is known as “linguistic typology”, i.e. the study and classification of languages according to their structural features (see par. 5.3).

Many of the examples provided below concern differences with respect to English and to learners’ potential difficulties in learning this language. However, the principles discussed can be extended to other languages.
5.2 Consonant and vowel systems

Phonemic inventories of different languages can be very diverse, in terms of both number and type of phonemes.

British English, for example, has 10 single vowels (see [http://www.phonetics.ucla.edu/course/chapter2/amerenglishvowels.html](http://www.phonetics.ucla.edu/course/chapter2/amerenglishvowels.html)) and 21-24 consonants (numbers may vary in American English and in different regional dialects). Italian has 7 vowels and 23 consonants. Bulgarian has 6 vowels and 33 consonants. Japanese has a relatively small phonemic inventory, consisting of 5 vowels and 14 consonants, while the Rotokas language – spoken in Papua New Guinea – has an even smaller one with just 5 vowels and 6 consonants. Xhosa, one of the official languages of South Africa, has a very large phonemic inventory, consisting of 10 vowels and up to 69 consonants.

When you learn a foreign language, you may have to face some difficulties related to the differences that you may find between its phonemic inventory and that of your mother tongue. If you are already over the so-called critical period, the phonetic-phonological component of a second language will be one of the most difficult aspects to learn (Fabbro, 2004). (See Extension Material 5.1.)

During the first months of life, when the child naturally and effortlessly acquires the native language, the brain develops its own neural networks based on the input it receives. Once shaped in this way, neural networks tend to favour the learning of linguistic structures somehow ‘similar’ to those already acquired, whereas they interfere with those which are not similar, as may be the case with an L2. This means that, when as children we learn our native language, we group together the variety of perceived sounds into a series of categories that we acknowledge as peculiar to our language. These categories form a sort of ‘filter’ through which we perceive the L2 sounds.
Extension Material 5.1 - The Critical Period

The “critical period” is generally defined as the temporal window in the human life span after which it is no longer possible to acquire a certain linguistic code as a native language (Fabbro, 2004).

The existence of a critical period, stretching from early infancy until puberty, was originally proposed for native language acquisition (Lenneberg, 1967) and then extended also to second language learning (Krashen, Scarchella & Long, 1982). After puberty, the plasticity of the language acquisition mechanisms seems to start decaying. Recent research in the field of language acquisition, however, has led to a less drastic view of the critical period and has shown that the most abrupt decay after puberty concerns especially the acquisition of phonetic abilities. Furthermore, researchers have highlighted the importance of considering the “critical period” not as a single homogeneous window in time, but as a continuum of windows (Goswami, 2004), or as “multiple critical periods” (Knudsen, 2004), during which the cerebral areas dedicated to certain linguistic functions mature and become stable under a neuro-physiological and neuro-anatomic point of view, making neural restructuring progressively more difficult.

The following table, translated from Daloiso (2009) displays the critical periods for language acquisition that have been identified:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Periods for Language Acquisition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First period (0-3 years)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic characteristics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neural correlates</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cerebral representations</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows, the acquisition of new linguistic codes becomes more difficult as neural plasticity diminishes with time. The first and second critical periods are crucial for the acquisition of native competence in one or more languages. These two time windows are therefore the most favourable in terms of developing plurilingual competence in children (Daloiso, 2009).
Extension Material 5.2 - Assimilation of New Sounds to Native Sounds

According to recent research, native phonological categories act as “prototypical sounds” and behave like “magnets” both for native and non-native sounds. Sounds that we come into contact with are “attracted” by the prototypical sounds that are acoustically perceived as the closest; therefore, if a non-native sound differs acoustically by too great a margin from any of the prototypical sounds, it will not be “attracted” by it. (See Kuhl, 2004, in Links and further reading for more on this topic.)

If an individual’s competence in the L2 is still poor, some sounds of the language will be harder for them to distinguish between. The degree of difficulty depends on how much the particular sounds are “attracted” by and “assimilated” to the sounds of their mother tongue.

According to the Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM) by Best (1995) the modalities of assimilation of the L2 sounds to those of L1 can be various. For example, it is possible that two L2 phonemes are attracted by a single L1 phoneme and both of them are assimilated to it. In this case it will be difficult to perceive them as different from each other. For instance, if the sounds /th/ and /t/ of the English language are perceived by an Italian speaker with little competence in this language, both of them will be assimilated to the /t/ sound and will be difficult to distinguish, with no difference being perceived between words such as ‘thick’ and ‘tick’.

In some cases, two L2 phonemes may be attracted and assimilated to two different L1 phonemes: in this case they will be much easier to distinguish. In other cases, it is possible that one of the two phonemes is assimilated to an L1 phoneme whereas the other one is not assimilated to any native sound. In this case too, the two sounds will be quite easy to distinguish, though the learner may find the latter difficult to pronounce correctly.

If the person who is learning an L2 receives a qualitatively and quantitatively appropriate input, they will be able to perceive how to articulate the sound (e.g. where to place the tongue, whether it is pronounced towards the front of the mouth or the back) and will have more chance to be able to approximate the required sound in the L2, even if it is not part of their own native language repertoire. (See Goldstein & Fowler, 2003, in Links and further reading.)
5.3 Linguistic typology

Existing languages are classified by linguists according to three main criteria: the “genealogical” grouping, which is based on the “family” relationships among languages; the “areal” grouping, based around the common structural features which are typical of those languages spoken in geographically close areas; and the “typological” classification, based on the internal structure of words and on the modalities of word combinations into sentences. In this unit we will mainly focus on the “typological” criterium, since it plays a more significant role for our purposes. (To learn more about genealogical and areal classifications, see Extension Material 5.3 and 5.4.)

Acquiring awareness of the typological differences among languages can turn out to be particularly useful for teachers of foreign languages, since it allows them to better understand the way different languages work, and thereby to foresee some of the difficulties that can emerge in language learners.

When two languages have one or more morphological or syntactical features in common, they are said to be typologically correlated, whether or not they are genealogically related. Linguists make a distinction between morphological typology and syntactical typology.

5.3.1 Morphological typology

Morphological typology classifies languages on the basis of the internal structure of words and identifies 4 primary linguistic categories:

1. **Isolating**: this kind of language has a low morpheme-per-word ratio and expresses the connection among words mainly through their order in the sentence.
2. **Agglutinative**: this kind of language forms words by adding as many affixes as the amount of grammatical connections necessary to express.
3. **Inflecting**: this kind of language uses a single suffix in order to express the grammatical functions.
4. **Incorporating or Polysynthetic**: in this kind of language a single word can correspond to an entire sentence, i.e. it is possible to combine all the grammatical elements that would take a sentence in other types of languages together into a single word.

It is important to keep in mind that “pure” types of languages do not actually exist and that the classification mentioned above shouldn’t be taken rigidly. Some languages can be classified in one typology for some features, but a different typology for others. English, for instance, can be considered an isolating language, since its morphology is very reduced in comparison with many other languages. However, it shows some inflective features as well as typical features of agglutinative and incorporating languages.
Extension Material 5.3 - Genealogical Classification of Languages

One of the criteria that linguists have used in order to try to “sort out” existing languages, is genealogical classification: languages have been grouped into different “linguistic families” according to their derivation from a common original single language. Linguists have been able to trace this through backwards reconstruction. Various linguistic families, geographically arranged as illustrated in the map below, have been investigated.

The family is the largest “genealogical unit” and it can be divided into groups (and subgroups) of languages. Both living and extinct languages can belong to such groups and subgroups. As an example, we show below the Indo-European family with its corresponding groups and subgroups. To conserve space, we will avoid showing extinct languages.

As you can see, both Italian and English belong to the Indo-European family, so they are genealogically related (whereas Chinese is not), but belong to different linguistic groups.

Finally, as you can see, Turkish is not in the tree. This language belongs to the Altaic family.
Extension Material 5.4 - Areal Classification of Languages

Languages which don’t belong to the same family or to the same linguistic group, can share some similarities of a structural kind that may have been created owing to the geographical proximity among the languages themselves. Japanese and Chinese, for example, are not derived from the same original language, but have common features which have developed due to contact between them through the centuries. At an areal level, these two languages fall into the same classification.

Another example could be that of Sinhala and Tamil, two languages spoken in Sri Lanka (although Tamil is also spoken in Tamil Nadu, South India, and elsewhere). They show a lot of similarities in their syntactic systems and share a lot of vocabulary, but belong to two different families: Sinhala is part of the Indo-Aryan family, while Tamil is a Dravidian language.

Extension Material 5.5 - Morphological Typology

From a morphological point of view it is possible to detect 4 types of languages:

**ISOLATING:** in isolating languages morphology is nearly nonexistent. This means that nouns are not distinguished by gender, number or case; verbs aren’t inflected, etc. In order to express connections among words, isolating languages mainly make use of word order. They may also rely on the addition of some small function words known as particles.

Chinese is an example of an isolating language. English is another example, though less “extreme”. In these languages the order of words tends to be quite rigid, adjectives aren’t inflected (“a red rose” vs “seven red roses” - the adjective is the same for the singular and the plural), nouns aren’t distinguished by gender, but just by number (while there are some different words for male/female, e.g. stallion/mare, the vast majority of nouns have no gender link at all) and verb forms never change (in English the only exception is the present tense in which the suffix -s or -es is added to the third person singular, e.g. I catch, he catches). So English and Chinese, even if not genealogically related, are in fact typologically related since they are both isolating languages.

**AGGLUTINATIVE:** agglutinative languages form words by adding as many affixes as the amount of grammatical connections to be expressed.

Some examples of agglutinative languages are German, Japanese, Finnish, Hungarian and Turkish. For instance, in Turkish, the word “bird” is “kus”, while “birds” is “kus- lar” (to the lexical morpheme that means “bird” we add “-lar”, that is the plural suffix); likewise “room” is “oda”, while “rooms” is “oda-lar” (lexical morpheme + plural suffix); “my rooms” is “oda- lar-im” (lexical morpheme + plural suffix + possessive suffix).

**INFLECTING:** inflecting languages add a single suffix to a word to express various grammatical functions at the same time. This means that the suffix for a verb, for example, will contain information indicating who is doing the action and whether it is past, present or future. Grammatical functions can also be expressed through changing the stem, or main, vowel of a word: an example from English is the word ‘fight’ which changes to ‘fought’ in the past.
Romance and Slavic languages are generally included in the inflecting category. Some examples of Romance languages are Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese; while some examples of Slavic languages are Russian, Czech, Bulgarian and Polish.

Italian can be considered an example of an inflective language: e.g. in the verb “scriv-ete” ("you (pl.) write") the suffix –ete contains the information about the present indicative tense, the active form and the second-person plural. If we consider the first-person present indicative of the verb “faccio” ("I do"), compared to “fece” ("I did"), the change of the stem vowel from –a- to –e- shows the shift from the present tense to the past historic.

In the French verb “parl-ons” ("we talk"), the suffix –ons contains the following information: present indicative, 1st person plural, active form; similarly in the Spanish verb “habl-as” ("you speak"), the suffix –as means present indicative, second person singular, active form.

**INCORPORATING** (or polysynthetic): within incorporating or polysynthetic languages it is possible to express with a single word all the connections that an inflective language expresses with a clause.

Some of the African Bantu languages come into this category as well as languages spoken by some native American groups.

In the Inuit language, for example, the word “angyaghllangyugtuq” means “someone who wants to buy a big boat” (angya-ghlla-ng-yug-tuq = boat- augmentative - to buy - volitive - 3rd personal singular).
5.3.2 Syntactical typology

Syntactical typology classifies languages according to the order in which the constituents of the clause tend to be placed. It takes four aspects into account:

1. The subject (S) - verb (V) - object (O) order. There are six possible combinations: SVO, SOV, VSO, VOS, OSV and OVS. Among these combinations, the most frequent are SVO, SOV and VSO. VOS is attested in very few languages, OSV in none and OVS (it seems) just in one.
2. The noun(N) - adjective(A) order
3. The use of prepositions (Pr) or postpositions (Po)
4. The noun(N) - genitive(G) order

It is important to underline that observation of diverse languages reveals the existence of systematic correlations among the four aspects mentioned above. We know, for example, that if a language is normally characterised by the subject-verb-object order (1), then the adjective usually goes before the noun (2), it uses prepositions, not postpositions (3) and the possessive phrase is positioned after the noun (4). (To learn more about syntactic typology and examine some examples, see Extension Material 5.6.)

Among the systematic correlations that have been observed in the world’s languages, the following correlations are the most prevalent:

1. VSO/Pr/NG/NA
2. SVO/Pr/NG/NA
3. SOV/Po/GN/AN
4. SOV/Po/GN/NA

These “combinations” are of the <<if...then>> kind and so, from a logical point of view, they constitute implications. Linguists call them “universal implications”.

It is important to note that not every language falls perfectly into the categories mentioned above. There may be several exceptions.

An awareness of the differences and the correlations among languages at the syntactical typological level, can emerge as very helpful for teachers of foreign languages.

Given the large variety of languages and cultures that more and more often coexist in schools, it is impossible for teachers to be familiar with the first language of each and every one of their pupils in detail. However, from information given by the pupils themselves about their mother tongue, and with basic knowledge of syntactic typology, teachers will be better equipped to understand the different structural features of the range of home languages spoken in their classroom. This will be useful in two ways:
1. firstly, it will be useful for the teacher to make a comparison between the student’s native language and the language being taught, and anticipate possible difficulties they may have;

2. secondly, it will be useful for the pupil to reflect on the differences between their mother tongue and other languages increasing their metalinguistic awareness; it will also help the pupil to feel more involved during the lesson and to perceive the diversity of their language not as an obstacle, but as an enrichment for themselves and for their classmates.

Extension Material 5.6 - Syntactical Typology

1) Subject (S) - verb (V) - object (O) order:
   - SVO: 
     Italian: La ragazza (S = the girl) ha letto (V=read) il libro (O= the book) English: John (S) read (V) the book (O)
     Vietnamese: Tôi sẽ học tiếng Việt (I will study Vietnamese). In this sentence “Tôi” means “I” (S), “sẽ họ means “will study” (V), where “sẽ” is a future marker and “học” means study, “tiếng Việt” means “Vietnamese language” (O) where “tiếng” means language and “Việt” means “Vietnamese”
   - SOV: 
     Turkish: Kiz kitap okuyor (The girl is reading the book), where “Kiz” = girl, “kitap” = book, “okuyor” = to read (+ 3rd person singular)
     Japanese: Hiromi-ga Naoko-ni tegami-o kaita (Hiromi wrote a letter to Naoko), where “Hiromi-ga” = Hiromi nominative (S), “Naoko-ni” = Naoko-dative, “tegami-o” = letter-accusative (O), and “kaita” = to write (+ past)
     Sinhala: Mama TV baluwa (I watched TV), where “Mama” = I (S), “TV” = TV (O), and “baluwa” = to watch (+ past)
   - VSO: 
     Welsh: Gwelais i'r ddamwain (I saw the accident), where “Gwelais” = to see (+ 1st pers. sing. + past), “i” = I, “’r” = the, “ddamwain” = accident (+ fem. sing.)
     Arabic: Qara’at al-bintu al-kitaba (A girl has read the book), where “Qara’at” = to read (+ 3rd pers. fem. perf.), “al-bintu” = girl, “al-kitaba” = the book

2) The noun (N) – adjective (A) order
   In some languages one of the two orders prevails but the other is also possible. Italian, for example normally favours the NA order, “albero (tree) verde (green)”, but AN is also used, “verde albero”. In languages like English, the AN combination predominates: “black coffee”. German is the same, for example “eine (a) freundliche (friendly) Dame (lady)”.

3) The use of prepositions rather than postpositions. Italian is one example of a language that makes use of prepositions (“A Roma” = “To Rome”), whereas Japanese uses postpositions (“Yokohama e” = “to Yokohama”).

4) The genitive (G) – noun (N) order
   In Italian the order that prevails is NG (“Il gatto di Marta” = “Martha’s cat”); in English the preferred order is GN (“Martha’s cat”), but often also NG (“The owner of the factory”). In Vietnamese the order is usually GN: “Martha của mèo” (Martha’s cat) would literally translate as “Martha of whom cat”.
5.4 Examples of comparisons between languages

The range of possible combinations between L1, L2 and other additional languages that may co-occur in the plurilingual student is extremely wide and impossible to cover. Below, we have taken the example of Turkish and considered its main features in order to highlight possible difficulties that may arise and the most common mistakes that learners are likely to make in English. We have then looked briefly at Turkish in relation to French and suggested potentially problematic areas.

This module also includes an appendix that contains a comparison of English with a number of other first languages spoken by learners attending our schools. Links have also been made to other European languages where possible. Please select the sections which relate to languages spoken by your learners.

If you can’t find the language in which you are interested, you might like to refer to the UCLA Language Materials Project Teaching resources for less commonly taught languages (http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/Default.aspx) which contains 117 language profiles or to Swan and Smith’s (2001) Learner English. A teacher’s guide to interference and other problems. (See References)

5.4.1 Turkish - English

1) Phonetic – phonological aspects:
   a. Turkish is a phonologically transparent orthography with regular letter-sound correspondence.

   b. Sound systems. Turkish has 21 consonants and 8 vowels. Since 1928, Turkish has used an adapted version of the Roman script.

   c. Unlike in English (where it is only pronounced before a vowel sound, for example, ‘run’ or ‘story’, but in most dialects tends to disappear in words like ‘farm’ or ‘butter’), /r/ is always pronounced in Turkish. When learning English, Turkish speakers tend to pronounce the /r/ when it is in the final position (‘poor’) or when it comes before a consonant (‘hurt’).

   d. In Turkish, the letters ‘s’ and ‘z’ are always pronounced as /s/ and /z/ respectively. This is not the case in English and can lead to confusion with the pronunciation of genitive endings (‘the boy’s ball’), third person singular present tense verbs (for example ‘lives’) and plurals (for example, the word ‘trees’ which should be pronounced /triːz/ not /triːs/).

   e. Turkish speakers have difficulty pronouncing the /æ/ sound common in English words such as ‘bat’ and ‘matter’ and may often substitute /e/, for example saying ‘set’ for ‘sat’.

   f. There may also be confusion between /ɔː/ (‘low’) and /ou/ (‘low’).
g. /ð/ the ‘th’ sound in (‘clothe’) and /θ/ the ‘th’ sound in (‘cloth’) do not exist in Turkish and may cause significant difficulty.

2) Morphological aspects:
   a. Turkish is an agglutinative language. Affixes are added in sequence to the end of a word. For example, the suffix ‘-di’ is used to express the past tense and the suffix ‘-mi’ is used to ask a question requiring a yes/no answer.

   b. Verb conjugation
   A suffix is added to the root of a verb to indicate tense and person. For example ‘I don’t understand’ is translated as ‘anlamiyorum’ which is made up of the verb root (anla-), the negative suffix (m(i)), the first person present continuous tense indicator ((i)yor) and the first person marker -(u)m. The use of the present continuous here shows why Turkish students may incorrectly use the present continuous tense in English.

   c. Gender and number in nouns and adjectives
   Nouns do not have gender but they show number, possession and case.
   Nouns can be pluralised by adding the suffix ‘-ler’ or ‘-lar’ but the plural is used less frequently than in English.
   Numbers are followed by a singular noun, e.g. 1 book, 5 book, which is the same as Welsh but may cause difficulties in English.

   d. Other relevant aspects
   There is no separate verb ‘to be’.
   There is no definite article and there are differences between indefinite article usage in English and Turkish.

3) Syntactic Aspects:
   a. Preferred Subject – Verb – Object order
   The usual word order is Subject-Object-Verb (with the finite verb at the end of the sentence). Word order is sometimes altered to change the stress: the word immediately before the verb is stressed.

   b. Preferred noun-adjective order: adjectives go in front of nouns.

   c. Subject must be expressed or can be omitted
   Personal pronouns exist in Turkish but are often omitted as the verb form indicates who is the subject.

   d. Other relevant aspects
   - ‘He’, ‘she’ and ‘it’ are represented by one third person pronoun in Turkish.
   - In Turkish, commas are often inserted after the topic of the sentence and learners may also do this in their written English.
   - The equivalent of English prepositions come after the noun.
4) Examples of common errors:
   a. My mother teacher.
   b. I am watching television every day.
   c. When I had finished breakfast, came to school.
   d. My brother, is in year 2.
   e. My parents have bought new house.
   f. I live in the Manchester.
   g. I made my homework.
   h. Have you a big garden?
   i. He knows playing tennis.
   j. I went to home after the party.
   k. I saw him two week ago.

5.4.2 Turkish - French

For a Turkish speaker learning French in the UK, it will be important to consider the length of time the student has been learning English. There are many similarities between English and French, in terms of syntax, vocabulary and grammar so a student who already has a reasonable command of English will be at an advantage when they start learning French.

Unlike the transparent spelling system of Turkish, French has a relatively opaque spelling system. However, unlike English, you can almost always tell how to pronounce a word from its spelling, for example ‘eau’ is always pronounced in the same way.

Turkish has quite a lot of loan words of French origin: kuaför (coiffeur/hairdresser), pantolon (pantalon/trousers), kravat (cravate/tie), bisiklet (bicyclette/bicycle), enerji (énergie/energy), karakter (caractère/character), restoran (restaurant), televizyon (télévision/television) and many others. Similarly there are a number of French words that originate from Turkish. These include yaourt (yoghurt), chiche-kebab (shish kebab) and kiosque (kiosk). It will be useful to discuss these and encourage the student to mention any other similar words that they encounter when learning French.

French and Turkish both have an informal and formal word for ‘you’ so this concept should not pose any difficulties for Turkish speakers.

Turkish speakers, like monolingual English speakers, may be expected to have some difficulties with the gender of nouns in French as these do not exist in Turkish.

Definite articles do not exist in Turkish so may be problematic in French (although less so for learners who have become familiar with the concept in English).

Like English, Turkish adjectives stand before nouns and are not modified according to the number of objects they modify. As a result, Turkish speakers may have some difficulty with the positioning of French adjectives (as some go in front of the noun but most stand after) and with the need for adjectival agreement in terms of number and gender.
5.4.3 Final remarks

This section has provided an overview of one of the languages spoken as a mother tongue by children in our schools and has indicated the type of errors that teachers might expect from speakers of that language. However, it should be borne in mind that a child’s performance in a third (+) language will also be influenced by factors such as the length of time they have spent learning the main language of the school and the relationship between the second and third languages. A child might have Arabic as their first language but if they have spent several years learning English, they are unlikely to experience the same difficulties with the French or German script that they may have experienced when they first started learning English.

In addition, teachers also need to recognise that each child has their own story and that it is essential to build up as complete a learner profile as possible. This includes finding out about any gaps in schooling as well as the number of languages the child has been exposed to and their degree of fluency. It is important to know when they use each language and who they use it with. Find out whether they are able to read and write in first and subsequent languages and, if so, when do they read and write and for what purpose? Ensure that you know which languages are used in the family home. It might be the case that a child’s first language is Somali but that they have spent several years in Holland and are fluent in Dutch. This will inevitably have an impact on their experience of learning additional European languages. Do not assume that siblings share the same learner profiles as, in some cases, their knowledge of languages may differ considerably.
References


Links and further reading


Power, T. English Language Learning and Teaching. This website gives common English pronunciation difficulties for a wide variety of languages. http://www.tedpower.co.uk/l1all.html [Last accessed 11/12/2013]
Appendix A - Albanian

Albanian or Shqip is spoken by over 7 million people. It is spoken by virtually the whole populations of Albania and Kosovo (including bilingual minorities) as well as by large numbers in Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Turkey, Montenegro and Serbia. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, a significant number of Albanian speakers have moved to western Europe and North America.

Albanian belongs to the Indo-European language family but does not have a close relationship with other Indo-European languages. However, some vocabulary was acquired from Latin and Romanian and there are morphological and syntactical similarities with other Balkan languages.

The Albanian language has 2 main dialects. These are Tosk (spoken in southern Albania, Turkey, Greece and Italy) and Gheg (spoken in northern Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Bulgaria). Tosk is the official language of Albania.

Albanian has been written in various scripts but now uses a variation of the Latin script and has 36 letters.

Like many Indo-European languages (for example Spanish, German, French), Albanian is a synthetic language (i.e. it has a high morpheme-word ratio). Nouns are usually masculine or feminine (but occasionally neuter) and have singular and plural forms, and definite or indefinite endings. The plural form can be expressed through suffixes as well as through umlauts or changes in the final consonant. An adverb generally follows a verb and a preposition generally precedes a noun.

Albanian has five cases. These are the nominative, genitive, dative, accusative and ablative. This familiarity with cases should be helpful when an Albanian speaker learns a language such as German. Albanian is an SVO language and the verb agrees with the subject. As with German, direct objects take the accusative case and indirect objects take the dative case. Albanian has ten tenses, one of which is called the admirative tense and is used when the speaker wants to express surprise such as ‘ra shi’ (“it rained”) and ‘rënka shi (why, it’s been raining!”)

SOURCES


Appendix B - Arabic

Arabic is an official language in over 20 countries including Algeria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia. It also operates as a second major language in a number of additional countries such as Chad, Djibouti and Bangladesh. There are also many Muslims throughout the world who, regardless of nationality, have some knowledge of the Arabic language due to their study of the Koran.

The following section highlights some of the features of Arabic which may account for specific difficulties faced by individuals learning English and other western European languages.

In Arabic, the script is written from right to left and the verb is positioned first and followed by the subject of the sentence. However, in colloquial Arabic, the word order is Subject-Verb-Object.

There is no separate upper and lower case in Arabic so errors in capitalisation can be expected when learners write in European languages. There may be difficulties learning capitalisation rules for English and then contrasting rules in a language such as German where all nouns are capitalised.

Arabic speakers sometimes confuse similar letters (p/q and b/d) when learning the Roman alphabet and also experience difficulties learning cursive writing. When reading and writing, Arabic speakers may also mis-sequence letters within words because of right to left eye movements.

The written Arabic script comprises consonants and long vowels. There are three short vowels but these are not written in Arabic script. It is not therefore surprising that learners may frequently omit vowels when writing in European languages.

Arabic uses the conjunction ‘wa’ (equivalent to ‘and’) to list a series of items whereas English uses commas and ‘and’ before the final item. Learners may produce English with the ‘and’ repeated rather than using commas.

The English present simple and present continuous are represented by one present tense in Arabic. This may cause difficulties for the Arabic speaker learning English (‘She is studying now’ v ‘She studies for three hours every evening’) but will not be an issue when learning French or German which do not have a separate present continuous form either.

In Arabic, the object of a verb in a relative clause must be included and this leads to errors in English (‘The cottage, which we stayed in it last summer, was by the sea’.) Personal pronouns are often added to verbs in Arabic and this can lead to mistakes in English such as ‘My sister she works in a school’.
Abstract nouns are preceded by a definite article in Arabic so unnecessary definite articles may be expected in learners’ writing in English. In contrast, there is no indefinite article in Arabic so omissions of indefinite articles in English may be expected.

Relative pronouns do not distinguish between human and non human so learners may find it difficult to decide whether to use ‘who’ or ‘which’.

In Arabic, there is no equivalent of the auxiliary verb ‘do’ so learners are likely to have initial difficulties with forming interrogatives and negative statements. Errors such as ‘He go to the mosque?’ are to be expected.

Arabic does not have a verb ‘to be’ in the present tense. This leads to errors such as ‘He going to the football club’.

Because the Arabic spelling system is phonetic, Arabic speakers often pronounce English words phonetically.

Arabic word stress is regular so Arabic speakers struggle with languages such as English where different stress can affect the meaning of a word.

**Pronunciation**

Some particular vowel confusions occur in English, for example between:

/ɪ/ sit and /e/ set
/ɒ/ cot and /ɔ:/ caught
/æ/ man and /e/ men
/e/ sell and /ei/ sale
/ɔ/ cot and /a:/ cart
/ə/ full and /u:/ fool

Consonant confusions occur between:

/p/ pit and /b/ bit
/g/ game and /k/ came
/v/ vine and /f/ fine
/θ/ think and /s/ sin or /t/ tin
/ð/ they and /d/ day
/z/ as in leisure and pleasure and /s/, /ʃ/ and /z/

Arabic does not have initial consonant clusters such as pr, pl, gr, gl, thr, spr or spl and also has far fewer consonant clusters than English. Sometimes Arabic speakers will insert a vowel in order to make pronunciation easier.

**Difficulties faced by Arabic speakers learning English – feedback from a teaching assistant in a Manchester primary school**

1. Confusion over pronouns, gender and tenses
   - Him went home (He went home)
   - Me go to the shop (I went to the shop)
2. Difficulties with phonics
   - i/e confusion
   - b/p confusion
   - o/u confusion
   - ch/sh confusion

3. Difficulties with writing
   - Where to start writing on the page
   - Sentences do not flow – pupils keep starting a new line
   - Pupils may miss a line after each sentence
   - Incomplete sentences (because spoken sentences are incomplete)
   - Capital letters appear in the middle of a sentence and full stops are frequently omitted.

A sample of Arabic script

ما هو عسر القراءة؟
ان عسر القراءة قد أصبح الآن مفهوما جيدا، ولكنه يمكن أن يزال محيرا ومربكا للذين قد تأثروا به.

ان عسر القراءة يؤثر بشكل رئيسي على تعلم مهارات القراءة والهجاء. ان الأطفال الذين يعانون من عسر القراءة يجدون صعوبة في استخدام الطريقة الصوتية لصوت من الكلمات، وإنهم يجدون صعوبة في كسر أصوات الكلمات وغالبا ما تجد صعوبة في تذكر المعلومات المنطوقة، مثل مجموعة من التعليمات.

[Courtesy of The Dyslexia-SPLD Trust]

SOURCES


Appendix C - Bulgarian

Bulgarian is a Slavic language, and belongs to the family of Indo-European languages. It is spoken in Bulgaria and by ethnic Bulgarians all over the world. There were several big emigrant waves in the 20th century in addition to those from earlier centuries. Now there are large Bulgarian communities living in the USA, Spain, UK, Italy, Russia, Canada and Australia.

Bulgarian has a Cyrillic based alphabet, which causes specific difficulties for children studying English. In the Bulgarian alphabet there are 30 letters; 12 of them are the same shape as some Latin letters, but some of them represent different sounds. For example: In Bulgarian the letter “B” is for the sound [v], while in English it is for the sound [b]; in Bulgarian the letter “H” is for the sound [n] while in English it is for the sound [h], etc. In addition there are two Bulgarian letters that look like two reversed letters from the Latin alphabet (И – N and Я – R). All this is quite confusing for the students. In Bulgaria children start to study English (or another foreign language) from the 1st, or, at the latest, 2nd grade. This means that children have to learn two alphabets and to learn to read and write using two different graphic systems concurrently.

In Bulgarian, nouns are divided into masculine, feminine and neuter. There is one more sub-division of the masculine and feminine nouns into two groups: Personal nouns and Non-personal nouns. All this affects the characteristics of each noun, and dependent on that, the form of the noun in the sentence must be changed. The fact that in English there is no such division of the nouns causes some confusion and often learners use personal pronouns (he/she/it) incorrectly. Learners (especially beginners, or those who have difficulties, like dyslexia) might say: “In the room there is a table. SHE is new.” (In Bulgarian “table” is feminine.) Or, “I have a child. IT is a boy.” (In Bulgarian “child” is neuter.)

Significant difficulty for a Bulgarian who is learning English comes from the rules of when and how to use the articles (a/an or the). In Bulgarian articles are added to nouns or adjectives depending on their role in the sentence. It is a definite article if the noun takes a role of the subject, or indefinite article if it is an object. In the case where we have a combination of an adjective + a noun, first the adjective needs to be made consistent with the noun in gender and number, then the article is added to the adjective. The articles are added as an indivisible ending on the noun or the adjective. The form of the article changes depending on the gender, the number and the conjugation of the noun/adjective. A very specific case is where a personal pronoun is used before a noun (or combination of adjective + noun), as in Bulgarian the article is added to the end of the personal pronoun.

A Bulgarian learner may have difficulties when a Bulgarian word could be translated into English by two or even more words. For example, the word “много” could be translated as “many”, “much”, “lots of”, “a lot of”, “plenty of” and very often learners use these words incorrectly. The opposite is also true – there are cases when one English word could be
translated by more than one word in Bulgarian. For example, “stage”
could be translated as “сцена”, “етап”, “фаза”, “скеле”, etc. In all these
cases the learner needs to be very aware of the context in order to
choose the correct word.

The same mistake is often made with the usage of pairs of words like
“some/any”, which have different grammatical usage in English, but have
only one form in Bulgarian. It is especially valid for questions such as: “Are
there some people in the room?”

In terms of tenses, Bulgarian has 9 tenses, divided into three main
groups: present, past and future tenses. The system of tenses is quite
complicated, and it is completely different from the English one. It causes
serious problems for all learners, but especially for those with dyslexia,
because of their difficulties with time management.

For example: A sentence in English that is in the Present Perfect could be
translated into Bulgarian using different tenses depending on the context.

I have studied English for five years. – Уча английски от пет години.
(Present)
I have done my homework. – Написах си домашното. (Past Complete)
I have read this book. – Чел съм тази книга. (Past Indefinite)

The opposite is also true: a sentence in Bulgarian that is in the Present
Tense could be translated using different tenses in English depending on
the context.

Уча английски от пет години.- I have studied English for five years.
(Present Perfect)
В момента уча английски.- I am studying English at the moment.
(Present Continuous)
Всеки ден уча английски. – I study English every day. (Present Simple)

It is therefore not surprising that learners struggle to select the correct
English tense. This is especially true of the younger pupils in the lower
grades. As they are still only in the early stages of acquiring grammatical
knowledge of Bulgarian at this point, it is very difficult for them to
understand the system of English tenses. And even if they learn the rules,
it is not easy to implement them in their speech or writing.

In Bulgarian each verb has different forms depending on the subject;
these forms contain all the information about who is taking the action and
when:

Аз ходЯ на училище. – I go to school.
Ти ходИШ на училище. – You go to school.
Ние ходИМ на училище. – We go to school.

This makes it possible to omit the subject in the sentence, which is not
the case in English and often causes mistakes like, “Mary is 12. Goes to
school every day.”
The sentence structure in English follows strict rules, while in Bulgarian it is much more flexible, for example:

In English:
“She is coming tomorrow morning.”

But in Bulgarian you could say:
“She is coming tomorrow morning.” or
“Tomorrow morning she is coming.” or
“Is coming tomorrow morning (she).” or
“Morning tomorrow she is coming.”
without changing the meaning.

For this reason learners very often use incorrect structures in English, making their speech or writing unclear, or even incomprehensible.

Questions in Bulgarian, like in other Slavic languages, are formed by adding an initial question word or by changing the intonation. Negatives are formed by putting “не” (no) in front of the verb. As auxiliary verbs do not exist in Bulgarian, they can be quite challenging in English and lead to mistakes such as “We not want cake” or ‘When the film start?’ In standard English it is considered ‘bad grammar’ to have two negative forms in one phrase/sentence, while in Bulgarian it is quite common.

English doesn’t allow, “Nobody isn’t here”, or “There aren’t no apples on the table”, but this is the way it is said in Bulgarian.

One of the most serious problems for all Bulgarians who try to learn English is the spelling. The Bulgarian language is completely transparent, with clear rules for pronunciation and spelling, which is not the case with English. This causes problems not only with writing, but with reading as well.

A sample of Bulgarian writing
Що е дислексия?

“Дислексия” е първият и основен термин, използван, за да бъдат назовани най-различни проблеми, свързани с овладяването на учебния процес. Обикновено тя се свързва с проблеми с четенето, писането и математиката, уменията за организация на дейностите, или с това, че бавно и трудно усвояват учебния материал. Но трудностите в училище са само част от проявленията на дислексията. Всеки случай е различен, няма двама души, които да развиат абсолютно еднакви форми на дислексия. Това, което е важно да се знае е, че дислексията не е резултат от умствено или неврологично увреждане, нито е причинена от мозъчна малформация. Дислексията е продукт на мисленето и на особените начин, по който някои хора реагират на чувството на объркане.

[Sample contributed by Daniela Boneva]
Appendix D - Chinese

Chinese is an official language in China, Taiwan and Singapore and is also widely spoken in Malaysia. There are many Chinese communities throughout the world. There is much debate about whether Mandarin, Cantonese, Wu, Kan and the other Chinese mother tongues are dialect groups or separate languages. Modern standard Chinese is based on Mandarin which is considered the national language. The Chinese dialects/languages share a written language and have many features in common. Consequently, the difficulties they face with English and other western European languages are likely to be similar.

Pronunciation of English is a major area of difficulty for Chinese speakers. Mandarin does not have the contrasting vowel sounds /i/ and /i:/ or /u/ and /u:/ and so learners find it difficult to distinguish between ‘ship’ and ‘sheep’ and between ‘full’ and ‘fool’. Similarly, Mandarin has no /æ/ sound and a word such as ‘man’ may be pronounced as ‘men’, ‘mun’ or ‘marn’. The sound /v/, which does not exist in Mandarin, may be replaced by /w/ (for example ‘wet’ for ‘vet’) or by /f/ (‘fan’ for ‘van’). Learners also struggle with voiced consonants and tend, for example, to pronounce /b/ as /p/ (‘pill’ for ‘bill’) and /d/ as /t/ (‘made’ as ‘mate’). Like many other languages, Mandarin has no /ð/ and /θ/ and learners may pronounce /ð/ as /z/ (‘close’ for ‘clothes’) and /θ/ as /s/ or /t/ (‘sin’ for ‘thin’, ‘tin’ for ‘thin’).

One of the most common difficulties for Chinese (and Japanese) speakers is distinguishing between /l/ and /r/ and can lead to misunderstanding (for example ‘fright’ and ‘flight’). Final consonant sounds are rare in Mandarin and learners struggle with words such as ‘hill’ which they may pronounce as ‘hee’ (dropping the consonant) or as ‘hill-er’ (adding an extra syllable). Chinese speakers find initial consonant clusters difficult and may add a vowel sound (‘sipoon’ for ‘spoon’). For final consonant clusters, they may omit the last consonant (‘dog’ for ‘dogs’) or add an extra syllable (‘dogus’ for ‘dogs’).

Chinese languages/dialects use a varying number of tones to distinguish between the meaning of words. They do not use pitch to change the emphasis or to express emotion and tend to struggle with intonation in English.

Chinese does not use verb conjugation to express time. Time can be conveyed through word order, context or, like Vietnamese, by using a time marker such as ‘yesterday’. Chinese students find English verb conjugation very difficult and will often make mistakes such as ‘He has gone to London last Sunday’ or ‘I live in England for a long time’ (when they mean ‘have been living’). There are no definite or indefinite articles in Chinese so errors can be expected in this area in English and other western European languages.

Pronouns are likely to be an area of difficulty as spoken Chinese does not distinguish between gender with the word ‘tā’ meaning ‘he’, ‘she’ and ‘it’. A typical error would be ‘I’ve got a sister. He is studying at university’.
In Chinese, there is no distinction between ‘I’ and ‘me’ or between ‘my’ and ‘mine’ so learners may find it difficult to select the correct type of pronoun in English. In addition, learners may omit pronouns as this is permitted in Chinese when the meaning is clear. Chinese does not generally pluralise its nouns so learners are very likely to omit plural endings in English.

Chinese has a logographic writing system where a picture or single character represents a whole word and can be decoded holistically. It can be difficult for Chinese speakers to get used to alphabetic scripts where they must visually decode words that are spread out over a series of letters. This is likely to have an impact on the speed of reading in the early stages. Where learners have already become familiar with an alphabetic language (for example a Cantonese speaking child in a UK school), they should have fewer difficulties when faced with an additional language which may have slight variations in terms of alphabet (for example é, ú, ŋ in Spanish, ß and and ö in German etc.) but basically employ the same system. Finally, it should be recognised that a newly arrived learner’s writing might appear to suggest motor difficulties when it is really just indicative of a lack of familiarity with the new script.

Research (e.g. Holm & Dodd, 1996) suggests that students who are literate in a non alphabetic first language are likely to have limited phonological awareness and will perform poorly on tests of non word decoding. This suggests that they will struggle to read new or unfamiliar words. It is likely that they will rely on whole word visual decoding unless they are given explicit instruction in phonological awareness.

**SOURCES**


Power, T., English Language Learning and Teaching: Chinese language backgrounds http://www.tedpower.co.uk/l1chinese.html [Last accessed 12/12/2013]


Appendix E - Farsi (Persian)

Farsi, or Persian, is mainly spoken in Iran, Afghanistan (Dari) and Tajikistan (Tajik). There are significant numbers of Farsi speakers in other Persian Gulf countries (Bahrain, Iraq, Oman, People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates), as well as large communities in the USA.

The dialectal differences between Farsi spoken in Iran and Dari spoken in Afghanistan have been compared to the French spoken in Europe and in Canada. Tajik is more influenced by Russian and is written in Cyrillic script.

Farsi is written in Arabic script from right to left. This may cause confusion when Farsi speakers start learning languages such as English and French which are written from left to right. Farsi speakers may also confuse visually similar letters such as ‘b’ and ‘d’. Some short vowels are omitted in Farsi and Farsi speakers may tend to do this when writing in English. In addition, there is no capitalisation in the Farsi language for any word. Therefore Farsi speakers may initially omit capital letters at the start of sentences or forget to use a capital letter for proper nouns. This could be particularly confusing if they are learning English and French at the same time as the days of the week, months, languages and national adjectives are not capitalised in French whereas they are in English. Farsi uses less punctuation than English and Farsi speakers may transfer this to English and rely heavily on the use of conjunctions instead of punctuation.

Farsi phonemes tend to have one orthographic form whereas in English, one phoneme may have many different forms. There will a temptation for Farsi speakers to attempt to write English phonetically.

In Farsi, the word order is generally subject-object-verb. As English word order is subject-verb-object, Farsi speakers can be expected to have some initial difficulties with the structure of English sentences.

Farsi adjectives follow the noun whereas in English they usually precede the noun so mistakes with adjectival order are to be expected. In addition, the same word in Farsi often functions both as an adjective and an adverb and this may lead to confusion over adjectives and adverbs in English.

Like English, Farsi nouns do not have gender. Farsi speakers may have initial difficulties with languages such French, Spanish and German where nouns have a gender and adjectives must agree with the nouns they modify.

In Farsi, personal pronouns such as ‘I’ and ‘he’ are included for emphasis but are not necessary for the sentence to make sense. Farsi speakers may sometimes omit necessary pronouns when writing or speaking English. For example, they might say ‘Has gone to play football’. In addition, Farsi does not distinguish between ‘he’ and ‘she’ and Farsi speakers make frequent mistakes with English personal pronouns.
Farsi comparatives and superlatives are formed by adding a suffix. In English, there are two different methods (adding ‘-er’ and ‘-est’ as in ‘small’, ‘smaller’, ‘smallest’ and using ‘more’ and ‘most’ as in ‘enjoyable’, ‘more enjoyable’, ‘most enjoyable’) which are likely to cause difficulties for the Farsi speaker. They might, for example, say or write ‘He is more happier’ or ‘This exercise is dificulter than that one’.

The auxiliary verb ‘do’ does not exist in Farsi. This means that Farsi speakers may omit the auxiliary verb in English and make errors such as ‘I not understand’ or ‘Where you go at the weekend?’

Farsi verbs agree with the subject in person and number. This may well give the Farsi speaker an advantage over the monolingual English speaker when they start learning a language such as French. The Farsi present tense has different functions and this can lead to confusion over the English present continuous, present perfect and future tenses. Farsi uses the present tense to talk about something that will take place in the future so a Farsi speaker might say or write ‘He comes next week’ instead of ‘He will come next week’. Farsi also uses the present tense where English uses the present continuous and this can lead to errors such as ‘She watches TV’ instead of ‘She is watching TV’.

In Farsi, the last syllable of a word is usually stressed whereas in English, word stress is much less predictable. A Farsi speaker may, for example, say ‘England’ as ‘EngLAND’. Farsi does not have weak forms so Farsi speakers of English are likely to stress all syllables even when they are in an unstressed position.

Farsi speakers may have difficulties with vowel sounds. Problematic areas are likely to be ‘/ɒ/’ which tends to be pronounced ‘/u:/’ (‘fool’ instead of ‘full’) and ‘/ɪ/’ which tends to be pronounced ‘/i:/’ (‘heat’ instead of ‘hit’). This can change the meaning of an English word entirely and lead to misunderstandings.

Farsi speakers may struggle with certain consonants. For example /θ/ and /ð/ do not have equivalents in Farsi and words such as ‘then’ may be pronounced as ‘ten’, ‘den’ or ‘zen’. There may be confusion between the phonemes /w/ and /v/. Although /r/ exists in Persian, speakers tend to struggle with the English /r/, wanting to pronounce it even when it appears before a consonant (‘fork’ or ‘hard’) or at the end of a word (‘car’, ‘door’). Consonant clusters such as gr, bl, sp, str and spr cause problems as they do not exist within single syllables in Persian. Speakers often add a short vowel and may say ‘geround’ for ‘ground’ or ‘esteraight’ for ‘straight’.

Farsi has a significant number of words borrowed from Arabic and a smaller number borrowed from Turkish. In addition, there are loan words from European countries, in particular French. Knowledge of a significant number of French words should give the Farsi speaker a real advantage in the French language classroom.
Examples include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farsi</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>duš</td>
<td>douche</td>
<td>shower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mersi</td>
<td>merci</td>
<td>thank you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>âmblulâns</td>
<td>ambulance</td>
<td>ambulance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gârson</td>
<td>garçon</td>
<td>waiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mânto</td>
<td>manteau</td>
<td>woman’s coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>otobus</td>
<td>autobus</td>
<td>bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keravât</td>
<td>cravate</td>
<td>tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sâk</td>
<td>sac</td>
<td>bag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pâpiyon</td>
<td>papillon</td>
<td>butterfly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mâyo</td>
<td>maillot</td>
<td>swimsuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>žambon</td>
<td>jambon</td>
<td>ham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ut</td>
<td>août</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epol</td>
<td>épaule</td>
<td>shoulder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCES**


SOAS University of London, About Persian (Farsi). Department of the Languages and Cultures of the Near and Middle East. http://www.soas.ac.uk/nme/persianiranian/farsi/ [Last accessed 10/12/2013]


Appendix F - Indo-Aryan languages of South Asia (with sub-sections on Hindi/Urdu and Bengali)

The Indo-Aryan languages are a branch of the Indo-European family which has its origins in Sanskrit. They include the national languages Hindi (India), Urdu (Pakistan), Bengali (Bangladesh), Nepali (Nepal), Sinhala (Sri Lanka) and Divehi (The Maldives) as well as some regional languages including Gujarati, Marathi, Kashmiri and Panjabi. Urdu and the other Pakistani languages use variants of the Arabic script whereas the other South Asian languages have their own scripts which are written from left to right.

Pronunciation difficulties occur where the first language has no equivalent or near equivalent sound. For example Sinhala (like German) does not have separate phonemes for the English sounds /w/ and /v/. Whether the word is ‘wet’ or ‘vet’, learners tend to produce a phoneme that is close to the English /v/.

Bengali and Gujarati speakers may struggle to distinguish between ‘self’ and ‘shelf’ because those languages only have one phoneme in the area of /s/ and /ʃ/.

Other areas of difficulty for speakers of many of the Indo-Aryan languages may include:

/e/ ‘said’ and /æ/ ‘sad’
/o/ ‘law’, /ɔ:/ ‘lorry’ and /a:/ ‘lard’ with the latter often being used for all three sounds.
/dʒ/ ‘bridge’
/ʒ/ ‘pleasure’

Because South Asian scripts are generally phonetic, learners are likely to over-rely on the written form. This leads to difficulties when they come across silent letters or past tense regular verbs such as ‘cooked’ and ‘helped’ which they may pronounce with a final /d/ sound rather than a /t/ sound. Another common error is to pronounce the plural ‘s’ as /s/ even in words such as ‘toys’ and ‘brothers’ where the plural ‘s’ should be pronounced as /z/.

South Asian languages have fewer consonant clusters and this is an area that learners can struggle with. Like Portuguese learners, they may put an /i:/ in front of consonant clusters starting with an ‘s’ and say ‘istantion’ or ‘istreet’. They may also insert an extra vowel (‘salow’ for ‘slow’) or omit the last consonant in a final consonant cluster (‘toas’ for ‘toast’). Similar difficulties can occur in German with initial consonant clusters and, in particular, consonant clusters at the end of a word (‘Arzt’, ‘zuletzt’) where the final consonant may be omitted.

South Asian languages are syllable-timed whereas English is stress-timed and has unpredictable word stress. Related words can be particularly difficult to learn as, for example, in ‘PHOtograph’, ‘phoTOgrapher’ and ‘photoGRAPHic’. Learners may have less difficulty with languages such as French which have a much more regular system of word stress.
South Asian speakers tend to use full vowels instead of a schwa even when a syllable should be unstressed for example ‘Oxford’ instead of ‘Oxfərd’. They also tend to stress words such as ‘and’, ‘was’ and ‘than’ when they are meant to be weak forms.

South Asian scripts do not distinguish between upper and lower case so this can be an area of difficulty with English. Punctuation may also be difficult as South Asian scripts originally only used a full stop equivalent and other punctuation marks were introduced later but with little consistency. This inconsistent use of punctuation is also a feature of learners’ written English.

Hindi and Urdu
The everyday spoken languages of Hindi and Urdu are very similar but academic and technical vocabulary can be different as Urdu has more Persian, Central Asian and Arab influences, whereas Hindi has been more influenced by Sanskrit. In terms of grammatical structure, Hindi and Urdu are almost identical and Punjabi has very few differences. The other Indo-Aryan languages listed above have a lot of similarities with Hindi and Urdu and many of the points made below will also be applicable to them. However, Bengali has quite a lot of differences.

Like English, Hindi and Urdu have simple and progressive forms of past, present and future tenses but their usage does not always correspond to English usage. A common feature of learners’ English is the incorrect use of the present continuous in a sentence such as ‘I am coming from India’ instead of ‘I come from India’. In addition, there is no equivalent to the English auxiliary verb ‘do’ and this leads to mistakes with negative statements and interrogatives. Sometimes learners will simply change their intonation when they want to ask a question and may say ‘She is married?’

In Hindi and Urdu, nouns have a masculine and feminine form. For example, ‘Kelaa’ (banana) is a masculine noun whereas ‘bher’ (sheep) is a feminine noun.

Nouns have single and plural forms. The plural may be formed by adding an ending to the noun or by modifying the final vowel. For example, the masculine noun ‘kuttaa’ (dog) becomes ‘kutte’ (dogs) and the feminine noun ‘machlee’ (fish) becomes ‘machliyaan’. However, some masculine nouns have the same form for singular and plural. This could partly explain why learners sometimes omit English plural endings.

As in English, adjectives precede the nouns that they are describing. However, they also have to agree with the relevant noun. For example ‘chotaa larkaa’ means ‘ small boy’ whereas ‘chotee larkee’ means ‘ small girl’. This familiarity with the inflexion of adjectives means that the Hindi/Urdu speaker learning French is at an advantage over the monolingual English speaking child (as long as the teacher makes a link between the two languages).
Verbs have to demonstrate gender and number agreement. The endings ‘taa’, ‘tee’ and ‘te’ represent masculine singular, feminine singular and plural respectively. The sentence ‘Main sotee hoon’ translates as ‘I sleep’ (literally meaning ‘I sleep am’ and is used only when the ‘I’ is female). Again, this knowledge of verb endings may facilitate the learning of an additional language.

Hindi and Urdu do not have definite articles. The word ‘ek’ (one) can be used to express the indefinite article but it is used much more infrequently that the English ‘a(n)’. South Asian speakers struggle with articles in English and may wrongly omit them or over-compensate and use them too much.

As far as sentence structure is concerned, the standard word order of Hindi and Urdu is Subject-Object-Verb.

Where English uses prepositions, Hindi and Urdu use postpositions where ‘by bus’ is ‘bas se’ (bus by) and ‘on the table’ is ‘mez par’ (table on). Learners do not have major difficulties with the positioning of prepositions in English but tend to struggle to select the correct one.

**Examples of errors made by Urdu speakers in Manchester/Oldham**
- Now I coming here and I learn here many things.
- wathe is very cold
- Now every house is very good condishen.
- Then Farwa and my brother and my cousins we where playing blindfold.
- Then went fun fair Then it was finshed fun fair
- I played in the garden football.
- My sister said to dad less go to fun fere.
- Me and my sister went on a rid it was very scere.
- it tast wary nise and i eat barger cheken and cresip then my dad dropet me at school
- After a while the man gave us some jeuice to drink, I could tasted the pizza in my mouth.
- I cod see the river and people cnowing and relee happee fasis entrin Kings wood and people sad leving kings wood.

**The Urdu script**
Urdu uses a Perso-Arabic script which is based on the Arabic script. It is fully cursive and is read from right to left.

[Courtesy of The Dyslexia-SPLD Trust]
The Hindi script
Hindi uses the Devanagari script which is read from left to right. It is an abugida or syllabic writing system which means that each consonant has an inherent vowel (a schwa) which can be changed to another vowel or muted by using diacritics. Vowels can be written on their own if they are at the beginning of a word or stand alone. The Devanagari script is also used for writing other languages including Nepali and Marathi.

A number of other languages use a syllabic script, for example Bengali, Gurmukhi (Punjabi), Malayalam, Kannada, Sinhala and Tamil.

Bengali
Bengali shares a number of features with other South Asian languages. This section will look briefly at aspects that are known to cause difficulty for Bengali speakers when learning English and can be attributed to the influence of their first language.

Learners frequently omit the third person singular verb ending in the present simple tense. In Bengali, ‘they eat rice’ is ‘tara bhat kha’ (they rice eat) and ‘she/he eats rice’ is ‘she/tʃe/ bhat kha’ (she/he rice eat).

Learners often confuse pronouns in English because Bengali does not have gender-based pronouns. As in the previous example, the word ‘she’ /tʃe/ means both ‘he’ and ‘she’. Similarly ‘him’ and ‘her’ are represented by one word.

In Bengali, the plural is formed either with a plural marker or with an ending on the noun. For example, the word for ‘man’ is ‘manush’. ‘Men’ can be expressed by ‘onek manush’ (literally ‘many man’) or by a plural form ‘manushera’ or ‘manushgulo’. It is not possible to use a plural marker with an ending in Bengali. This would explain English mistakes such as ‘many visitor’.

Bengali does not have an expression for the impersonal form ‘there is/are’. This leads to errors such as ‘in Dhaka many university are’ (Ariful Islam, 2004).

Bengali has Subject-Object-Verb word order with adverbs positioned before the verb. This can cause mistakes such as ‘I fast swim’ or ‘I very much football like’.

Bengali speakers often stress vowels which should be unstressed, for example saying /næʃonal/ (instead of /næʃnəl/) for ‘national’.

Unlike in English, the Bengali pronunciation of ‘r’ does not depend on its position in a word. This leads to words such as ‘personal’ /pə:sənl/ and ‘river’ /rɪva/ being pronounced as /pərsonəl/ and /rɪva/ respectively (Ariful Islam, 2004).
A sample of Bengali writing
ডিস্লেডিয়া কাকক করে?
ডিস্লেডিয়া কথা এখন ভাবে ভকর জানা অকাবে, ভকরন্ত যাকে এটা আকাবে, ভকরের কাকক তবু, এটোকাক ডেভেলপেবলি ও ভকরভারডিকের করণ মর্যা হত পাকর।
পলায় ও ন্যানান করার হেসাবে লোকের ওপর প্রথমাধিকে ডিস্লেডিয়ার প্রভাব পাকর। ল্যালাল ভাঙ্কাকরে ডিস্লেডিয়া অকাবে, ভকরের পকাকে বেলসুড় উচ্চারণ করার জন্য থ্রুপ ভবহুর করা কঠিন হয়; ভেদকর ভবহুর লকচাকে ভকরের অকাবে বনা হয় এবং অকাবে সমায়; ভকরের বিলে মত সমায় ডেভেলপ তথ্য মর্যা ভকরের পকাকে কঠিন হয়।

[Courtesy of The Dyslexia-SPLD Trust]

SOURCES


Appendix G - Malayalam

Malayalam is the official language of the Indian state of Kerala and the main language spoken in the Laccadive Islands. It is also spoken in Bahrain, Fiji, Malaysia, Singapore, Israel, Qatar, and The United Arab Emirates. It belongs to the Dravidian family of languages which also includes, among others, Tamil, Kannada and Telugu.

Like these languages, Malayalam is written from left to right and uses a syllabic alphabet in which each consonant has an inherent vowel. The inherent vowel can be changed through the use of diacritics which are placed above, below, before or after a consonant. The example below shows the way in which diacritics change the vowels accompanying the consonant.

[www.omniglot.com/writing/malayalam.htm]

Malayalam is phonetic in the sense that all written letters (graphemes) are pronounced. This can lead to the pronunciation of letters which are silent in English (for example the ‘b’ in ‘debt’, the ‘p’ in ‘cupboard’ and the ‘h’ in ‘honour’. Because English spelling does not indicate any distinction between different plural endings (for example, roses, dogs, cups), Malayalam speakers are likely to pronounce all plurals with the /s/ ending. They will also tend to pronounce the past tense morpheme ‘-ed’ as /d/ even when saying verbs such as ‘looked’ or ‘started’. In Malayalam, there are some double letters (/p/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /k/) which are pronounced with double articulation. When Malayalam speakers come across double letters in English, there may be a tendency for double articulation. Thomas (2011) cites difficulties with a number of words including ‘brilliant’, ‘occur’, ‘apparatus’ and ‘committee’.

Languages such as English which have stress-timed patterns require the speaker to say words, phrases and sentences with unequal timing. This can be very difficult for speakers of Malayalam and other syllable timed languages where each syllable takes approximately the same amount of time. Words such as ‘record’ which are pronounced differently depending on whether they are a noun or a verb are likely to cause particular difficulty.

Malayalam has SOV (subject-object-verb) word order unlike the SVO word order of English. Initial difficulties with word order are therefore to be expected.
In Malayalam, verbs are inflected through the use of suffixes and postpositions. There are various simple and continuous tenses. Verb conjugation is also based on mood (whether the action of the verb is (un)real, possible, potential) and auxiliary verbs are used to show the speaker’s feelings towards an event expressed by the verb.

Malayalam uses noun declensions. The table below gives an example of how the word ‘manusyan’ (which means ‘human’) is declined according to case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nominative</td>
<td>manusyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accusative</td>
<td>manusyane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dative</td>
<td>manuṣyannu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genitive</td>
<td>manuṣyante</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Familiarity with noun declensions is likely to be an advantage for Malayalam speakers (over monolingual English speakers) when they start learning a language such as German.

The plural form of nouns is used in written Malayalam and formal speech but is often omitted in everyday conversation. It is therefore likely that Malayalam speakers may not initially realise the importance of the plural form in both written and spoken English.

Malayalam has borrowed vocabulary from Sanskrit, Tamil, Hindi and Urdu. It also has loan words from Portuguese (alamāra from armário (cupboard), iskool from escola (school), janāla from janela (window)), Dutch (thapal from tapal (post), kakkūs from kakhuis (toilet)) and Arabic.

**SOURCES**


Appendix H - Nepali

Language
Nepali is the main and official language spoken in Nepal, although different ethnic groups use their own community languages. For example, Gurungs speak gurung language, Limbus speak limbu. Therefore not all students from Nepal may be confident in Nepali.

Writing
Devanagari script is used to write Nepali (as well as Hindi and Marathi). The alphabet consists of 36 consonants and 12 vowels. Vowels are written differently depending on their place in a word. Vowels are sometimes nasalized. It is written from left to right and top to bottom. The use of punctuation marks is the same as English, except that sentences end with ‘|’ not a full stop.

Reading
Nepali script is phonetic and a relatively transparent orthography compared to English. Children are taught to read phonetically and may overly rely on phonics when reading English. Learning in Nepalese schools is often by rote, with a strong focus on reading accuracy. Therefore, students learning English need to be encouraged to understand what they are reading and add appropriate expression. Nepali students may overlook word endings. For example; ‘walk’ and ‘walked’ might both be read as ‘walk’; possibly due to poor auditory or visual discrimination.

Pronouns
In Nepali there are three main honorific grades of pronouns and corresponding verb endings depending on who you are addressing. For example:
1. Low grade pronouns – used mainly for children in one’s own family, and animals.
2. Middle grade pronouns – used mainly for other children, social inferiors, younger relations and intimate friends.
3. High grade pronouns – used mainly for older relations, acquaintances of equal status and people to whom one owes a measure of respect.

Pronunciation
Nepali speakers may experience difficulties with enunciating or differentiating certain sounds which do not occur in their language. For example:
s/sh, t/th, p/b/five

long and short vowel sounds eg. ship/sheep

Use of capital letters
Nepali does not use capital letters. Students may have difficulty in using capital letters to start sentences, or for proper nouns or for the first person pronoun ‘I’.
Word order
Nepali word order differs from English as the verb always comes at the end of the sentence, e.g. I have a book = I book have (मेरो किताब छ मero kitaab chha)
I ate my dinner at 7pm = I 7pm dinner ate (मैले सात बाजे खाना खाएँ Maile saat baje khana khae)

Articles (a/an/the)
Nepali does not use articles. Students learning English may omit articles or use them inconsistently in their writing. Sometimes ‘one’ is used instead of ‘a’ or ‘an’. Nepali students may include articles where none are needed, sometimes owing to errors with uncountable nouns. For example;

Many people live in Himalayan region.
My greatest ambition is to be pilot.
After few months I again moved to UK.
I believe in a god because they help us.
I like to read the books.
I have one apple.
I like to drink a milk.

Singular/ plural mismatches
Students often mismatch nouns and verbs. For example:

There is 75 districts in Nepal.
Many people lives in Himalayan region.
I believe in a god because they help us.

Plurals
In Nepali, plurals are expressed by adding ‘हरु haru’ (which implies ‘many’) to the noun. For example:

pencil = कलम kalam
pencils = कलमहरु kalamharu

Students therefore may forget the ‘s’ for plurals in English and may overuse the word ‘many’.

Prepositions
The same word in Nepali is used to express in/on/at (मा ma), and so it is easy for students to confuse these prepositions in English. Students often choose the wrong preposition, include a preposition where none is needed or omit a preposition altogether.

‘मा’ is used after the noun in Nepali, e.g. ‘in the box’ would be ‘box in’.

Verb tenses
Nepali has simple and continuous forms of verb tenses. To express the past, present, or definite future, an ending is added to the root verb. However, future is often expressed in the present tense - qualified by an adverb of time, e.g. tomorrow.
Module 5 - Comparison among Languages

- to eat = खानु khanu
- I ate = खाएँ ma khae
- I eat = म खानछु ma khanchhu
- I eat tomorrow = म भोलि खानछु ma bholi khanchhu
- I will (definitely) eat tomorrow = म भोलिखानेछु ma bholi khanechhu

Therefore, it is common for students to make mistakes with tenses, especially to overuse the present tense.

There are few irregular verbs in Nepali. English irregular verbs may cause additional problems as they have to be learned separately. Students often forget the third person ‘s’ in the present tense. For example: ‘She listen’.

**Modal verbs**
Students may have difficulties using: would, could, can, shall, should, and will, especially in conditional sentences. These words do not exist in Nepali, e.g.
- I will like to go to China.
- If I was taller, I will be better at basketball.
- When he was little, he can play football well.

**Auxiliary verbs/ Perfect tense**
Problems with these relate to using the wrong tense, choosing the wrong auxiliary verb, omitting the auxiliary verb altogether and/or singular/plural mis-matching, e.g.
- He is been to Hong Kong.
- They are live in Hampshire.
- I never seen a Chinese man.

**English words used in Nepali**
- Coat = kot
- Tomato = tamator
- Trouser = traujar
- Table = table
- Suit = sut
- Boot = boot
- Ball = ball

(adapted from Hampshire EMTAS, nd)

**SOURCES**
Hampshire EMTAS (nd) Nepali Children in Hampshire Schools Hampshire County Council


Appendix I - Pashto

Pashto (also sometimes referred to as Pakhto, Pushtu, Pushto, Afghani) is part of the Iranian branch of Indo-Iranian languages. Pashto has no official status at federal level in Pakistan whereas, in Afghanistan, it is, together with Dari, one of the two official languages. However, Dari has greater prestige and is more widely used in business and Higher Education. It is estimated that between 45 and 55 million people speak Pashto as a first or second language. There are Pashto communities in various countries including Iran, Tajikistan, India, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and the UK.

Much of Pashto’s vocabulary is common to other Indo-Iranian languages. It also has words borrowed from other languages including Urdu, Arabic and Greek. It now uses a lot of borrowed English words, especially from the fields of science, technology, politics and the military.

Pashto is a subject-object-verb (SOV) language. Nouns follow adjectives and both have to be inflected to show masculine or feminine gender, singular or plural and one of four grammatical cases. Tenses include the present, simple past, past progressive, present perfect and past perfect and verbs can be inflected to indicate the subjunctive mood. The verb usually agrees with the subject but may agree with the object in the case of past tense, transitive verbs.

Pashto uses both prepositions and postpositions as well as circumpositions. (This is where a preposition and postposition are positioned around the main word. For example, ‘in place of’ in English or ‘à un détail près’ [‘except for one detail’] in French). Postpositions and circumpositions are not common in English and Pashto speakers may try to use them in situations where prepositions should be used.

Rehman, Khan and Bukhari (2012) identify difficulties faced by Pashto speakers when trying to pronounce English consonants that do not exist in Pashto. The tendency is to replace these sounds with Pashto sounds. For example, /f/ tends to be replaced by /p/, /θ/ is replaced by /t/, /v/ is replaced by /w/ and /ʒ/ is replaced by /dʒ/.

McKeever (2011) suggests that Pashto speakers may find English syntax difficult as direct objects precede verbs in Pashto (John Mary saw) whereas in English, direct objects follow verbs (John saw Mary).

Pashto uses all the letters of the Arabic alphabet and has three additional letters (shared with Persian and Urdu) which represent phonemes which are not found in Arabic.
Module 5 - Comparison among Languages

SOURCES


Appendix J - Polish

Polish, like Czech and Slovak, is part of the West Slavic sub-branch of Indo-European languages. It is spoken in Poland and by large numbers of ethnic Poles in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. In addition, there are Polish communities in many other countries including the UK, the USA, Canada, Ireland and Brazil.

Polish has a Latin-based alphabet but uses some diacritics such as the ‘line’ or ‘kreska’ (for example ć), the ‘overdot’ or ‘kropka’ (for example ż) and the ‘tail’ or ‘ogonek’ (for example ą). The letters ‘q’, ‘v’ and ‘x’ are only used for writing foreign words.

Like German, Polish nouns are divided into masculine, feminine and neuter. The masculine gender is more complicated than German as it is then further sub-divided by personhood (personal or non-personal) and animacy (animate or inanimate). So there are in effect three masculine gender classes: personal masculine, animate (non-personal) masculine and inanimate masculine. This means that, in terms of familiarity with gender classes, the Polish child learning German is actually at an advantage over the monolingual English-speaking child but, for the dyslexic child, it is essential that the teacher explicitly makes the link between the languages.

Polish learners may face difficulties when a Polish word has more than one meaning in English. For example, the word ‘sztuka’ means both ‘art’ and ‘play’. If the learner has only come across one of the meanings, they may use it incorrectly as in the (real) example quoted by Arabski (p. 75) ‘In this art (play), Hamlet died in the fight’. Other pairs of words that are represented by one word in Polish include ‘age/century’, ‘earth/land’ and ‘do/make’ (as with ‘faire’ and ‘machen’ in French and German respectively).

Polish learners of English benefit from the fact there are a lot of words that are identical or very similar in English and Polish. However, in some cases, the meaning of the words is different. For example, the Polish word ‘parking’ actually means ‘a car park’. For a useful list of ‘false friends’, please refer to http://en.blackfreighter.com/wiki/Polish_False_Friends.

Other errors may be made when a pair of words have a different grammatical usage in English but only have one form in Polish. These include ‘so/such’, ‘who/which’ and ‘something/anything’ and lead to mistakes such as ‘It was not such bad’ and ‘The film who was interesting...’ (Arabski, p. 76).

In terms of tenses, Polish has 3 tenses, namely the past, the present and the future. The verb form ‘Ja poszedłem’ encompasses the English simple past (‘I went’), present perfect (I have gone’) and past perfect (‘I had gone’). It is therefore perhaps not surprising that learners struggle to select the correct English tense as in the examples quoted by Arabski (p. 79):
Some weeks ago I have seen an English film. I have learned English before I came to Canada.

Questions are formed in Polish by adding an initial question word or by changing the intonation. Negatives are formed by putting ‘nie’ (no) in front of the verb. As auxiliary verbs do not exist in Polish, they can be quite challenging in English and lead to mistakes such as ‘She not does it’ or ‘Where they live?’

Polish has seven cases, including the nominative, accusative, genitive and dative which are also found in German. So, once more, as long as this is explicitly pointed out, the Polish child learning German is in a more favourable position than those children who have never experienced a case system.

Polish has a significant number of loan words from various languages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polish Word</th>
<th>Original Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Source language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ekran</td>
<td>écran</td>
<td>screen</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ekipa</td>
<td>équipe</td>
<td>team</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meble</td>
<td>meuble</td>
<td>furniture</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>handel</td>
<td>Handel</td>
<td>trade</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dach</td>
<td>Dach</td>
<td>roof</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pomidor</td>
<td>pomodoro</td>
<td>tomato</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autostrada</td>
<td>autostrada</td>
<td>motorway</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From English, Polish has made the following lexical borrowings: babysitter, driver, sweter (sweater), fair play, and bizness (business). In some cases where words are similar there can be confusion over the meaning. For example, ‘magazyn’ means ‘TV programme’ in Polish, and Arabski (p. 80) cites the example of a student mistakenly using the English word ‘magazine’:

They can watch some magazines connected with this subject.

Polish learners make errors with singular and plural nouns as they tend to apply Polish rules to English words. Examples include ‘porady’ (advice) and ‘informacje’ (information) which are uncountable in English but often used in the plural in Polish. As Polish has grammatical gender, learners also struggle with pronouns and make errors such as:

The orchestra was playing and the king was listening to her. (Arabski, p. 81)

Because the subject or object of the sentence can be omitted in Polish if the context makes them clear, students may also make omissions in English:

We have a lot of nice shops where can buy food. (Arabski, p. 82)
Basic word order in Polish is subject-verb-object but words are frequently moved around in a sentence. A sentence such as ‘Today, we went to the market to buy fruit’ could be re-ordered as ‘To buy fruit, today we went to the market’ without losing the original meaning and learners may not realise that English does not allow such flexibility. One difficulty concerns the position of adverbs and can lead to sentences such as ‘I eat often cakes’.

Polish has consistent stress on the penultimate syllable of a word and Polish learners can find the various stress patterns in English quite confusing. There is a tendency not to recognise weak forms and for words such as ‘and’, ‘a’ and ‘the’ to be pronounced with the same prominence as more important words in a sentence.

Polish does not have any weak vowels. Where native speakers would use a schwa (/ə/), Polish speakers often use a full vowel (for example in the word ‘banana’). Like speakers of other western European languages (including French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese), Polish speakers experience difficulty distinguishing between /ɪ/ and /iː/ , and this leads to confusion between words such as ‘ship’ and ‘sheep’. Other possible pronunciation difficulties include distinguishing between /e/ (men) and /æ/ (man) and between /aː/ (father) and /æ/ (fan). In terms of consonants, Polish speakers may struggle with final letter sounds which tend to be devoiced in Polish (bed/bet, dog/dock) and with /ð/ and /θ/ which do not have equivalents in Polish.

There are no articles in Polish and this can lead to them being overused, used in a random way or being omitted altogether. This difficulty is likely to occur when Polish speakers write in other European languages such as Italian, Spanish and French which all have their own rules relating to the use of definite and indefinite articles.

**A sample of Polish writing**

Czym jest dysleksja?

Dysleksja jest teraz dobrze rozumiana, ale osobom, których ona dotyczy, może nadal wydawać się zagadkowa i zagmatwana. Dysleksja wpływa głównie na umiejętności uczenia się czytania i literowania. Dzieciom z dysleksją trudno posługiwać się fonetyką aby wymówić słowa; mają trudności z dzieleniem słów na głoski i często jest im trudniej zapamiętać informacje podawane w sposób ustny, takie jak zestaw instrukcji.

[Courtesy of The Dyslexia-SPLD Trust]
Module 5 - Comparison among Languages

SOURCES


Appendix K - Portuguese

Portuguese is spoken by over 200 million native speakers and is the official language of Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe. It also has joint official status (with Chinese and Tetum respectively) in Macau and East Timor.

Although Portuguese has some irregularities, it is a relatively transparent language with fairly predictable grapheme-phoneme correspondence. It is likely that (non dyslexic) Portuguese children will have fairly well developed phonological awareness, whereas what appear to be visual processing difficulties might actually be attributable to the fact that they are unaccustomed to writing in a less transparent language such as English.

There are significant differences between European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese. European Portuguese has many words of Arabic origin, particularly for food items (for example limão (lime) from al-laymun, azeite (oil) from al-zayt, laranja (orange) from al-naranj, arroz (rice) from al-aruzz) and place names (Albufeira (‘the lake’) from al-buhayrah and Aldeia (‘the small village’) from al-day’ah. In contrast, Brazilian Portuguese has many loan words from native American languages (especially geographical names, plants and animals) and American English.

Vocabulary differences (Shah, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Angola &amp; Mozambique</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Portugal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bus</td>
<td>machimbombo</td>
<td>ônibus</td>
<td>autocarro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slum</td>
<td>musqueque</td>
<td>favela</td>
<td>bairra de lata or ilha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to go away</td>
<td>bazar (from Kimbundu [Bantu language from northern Angola] kubaza - to break, leave with a rush)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Portuguese speakers may have difficulties with some of the following areas of pronunciation:

/i:/ and /I/ (‘reach’ and ‘rich’, ‘heat’ and ‘hit’)
/a:/ and /æ/ (‘cart’ and ‘cat’)
/æ/ and /e/ (‘man’ and ‘men’)
/ɑ / and /u:/ (‘full’ and ‘fool’)
/ʌ/ and /æ/ (‘luck’ and ‘lack’)
/ɔ:/ and /o/ (‘sport’ and ‘spot’)
/ia/ and /ea/ (‘hear’ and ‘hair’)
/ao/ and /ɔ:/ (‘bone’ and ‘born’)
/θ/ and /θ/ (‘clothe’ and ‘cloth’)
/z/ and /s/ (‘rise’ and ‘rice’)
/p/ and /b/ (‘pig’ and ‘big’)
/k/ and /ɡ/ (‘Kate’ and ‘gate’)


Unstressed vowels at the ends of words may be almost inaudible: ('sit' for 'city', 'part' for 'party').

The initial /h/ in words may be omitted ('ear' for 'hear') as there is no equivalent in Portuguese. Learners may insert additional vowels in certain consonant clusters ('closis' for 'clothes', 'estudy' for 'study').

Because Brazilian Portuguese is syllable-timed (unlike European Portuguese and English which are stress-timed), Brazilian Portuguese learners may have difficulty with English intonation patterns and may stress syllables which should be unstressed. For example, they might say 'I saw THEM yesterday' in response to the question 'When did you see them?' (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 116)

Portuguese grammar has many similarities with English and other western European languages. Like English, it has a range of past, present and future tenses and uses active and passive forms. It does not have the equivalent of the auxiliary verb ‘do’ and questions are formed by changing intonation or word order while negatives are formed by placing the word ‘não’ in front of the verb. Portuguese speakers may therefore have difficulties with direct and indirect questions and negatives in English. They may also make errors with the short responses ‘Yes, I do’ and ‘No, I don’t’ as these are formed in Portuguese by repeating the verb contained in the question (‘Do you like swimming?’ ‘Yes, I like’). As with French (m’est-ce pas?) and German (nicht wahr?), there is only one question tag in Portuguese (‘não é verdade? – which literally means ‘is it not truth?’) and this is likely to lead to mistakes such as ‘They are leaving after breakfast, isn’t it?’

**Typical Mistakes**

- She had a lot of exit. (‘Êxito’ is a false friend as it means ‘success’ and not ‘exit’.)
- I pretend to buy a new car. (‘Pretender’ is the Portuguese verb which means ‘to intend’.)
- She is very sensible. (Intending to mean ‘sensitive’ rather than ‘sensible’. The Portuguese for ‘sensitive’ is ‘sensível’.)
- I speak english. (No capitalisation of languages, nationalities, days in Portuguese.)
- I have done my homeworks. (Homework is pluralised ‘trabalhos de casa’ in Portuguese.)
- I play tennis in my free times. (Free time is pluralised ‘tempos livres’ in Portuguese.)
- She likes very much to read. (This follows Portuguese word order ‘Gosta muito de ler’.)
- She has twenty years. (Portuguese, like French, uses the verb ‘to have’ to talk about age ‘tem vinte anos’.)
- Has wonderful beaches in Rio (Portuguese uses the verb ‘to have’ ‘haver’ and ‘ter’ to express ‘there is/are’.)
- I wonder where is your office. (The verb follows the question word in indirect speech in Portuguese.)
- The life is difficult. (Definite articles are used in Portuguese for proper nouns, nouns used in a general sense, names of streets, places such as church and school etc.)
- She didn’t speak why she was shy. (Portuguese has the same word ‘porque’ for ‘why’ and ‘because’.)

[Source: Frankenberg-Garcia and Pina (1997); Swann and Smith (2001)]
Module 5 - Comparison among Languages

SOURCES


Appendix L - Romani

There are no precise figures but it is estimated that there are at least 3.5 million Romani speakers in Europe and at least half a million in the rest of the world. Romani is classified as an Indo-Aryan language. Like other modern Indo-Aryan languages, it is closely related to Sanskrit. When the ancestors of the Roma left India, the Romani language began to be influenced by other languages such as Persian, Kurdish, Armenian and Greek. The Greek influence is particularly strong and is evident in Romani’s syntactic typology, its morphology and many lexical items including some of the numbers: ‘eftá’ (seven), ‘oxtó’ (eight), ‘enjá’ (nine).

During the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Romani populations settled in central and western Europe and various Romani dialects developed. These dialects were also influenced by languages such as Turkish, Romanian, German, and Hungarian etc. with which the Roma came into contact.

The table below names some of the Romani dialects and the countries in which they are spoken.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialect</th>
<th>Where spoken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balkan dialects</td>
<td>Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia (Kosovo), Romania, Ukraine, and Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balkan-zis dialects</td>
<td>Northern and central Bulgaria and Macedonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Vlax dialects</td>
<td>Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, southern Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, and Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Vlax dialects</td>
<td>Romania, Moldova, Hungary, Serbia, in migrant communities worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Central dialects</td>
<td>Hungary, Slovakia, northern Slovenia, eastern Austria, Ukraine, Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Central dialects</td>
<td>Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Romani dialects vary in their degree of mutual comprehensibility. Difficulties may occur as Romani speakers tend to integrate expressions from their second languages and these expressions will often be unintelligible to Romani speakers from other countries.

Romani nouns can be masculine or feminine and singular or plural. Nouns have a nominative and accusative form and other cases are represented by adding a suffix to the accusative stem. For example, ‘ke’ is added to form the dative case and ‘ker’ or ‘ger’ is used for the genitive case. Adjectives and the definite article precede nouns and agree with the noun they modify.

Although traditionally an oral language, written forms of Romani have appeared since the early 1990s. There is no standardised form and publications are often in the writer’s dialect. Because writers have made an attempt to avoid the use of loan words from the second language, their publications are relatively accessible to speakers of other dialects.
Romani scholars are using an international alphabet and this is being made available to Romani speakers in different countries.

As with all multilingual students, it is very important to build up a complete picture of a Roma student’s language profile. A study of the Romani community in Manchester found that older adults (35+) had generally completed around 8 years of schooling and had basic reading and writing skills in Romanian whereas younger adults had moved around much more and had had little or no formal schooling. Older children often spoke Romani, Romanian, Spanish and basic English and some had some knowledge of French or German. Younger children tended to speak Romani and English.

Please note that Romanian is related to Romance languages such as Italian and French and is not at all related to Romani.

**SOURCES**


**Further Reading**


Appendix M - Somali

The Somali alphabet (based on the Latin script) became the official script in 1972. The script contains all the letters of the English alphabet apart from ‘p’, ‘v’ and ‘z’. The consonants ‘c’, ‘q’, ‘r’ and ‘x’ are likely to cause some difficulties as their pronunciation is very different in Somali. Some Somali consonants can be doubled and are then pronounced with extra force. This means that Somali learners are likely to pronounce words such as ‘bigger’ and ‘middle’ with too much force. There is one-to-one correspondence between Somali vowels and letters so learners are likely to struggle with English where letters represent more than one sound and sounds represent more than one letter. Learners will often pronounce vowels the way that they would be pronounced in Somali and typical errors include ‘my’ for ‘may’ and ‘bow-at’ for ‘boat’. Somali only has single consonants and learners often insert vowel sounds when trying to pronounce English consonant clusters, for example saying ‘filim’ for ‘film’ and ‘sipeed’ for ‘speed’.

The basic word order in Somali is subject-object-verb but there is significant flexibility which means that subject-verb-object, object-verb-subject and verb-object-subject are also possible. Learners may tend to put the verb at the end of English sentences or fail to appreciate the lack of flexibility of English word order.

Learners may also have difficulties with adjectives as they follow nouns in Somali. There are some standalone adjectives but most adjectives are formed by taking a noun or a verb and adding a particular ending, often ‘án’ or ‘sán’. For example, the word for ‘beautiful’ is ‘quruxsan’ which is formed by taking the word for ‘beauty’ (‘qurux’) and adding ‘sán’.

A sample of Somali writing
Waa maxay disleksiya?
Disleksiya hadda si fiican ayaa loo fahamsanayahay, laakiin wali way jaha wareerin kartaa dadka ay ku dhacdo.

Disleksiya sida badan waxay saamaysaa barashada xirfadaha aqrinta iyo higgaadinta. Caruurta ay hayso Disleksiya waxaa ku adkaado isticmaalka foonikiska si ay erayada usoo saaraan; waxaa ku adag kala googoynta dhawaaqa erayada sida badanna waxaa ku adkaada xasuusashada wax lagu hadlay, sida waxa la faro oo kale.

[Courtesy of The Dyslexia-SPLD Trust]
**SOURCES**


Appendix N - Tamil

Tamil is an official language in South India, Sri Lanka and Singapore and there are many Tamil communities throughout the world. The difficulties faced by Tamil speakers learning English are generally applicable to speakers of Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu which, like Tamil, are Dravidian languages.

Tamil speakers may struggle with certain aspects of English pronunciation, including consonants such as /z/ and /f/ which do not exist in Tamil. Learners may pronounce ‘fool’ as ‘pool’ and ‘maze’ as ‘mace’. Because some consonants are doubled in Tamil, learners may also pronounce some English consonants twice. Words such as ‘pin’, ‘ten’ and ‘cot’ are likely to be pronounced as ‘bin’, ‘den’ and ‘got’ respectively because Tamil and other Dravidian languages do not have aspirated consonants (consonants which are pronounced with a burst of air).

Tamil is an agglutinative language which means that distinct morphemes are added to a root word and each morpheme represents a unit of meaning such as past tense, number or plural. A Tamil word may contain several suffixes which would be represented by completely separate words in English. For example, the suffix ‘il’ which means ‘in’ is added to a noun such as ‘ka:lay’ (morning) to make ‘ka:layil’ (‘in the morning’). The plural suffix is ‘(k)kal’ and is added to singular nouns including a number of nouns such as ‘news’ and ‘advice’ which are uncountable in English.

Tamil does not have definite or indefinite articles although the number ‘one’ can sometimes be used as an indefinite article. Articles are often omitted in English but may also be over-used by some learners as they try to compensate.

Tamil learners do not face as many difficulties with English pronouns as some other language speakers as there are separate Tamil words for ‘he’, ‘she’ and ‘it’.

Learners may produce incorrect sentences such as ‘I very enjoyed the show’ because there is one word in Tamil which can be used in front of nouns, verbs, adjectives and nouns to express both ‘very’ and ‘very much’.

Some Tamil sentences contain no verb. For example, (idu puttham) literally translates as ‘This book’ but the sentence means ‘This is a book’. Similarly, the subject of the sentence may be omitted in Tamil so it is likely that Tamil speakers will produce English (or French, German equivalents) sentences such as ‘went to park’ instead of ‘I went to the park’.

Tamil is a syllabic script. The consonant ‘k’ (and ‘g’) is represented by K. (A dot can be placed over the symbol to mute the schwa sound.) The table below shows how diacritics can be added to change the vowel which is accompanying the consonant.
The vowels have their own separate symbols when they occur at the beginning of a syllable. They are represented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ka</th>
<th>欢喜</th>
<th>kaa/kã</th>
<th>欢喜</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kl</td>
<td>คิว</td>
<td>kl̂/kl</td>
<td>คิว</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ke</td>
<td>คี</td>
<td>kE/kae</td>
<td>กี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ko</td>
<td>โค</td>
<td>kO</td>
<td>โค</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ku</td>
<td>คู</td>
<td>Koo/kuu/kU</td>
<td>คู</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vowels have their own separate symbols when they occur at the beginning of a syllable. They are represented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>ஆ</th>
<th>Aa/A</th>
<th>aí</th>
<th>ă</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>இ</td>
<td>î/î</td>
<td>ீ</td>
<td>ீ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>ூ</td>
<td>Uu/U</td>
<td>ூ</td>
<td>ூ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>ெ</td>
<td>Ae/E</td>
<td>ெ</td>
<td>ெ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>ொ</td>
<td>Oa/O</td>
<td>ow/ou/au</td>
<td>ொ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix O - Vietnamese

Vietnamese used to have a Chinese-like script but in the seventeenth century, a Latin-based orthography was introduced by missionaries. The orthography uses diacritics (symbols added to letters or characters to change their meaning, function or pronunciation) to represent additional sounds and the different tones. Nevertheless, the fact that the orthography is Latin-based means that Vietnamese learners are likely to have less difficulty with European orthographies than learners whose orthographies have completely different derivations.

Vietnamese has a large number of Chinese loan words and also a significant number of French loan words. These include ‘pho mat’ from ‘fromage’ (cheese), ‘ga to’ from ‘gateau’ (cake), ‘phim’ from ‘film’ and ‘phot’ from ‘faute’ (mistake).

Vietnamese is a tonal language with a word’s meaning determined by its tone. For example, the word ‘ma’ has 6 different meanings depending on the tone:
- ma - ghost
- mà - mother
- mà - which
- mả - tomb
- mã - horse
- mạ - rice seedling

Vietnamese is made up of monosyllabic words and compound words which have their own separate syllable and tone. For example, ‘bàng’ means ‘table’, ‘ghế’ means ‘chair’ and ‘băng ghế’ means ‘furniture’. Vietnamese speakers generally give full stress to all syllables and can therefore face difficulties when learning foreign words where different syllables may require primary, secondary or no stress.

Vietnamese learners face particular difficulties with pronunciation including the following sounds:
- /ʃ/ (pronouncing ‘she’ as /si:/ (sea) and struggling with ‘nation’, ‘should’, ‘shut’, etc.
- /ʒ/ (pronouncing ‘measure’ /me ʒə/ as /mezə/
- /ʧ/ (struggling to pronounce /ʧi:p/ (cheap) or /ti:ʧ/ (teach) and other words such as ‘cheese’, ‘chicken’, ‘question’, ‘which’
- /ʤ/ (tending to pronounce ‘judge’ /ʤʌʤ/ as /zʌz/ or /zʌs/ and struggling with ‘job’, ‘general’, ‘age’, ‘village’
- /θ/ (‘thing’) and /ð/ (‘then’)

Consonant clusters do not exist in Vietnamese so these can be difficult, for example /tr/ and /str/. Final consonants exist in Vietnamese but are never pronounced or heard so learners may often omit the final consonants of words in other languages.
Vietnamese does not use verb inflections to indicate tense. Sometimes a word may be put in front of the verb to indicate tense (for example, đã, to represent the past tense or sẽ to represent the future). ‘Tôi đã ăn’ means ‘I ate’ and ‘Tôi sẽ ăn’ means ‘I will eat’. However, these words are often omitted because the tense can be inferred by the use of a time word such as hôm qua (yesterday) or mai (tomorrow). This means that Vietnamese learners may find the tenses in English and other European languages quite complicated.

In Vietnamese, nouns do not show plurality. (For example, ‘a dog’ is ‘một con chó’ in Vietnamese – ‘một’ means ‘one’, ‘con’ is a classifier for animals and ‘chó’ means dog. ‘Two dogs’ would be ‘hai con chó’ (literally ‘two classifier dog’). So it is not surprising that Vietnamese learners often omit plural endings.

In Vietnamese, adjectives follow nouns. ‘A small table’ would be ‘một bàn nhỏ’ (‘one table small’) so Vietnamese learners may have difficulties with languages in which adjectives precede nouns.

Most Vietnamese pronouns are kinship terms and are used according to the relationship between the speaker and the listener. For example, a girl talking to an older girl would address the older girl as ‘chị’ which literally means ‘older sister’. She would refer to herself as ‘em’ which means ‘younger sister’. Vietnamese does not draw a distinction between first, second and third person (I, me, you, he, she, it) or between number (‘I’ or ‘we’; ‘he/she’ or ‘they’) or between pronouns in subject and predicate position (‘she’ versus ‘her’) so learners studying languages which do make these distinctions may face some difficulties.

**SOURCES**

