5. PROBLEMS FACED BY MALAYALAM SPEAKERS LEARNING ENGLISH

5.1. Concerning Vowel System

The non-existence of certain English vowels is always a difficulty for Malayalam speakers. Though some vowels are somewhat similar, they are dissimilar either in distribution or in articulation.

Among the front vowels though [i, iː, e] are available in both languages, Malayalam speakers find some difficulty to produce the same sounds in the initial position.

An onglide [y] is used by them initially.

eg: [y iːn] for ‘in’ [iːn]

[y iː st a r] for ‘easter’ [iː st e]

[y e n d a r] for ‘enter’ [e n t e]

The final [i] of words like ‘company’ [kʌmpəni] is pronounced too tense by the Malayalam speakers. The English sound being much laxer is unknown to them. English [iː] is less open and centralized than that of Malayalam. Malayalam speakers fail to lengthen the vowels before voiced consonants and in stressed positions sometimes giving extra duration to the following consonants.¹

eg: [k i dː w] for ‘kid’ [k i d]

Malayalam speakers find difficulty in using the reduced variety of vowels in unstressed positions.

eg: [ʃ e n a r eː t iː v] for ‘generative’ [dʒ en iː t i v]
English [ɔ] is a difficult sound for the Malayalam speakers, hence they use various substitutions for it. People use [a] or [y a] after consonants and [a] or [a] in the initial position as [ɔ] does not occur in Malayalam. Some examples will prove it.

eg: [b a n k w] for 'bank' [b ɔ n k]
    [k ə p i t a l] for 'capital' [k ə pi t e l]
    [a d i k t w] for 'addict' [ɔ d i k t]
    [a k t a r] for 'actor' [ɔ k t e]

So far as the two variants [ɔ] and [ɔ'] are concerned, they are unknown to them.

English [∧] is an absent thing in Malayalam. It is so low as to be heard as almost [a] by the Malayalam speakers. They replace it by [a], as in

[ a p i w] for 'up' [∧ p]
[k a m] for 'come' [ k∧ m]

It is difficult to describe the exact value of the English vowel [e] as it is always subject to varied pronunciation depending on the individual speaker. There is one extremely short [e] as in [e m∧ n] 'among'. A higher and more retracted form of [e] exists when the velar consonant [k] or [g] comes after it as in

[e k a un t] 'account'
[e g a u] 'age'

Pronunciation of [e] and [ei] is difficult for the Malayalam speakers. A Malayalam speaker substitutes [o, a, o]
for the initial [e], [a] or [eː] medially and [a],
[aː] or [aː r] finally.

eg: [æ b r oː d] for [æ b r oː d] 'abroad'
[æ s aː n d] for [æ s aː n d] 'assent'
[ɔ p i n i ə n] for [ɔ p i n i ə n] 'opinion'
[ b o t ə m] for [b o t ə m] 'bottom'
[iː stə n] for [iː stə n] 'eastern'
[siː ilə] for [siː ilə] 'sailor'
[məʊ ʃ tə r] for [məʊ ʃ tə r] 'mortar'

The medial [eː] is often pronounced as [eː] as in
[p əː l] for [p əː l] 'pearl'

Initial [eː] is pronounced either as [eː] or [eː r]
eg: [eː l] for [eː l] 'pearl'
[eː r tʊ m] for [eː tʊ m] 'earth'

Final [eː] is pronounced as [aː r] or [aː r] in 'r' endings words,

eg: [pʰ aː r] for [f əː r] 'fur'
[s aː ɾ] for [s əː r] 'air'

Among the back vowels except [u] and [uː]
all other vowels create difficulty for Malayalam speakers.

A Malayalam speaker fails to pronounce English [aː],
Instead he uses a fronter and more centralized vowel [aː].

eg: [aː r tʊ m] for [ɑː t] 'art'
[p əː r tʊ m] for [p əː t] 'part'
[s tə r] for [s tə r] 'star'
A Malayalam speaker substitutes [ aː ], [ o ] or [ oː ] for English [ o ] as they are ignorant of the existence of the half open back vowel.

eg: [ oː p; a r eː s a n ] or [ aː p; a r eː s a n ] for [ o p e r a t i o n ] 'operation'
[ o kː a l tɯ ] for [ o k l t ] 'occult'

The majority of Malayalam speakers are ignorant of the existence of the half open long [ oː ] also in English. They substitute [ aː ] or [ oː ] for it.

eg: [ oː l ] for [ oː l ] 'all'
[ oː r d a r ] for [ oː d æ ] 'order'

Mostly the people of south Kerala use [ aː ]

eg: [ aː l ] for 'all'
[ aː r d a r ] for 'order'

All English diphthongs cause difficulty to Malayalam speakers as they are absent in Malayalam. The two Malayalam diphthongs [ a i ] and [ a u ] have some similarity with the English [ a i ] and [ a u ] but they are not identified as single units, as they take help of [ y ] and [ y ] with the vowel.2 [ a u ] is structured as [ a v ] [ u ] is represented as a consonant [ v ]. A Malayalam speaker splits [ a ] and [ u ] of English diphthong and a [ v ] glide comes between.

eg: [ a v u t s w ] for [ a u t ] 'out'

Similarly they split up the diphthong [ a i ] and use a [ y ] in between the vowels.

eg: [ a y i s w ] for [ a i s ] 'ics'
English [e i] is difficult for Malayalam speakers. They substitute [e y i] for [e i] and in the final position only [e:] is heard.

eg: [t e y i k u] for [t e i k] 'take'
    [e y i d u] for [e i d] 'aid'
    [p l e i] for [p l e i] 'play'

Another English diphthong [o i] is difficult for Malayalam speakers. They use a long [e:] and [i] with a [y] glide in between.

eg: [p o: y i n d u] for [p o i n t] 'point'
    [o: y i l] for [o i l] 'oil'
    [b o: y i] for [b o i] 'boy'

[o u] is an absent thing in Malayalam, hence it creates pronunciation problem. Malayalam speakers substitute [o:] or [o] for [o u].

eg: [o: i d u] for [o u l d] 'old'
    [o m i t u] for [o u m i t] 'omit'

[i a] is a complicated diphthong for Malayalam speakers. They use [i:] as the first element instead of [i] and [e:] or [a] as the second element instead of [e], as Malayalam lacks the sound [e]. Along with this they use glide [y] in between the two vowels.

eg: [b i: y e: d u] for [b i e d] 'beard'
    [d i: y a r] for [d i e] 'dear'
Though [ e e ] does not occur in Malayalam, a similar sound is heard. First element is used without change. The second element in the medial position is replaced by [ e i ], and [ e a ] is used in 'r'-ending words. Always a glide [ y ] comes in between.

eg: [ k e y e d w ] for [ k e e d ] 'cared'
    [ c e y a r ] for [ t i a s ] 'chair'

English [ u e ] is difficult for Malayalam speakers. They pronounce longer short [ u i ] or [ u ] plus [ a ] with glide [ v ] coming in between, followed by [ a ] in 'r'-ending words.

eg: [ s u v a r l i ] for [ u e l i ] 'surely'
    [ p y u v a r ] for [ p j u e ] 'pure'
    [ p w v a r ] for [ p u e ] 'poor'

Another important problem of Malayalam speakers is that they pronounce monophthongs instead of diphthongs. Even the best educated speakers in Kerala are ignorant about the existence of diphthongs in words like 'oak' and 'prose' in which [ o i ] is pronounced instead of [ o u ].

eg: [ o s k i w ] for [ o u k ] 'oak'
    [ p r o s w ] for [ p r o u z ] 'prose'

In words like 'day' and 'way', [ e i ] is pronounced instead of [ e i ]

eg: [ d e i ] for [ d e i ] 'day'
    [ v e i ] for [ w e i ] 'way'
English falling diphthongs are often pronounced by overstressing their second element. 'out' is pronounced with [u] being too tense and close, [v], of course, intervenes.

eg: [auəvː] for [aut] 'out'.

Lastly, there is a habit of lengthening the component syllabic vowel.

eg: [kojil] for [koi] 'coil'
[biːjər] for [bier] 'beer'
[pusəvar] for [pier] 'poor'
5.2. **Concerning Consonant System**

Among the twenty-four consonant sounds in English, some of them correspond with the sounds in Malayalam. But even in these existing correspondences of sounds between the two languages there may be differences in their variants. So a Malayalam speaker would confront with certain difficulties.

The sound [p] is similar in English and Malayalam. English [p] occurs initially with aspiration. If it is not produced with aspiration in the initial position the native speaker may hear it as something else. So initially in English accented syllables [p, t, k] and [b, d, g] are distinguished by the listeners mainly through the presence or absence of aspiration rather than through the presence or absence of voice. Such aspiration does not occur in Malayalam. Similarly the unreleased [p, t, k] and [b, d, g] in the final position are also difficult for a Malayalam speaker to distinguish. The initial [p] and [k] are invariably realised as aspirated, but they are not usually substituted for English [ph] and [kh]. The unreleased sounds in the final position are difficult for Malayalam speakers because most of the Malayalam words and in vowels. Four different pronunciations each of the English voiceless stops are unknown to Malayalam speakers. A sound having the value of English [t] is heard in Malayalam. The sound [t] is not heard in the initial position in Malayalam. It is doubling of [g] sound as in [patam] = [paraim] 'group' according to A.R. Raja Raja Varma, a Malayalam grammarian.
Lack of aspiration of voiceless stops before stressed vowels is a problem for Malayalam speakers.

eg: \([\text{pin}]\) for \([\text{p}^h \text{in}]\) 'pin'
\([\text{kin}]\) for \([\text{k}^h \text{in}]\) 'kin'

In the medial position stop sounds are pronounced with extra duration.

eg: \([\text{k o: p: a r}]\) for \([\text{k o p a}]\) 'copper'

Malayalam speakers use partially or fully released word final varieties of voiceless and voiced stops accompanied by \([\text{w}]\) - like vowel.

eg: \([\text{k y a: p: w}]\) for \([\text{k x p}]\) 'cap'
\([\text{b i: d w}]\) for \([\text{b i: d}]\) 'bead'

Another problem is the substitution of short and long retroflex voiceless stops \([\text{t}]\) or \([\text{t}^h]\) for alveolar \([\text{t}]\) in certain positions.

eg: \([\text{t i p: w}]\) for \([\text{t i p}]\) 'tip'
\([\text{m a t: a n}]\) for \([\text{m a t n}]\) 'mutton'

English voiced stops take an \([\text{w}]\) with it in the final position in Malayali English and English voiced alveolar stop \([\text{d}]\) is realised as \([\text{d}]\) in Malayalam.

English affricates \([\text{tʃ}]\) and \([\text{dʒ}]\) do not occur in Malayalam, so Malayalam speakers substitute \([\text{c}]\) and \([\text{j}]\) with less affrication and practically no lip protrusion for them. Medial and final \([\text{tʃ}]\) of English is replaced by \([\text{c}]\) with length.
eg: [ p oʊ ə ] for [ p oʊ tʃ ] 'poacher'
[ v i ʃ ] for [ w i tʃ ] 'witch'

Sometimes Malayalam speakers substitute a cluster [ ʤ j ] for English [ dz ], which is accompanied by [ w ] finally.

eg: [ a ʤ j e s t w ] for [ ð dz ə s t ] 'adjust'
[ j e ʤ j w ] for [ dz ə dz ] 'judge'

All English fricatives except [ s, h ] cause difficulty for Malayalam speakers in articulation and distribution. English fricative [ f ] is difficult for them as it is absent in Malayalam. They substitute [ ph ] for English [ f ]. But educated speakers, however, realize it.

eg: [ ph i y a t w ] or [ f i y a t w ] for [ f i s t ] 'fist'

Malayalam speakers fail to pronounce English labiodental voiced fricative [ v ], Instead they use a labio-dental continuant [ v ] with slight friction which is considered as a semi-vowel in Malayalam. In the final position it is followed by [ w ]

eg: [ k e ʃ v w ] for [ k æ i v ] 'cave'

English dental fricative voiceless consonant [ θ ] is pronounced as [ t ] of Malayalam. In the final and medial positions sometimes [ θ ] is used instead of [ θ ]

eg: [ t i n ] for [ θ i n ] 'thin'
[ e tʃ i k a l ] for [ e θ i k e l ] 'ethical'
[ s u tʃ i w ] for [ s u θ ] 'sooth'
Sometimes even the initial [ θ ] is pronounced as [ t ].

\[ \text{eg: } [ t i: si s ] \text{ for } [ \theta i: si s ] \text{ 'thesis'} \]

English dental fricative voiced consonant [ ð ] is replaced by Malayalam voiced dental stop [ ɖ ] in the initial and sometimes with [ t ] in the medial positions. In the final position [ ɖ ] is replaced by voiceless dental stop [ t ʃ ] followed by [ u ].

\[ \text{eg: } [ a e i ] \text{ for } [ æ i ] \text{ 'they'} \]

\[ [ v e T a ŋ ] \text{ for } [ w e ŋ ] \text{ 'weather'} \]

\[ [ s m ŋ t ŋ ] \text{ for } [ s m ŋ ŋ ] \text{ 'smooth'} \]

Though [ s ] is similar in both languages, the voiced counterpart of English [ s ] i.e. [ z ] creates problem for Malayalam speakers. They substitute [ θ ] for [ z ] in all positions.

\[ \text{eg: } [ s u ] \text{ for } [ s u ] \text{ 'zoo'} \]

\[ [ b i s i ] \text{ for } [ b i s i ] \text{ 'busy'} \]

\[ [ p i n s u ] \text{ for } [ p i n z ] \text{ 'pins'} \]

Though English [ s ] is absent in Malayalam its phonetic value is heard through [ ʂ ], the post-alveolar fricative.

\[ \text{eg: } [ s i p u ] \text{ for } [ s i p ] \text{ 'ship'} \]

\[ [ ʂ i s u ] \text{ for } [ ʂ i s ] \text{ 'wish'} \]

English [ z ] is absent in Malayalam so it is replaced by [ ʒ ]

\[ \text{eg: } [ r u ʒ u ] \text{ for } [ r u ʒ ] \text{ 'rouge'} \]

It is understood that Malayalam has no voiced fricatives. So in the place of [ z ] a retroflex voiceless fricative [ ʂ ] is used. Sometimes Malayalam speakers pronounce [ h ] in places where it is not pronounced in English but is present in spelling.
eg: \[ \text{vehikil} \] for \[ \text{visikil} \] 'vehicle'

Among the English nasals \[ \text{n} \] is a difficult sound for Malayalam speakers. All English nasals are realized with extra duration in Malayalam in the medial position.

eg: \[ \text{sam:ar} \] for \[ \text{same} \] 'summer'
\[ \text{vin:ar} \] for \[ \text{wine} \] 'winner'
\[ \text{sin:ih:um} \] for \[ \text{sinin} \] 'singing'

Sometimes English alveolar nasal \[ \text{n} \] is realized as a retroflex nasal \[ \text{n} \]

eg: \[ \text{mani} \] for \[ \text{mani} \]

An average Malayalam speaker is ignorant of the existence of dark \[ \tilde{\nu} \] in English. Malayalam speakers substitute Malayalam retroflex lateral \[ \text{l} \] in such positions.

eg: \[ \text{to:lar} \] for \[ \text{toll} \] 'taller'
\[ \text{kalar} \] for \[ \text{kale} \] 'colour'
\[ \text{do:li} \] for \[ \text{dol} \] 'doll'

English bilabial \[ \text{w} \] is another difficult sound for Malayalam speakers. The marked lip-rounding of the English sound is unknown to them. It is replaced by the labiodental semivowel \[ \text{v} \], hence the contrast between \[ \text{v} \] and \[ \text{w} \] of English is not perceived by them.\(^5\) 'wine' and 'vine' are pronounced similarly.

\[ \text{vayin} \] for \[ \text{vain} \] 'wine'
\[ \text{vayin} \] for \[ \text{vain} \] 'vine'
'wise' and 'vice' have the same pronunciation.

eg: \([\text{va\text{y}i\text{s}um}]\) for \([\text{wa\text{i}z}]\) 'wise'
\([\text{va\text{y}i\text{s}um}]\) for \([\text{va\text{i}z}]\) 'vice'

English \([r]\) is replaced by Malayalam retroflex trill \([\check{r}]\) in some positions. Sometimes in the medial position Malayalam \([r]\) is used. Malayalam speakers pronounce \([r]\) in the final position where English speakers do not pronounce it.

eg: \([\text{ro:du}]\) for \([\text{rou\text{d}}]\) 'road'
\([\text{ha\text{r}i}]\) for \([\text{h\text{a\text{r}i}}]\) 'hurry'
\([\text{ma\text{r}i}]\) for \([\text{ma\text{r}i}]\) 'marry'
\([\text{po:}\check{r}]\) for \([\text{fo:}]\) 'for'

The cluster patterns of English and Malayalam have much differences, so these dissimilarities cause difficulty in pronunciation to Malayalam speakers. In the English two consonant clusters the clusters which have \([t, d, f, s, l]\) as the first member, that member is replaced by \([\check{t}, \check{d}, p^{h}, s, s, s, l]\), respectively by the Malayalam speakers.

eg: \([\text{tr\text{e}y\text{i}n}]\) for \([\text{tr\text{e}i\text{n}}]\) 'train'
\([\text{dr\text{o}:p\text{u}}]\) for \([\text{dro\text{p}}]\) 'drop'
\([\text{p^{h}le\text{g\text{u}}}]\) for \([\text{fle\text{i}}]\) 'flesh'
\([\text{tr\text{a}\text{i}l}]\) for \([\text{th\text{r}o\text{l}}]\) 'thraii'
\([\text{s\text{r}i\text{k}\text{u}}]\) for \([\text{fri\text{k}}]\) 'shreek'
\([\text{has\text{b}e\text{n}\text{d\text{u}}}]\) for \([\text{has\text{b}e\text{n}}]\) 'husband'
\([\text{so\text{i}t\text{a}\text{r}}]\) for \([\text{so\text{lt\text{a}}}]\) 'alter'
In the English clusters which have \([ t, d, t’, d’, s, θ, l, w ]\) as the second member, that member is replaced by \([ t, d, c, j, p, t’, s, s, l, v ]\), respectively.

\[\text{eg: } [k \lambda t i v \text{e} \text{t}] \text{ for } [k \lambda t i v \text{e} \text{i} t] \text{ 'cultivate'}\]

\[ [b i l d \alpha r] \text{ for } [b i l d \alpha \text{e}] \text{ 'builder'}\]
\[ [k a l c a r] \text{ for } [k \lambda t i s \text{e}] \text{ 'culture'}\]
\[ [i n j e k t \text{w}] \text{ for } [i n d z e k t \text{t}] \text{ 'inject'}\]
\[ [k a m p h a r \text{t} \text{w}] \text{ for } [k \lambda m f e t \text{t}] \text{ 'comfort'}\]
\[ [v e l s i] \text{ for } [v e l \theta i] \text{ 'wealthy'}\]
\[ [a k s a n] \text{ for } [a k \gamma \text{e} \text{n}] \text{ 'action'}\]
\[ [k l a m s i] \text{ for } [k \lambda m s i] \text{ 'clumsy'}\]
\[ [p l e] \text{ for } [p l e i] \text{ 'play'}\]
\[ [k v e s t \text{w}] \text{ for } [k v e s t \text{t}] \text{ 'quest'}\]

In the final position the Malayalam speakers split up the components of an English two consonant cluster with an \([ \lambda ]\).\(^6\)

\[\text{eg: } [p a k a \text{d} \text{m}] \text{ for } [p a e k \text{t}] \text{ 'packed'}\]
\[ [k y a c \acute{a} \text{d} \text{w}] \text{ for } [k a e t \text{t}] \text{ 'caught'}\]
\[ [b e g \acute{a} \text{d} \text{w}] \text{ for } [b e g \text{d}] \text{ 'begged'}\]
\[ [b r i s \acute{a} \text{d} \text{w}] \text{ for } [b r e \theta \text{t}] \text{ 'breathed'}\]

Three consonant clusters also suffer from such changes.

\[\text{eg: } [k \lambda a s p a \text{d} \text{w}] \text{ for } [k \lambda a s p \text{t}] \text{ 'clasped'}\]
\[ [j e m p \acute{a} \text{d} \text{w}] \text{ for } [d z \lambda m p \text{t}] \text{ 'jumped'}\]
\[ [h e l p \acute{a} \text{d} \text{w}] \text{ for } [h e l \text{p}] \text{ 'helped'}\]
\[ [p i n c \acute{a} \text{d} \text{w}] \text{ for } [p i n \text{t} \text{t}] \text{ 'pinched'}\]
\[ [d a n s \acute{a} \text{d} \text{w}] \text{ for } [d a n s \text{t}] \text{ 'danced'}\]
\[ [s o l v \acute{a} \text{d} \text{w}] \text{ for } [s o l \text{v} \text{d}] \text{ 'solved'}\]
\[ [p l a n c \acute{a} \text{d} \text{w}] \text{ for } [p l a n c \text{d}] \text{ 'plunged'}\]
\[ [b a l j a \text{d} \text{w}] \text{ for } [b \lambda l d z \text{d}] \text{ 'bulged'}\]
Some of the word final three consonant clusters of English are pronounced as two consonant clusters dropping one of the components. This dropping of a consonant occurs in four consonant clusters also.

\[\text{eg: } [\text{bensw}] \text{ for } [\text{bends}] \quad \text{'bends'}
[\text{koisw}] \text{ for } [\text{kouldz}] \quad \text{'colds'}
[\text{tausantw}] \text{ for } [\text{thousandth}]
[\text{twelw}] \text{ for } [\text{twelfth}]
[\text{siks}] \text{ for } [\text{sixth}]
[\text{glimsw}] \text{ for } [\text{glimpsed}]
[\text{malksw}] \text{ for } [\text{mulcts}]
[\text{prompsw}] \text{ for } [\text{prompts}]
[\text{priteksw}] \text{ for } [\text{pretexts}]
[\text{aldsw}] \text{ for } [\text{Aldsworth}]

Four consonant clusters are split up into three consonant or two consonant clusters with [\+ ] vowel.

\[\text{eg: } [\text{aplitr}] \text{ for } [\text{apltire}] \quad \text{'apple tree'}
[\text{addlstn}] \text{ for } [\text{addleston}]
[\text{priambls}] \text{ for } [\text{preambles}]
[\text{algl}] \text{ for } [\text{angled}]

As Malayalam has no consonant cluster in the final position, all the English consonant clusters take an [\text{w}] in the final position.

\[\text{eg: } [\text{visdu}] \text{ for } [\text{wist}] \quad \text{'wished'}
[\text{milks}] \text{ for } [\text{milk}] \quad \text{'milked'}
[\text{alg]} \text{ for } [\text{angled}]

5.3. Concerning Syllabic System

There are differences in the system of syllables in English and Malayalam, hence Malayalam speakers have difficulties to use English syllables.

An English monosyllabic word which begins with a diphthong is made a disyllabic or trisyllabic word by the Malayalam speakers.

eg: [a u t] 'out' [a v u t: u]
    [o i l] 'oil' [o: y i l]

Monosyllabic words with medial and final diphthongs also have the same change.

eg: [d e i t] 'date' [ç e y i t: u]
    [m a i n] 'minc' [m a y i n]
    [ d i e] 'dear' [d i: y a r]

Thus the similar change occurs in disyllabic, trisyllabic, quadrisyllabic, pentasyllabic, hexasyllabic and septasyllabic words.

eg: [o i l e] 'oiler' [o: y i l a r]
    [b o i l e] 'boiler' [o: y i l a r]
    [i n s u e] 'insure' [i n s u y a r]
    [a u t d o i] 'outdoor' [a v u t d o i r]
    [a u t n a m b e] 'outnumber' [a v u t n a m b a r]
    [m a t i e r i e l] 'material' [m e t i r i a l]
    [o u v e n i e] 'overhear' [o: v e r h i a r]
    [â n g r e i s f u l i] 'ungracefully' [a n g r e i s f h u i]
    [d i s k a u n t i n a n s] 'discountenance'
    [d i s k a v u n t a n a n s u]
[əŋˈɡlɪzaɪzɪʃən] 'anglicization'
[aɪˈhɪsərə⟩ən] [kləɪˈmætələdʒɪst] 'climatologist'
[kləˈɪmatələˈjɪstəm] [səkəmˈstæŋsɪˈlɪtɪ] 'circumstantiality'
[sakəmˈstæŋsɪˈlɪtɪ] [ənəˈθɪməˌsɛɪzəʃən] 'anathematization'
[ənəˈθɪməˌsɛɪzəʃən] [ənəˈdɛvərɪzəbɪlɪtɪ] 'unadvisability'
[ənəˈdɛvərɪzəbɪlɪtɪ]

In English a word with VW sequence is available, but in Malayalam there cannot be such a vowel sequence. Whenever there is a change of a vowel sequence Malayalam speakers use [v] or [y] in between the vowels and sometimes dropping one of the vowels.

eg : [əiəmb] 'lamb' [ɪəmaːmbum] [snoʊili] 'snowily' [snəʊˈvɪli]
[spəuliˈɛʃən] 'spoliation' [spəˈliʃən] [steiə] 'stayer' [stəˈjər]
[daiə] 'dye' [ˈdeɪə]

The duration of an English syllable is decided by its stress while the duration of a Malayalam syllable is decided by the duration of the vowel. As a result Malayalam speakers fail to recognise the two degrees of stress, both differently placed in words like 'convict' [kʌnˈvɪkt] ['konvɪkt] and 'permit' [pəˈmɪt] ['pəmɪt]. When
the second syllable is stressed it is a verb and when the first syllable is stressed it is a noun.

All consonants except [h, w, r, y] occur finally in English while Malayalam permits only [l, l, r, m, n, n, y]. All the word final syllables except with the above mentioned consonants are difficult for Malayalam speakers they take an [u] in the final position adding one more syllable to the word and sometimes the consonant preceding [u] is geminated. Such word final syllables tend to be open.

eg: [ʌ p]   'up' [a p: u]
[milk]    'milk' [milk w]
[plæstɪk] 'plastic' [plæstɪk w]
[gəsɪp] 'gossip' [gəsɪp w]
[ærəbɪk] 'arabic' [æərabɪk w]
[dɪpəsɪt] 'diposit' [dɪpəsɪt w]
[æstrənəmɪk] 'astronomic' [æstrənəmɪk w]
[dɪpləʊməstɪk] 'diplomatic' [dɪpləʊməstɪk w]
[ækəmpənɪmənt] 'accompaniment' [ækəmpənɪmənt w]
[sɪnɪmətəgrəfɪk] 'cinematographic' 

English has many double, triple, and bigger clusters in the final position. Malayalam speakers have difficulty to identify the pattern of words with cluster
ending. This is because of the non-occurrence of the word final clusters in Malayalam. Words are made bigger by adding one more syllable to it. Such clusters are split up by using a vowel between the components of the cluster. English syllabic consonants are treated [ a ] or [ i ] plus the consonant.

eg: [ b o t l ] 'bottle' [ b o t l ]
[ t a k l ] 'tackle' [ t a k l ]
[ f i l m ] 'film' [ f i l m ]
[ s i t e d i ] 'citadel' [ s i t e d i ]
[ t o l e r e b l ] 'tolerable' [ t o l e r e b l ]
[ a n d a p t e b l ] 'unadaptable' [ a n d a p t e b l ]
[ a n a s t e a n e b i l ] 'unascertainable' [ a n a s t e a n e b i l ]

The word medial clusters are also difficult for Malayalam speakers, so they split them up and add a vowel in between the components adding one more syllable to the word.

eg: [ b a n j e n ] 'bunion' [ b a n j e n ]
[ s t r e i n d z i l i ] 'strangely' [ s t r e i n d z i l i ]
[ r e i z e b l i ] 'reasonably' [ r e i z e b l i ]
[ i n s i d e n t i l i ] 'incidentally' [ i n s i d e n t i l i ]
[ a b r i s e t e r i ] 'abridgatory' [ a b r i s e t e r i ]

Certain syllabic patterns in English are not possible in Malayalam. For example a three consonant cluster
in the medial and final positions is split up or a component is omitted by the Malayalam speakers.

eg: [ikspænsəns] 'expansions' [espənsənsəm] [pesimɪsts] 'pessimists' [pesimɪsm]
5.4. Concerning Word Boundary

The initial element of a word in English will be either a consonant, a group of consonants or a vowel. The final element of a word will be either a vowel, or a consonant or a group of consonants. 7

5.4.1. Initial Elements

5.4.1.1. Vowel Beginning

Certain English vowels, diphthongs, vowel sequences and consonants do not occur in Malayalam. They create learning problem for Malayalam speakers. Some of the problems are discussed below.

[ e ], [ e:], [ æ ], and [ ^ ] are absent in Malayalam. So in the initial position Malayalam speakers substitute [ a:] or [ a^ ] for [ æ ] and [ ^ ]

eg : [ æ k t ] 'act' [ a: k t u m ]
[ ^ p ] 'up' [ a p u m ]

[ e ] is replaced by [ e ] or [ o ] or [ a ]

eg : [ e b u t ] 'about' [ e b a v u t : u m ]
[ e b æ v ] 'observe' [ o b s e : æ v u m ]
[ e d o n ] 'adom' [ a d o n ]

[ e:] is substituted by [ e i , e : r ] or [ a r ]

eg : [ e : n ] 'earn' [ e : n ]
[ e : æ ] 'earth' [ e : æ t u m ]
[ e : b e n ] 'urban' [ a r b a n ]
Initial [o] and [ɔː] are realised as [o] or [ɔː]
eg: [ɔːrɪdʒɪn] 'origin' [ɔːˈrɪdʒɪn]
[əˈpærət] 'operate' [əˈpærət]
[əˈrɪənt] 'orient' [əˈrɪənt]

Initial [æː] is realised as [æː]
eg: [æːf tə] 'after' [æːˈfə tar]

Words beginning with [eː] and [iː] will take a [y] onglide.

All English initial diphthongs create problem for Malayalam speakers as they are absent in Malayalam. They are split up and onglides are used in between the two components.

[eːi] is realised as [e] plus onglide [y] plus [i],
eg: [eːid] 'aid' [eːɪd]

[aːi] is realised as [a] plus [y] followed by [i],
eg: [aːlənd] 'island' [aːlənd]

[oːi] is replaced by [aː] or [ɔː] plus [y] followed by [i],
eg: [oːil] 'oil' [oːi l] or [aːʊi l]

[aːu] is split up into [a] and [u] and a [v] onglide comes in between
eg: [aːvst] 'oust' [aʊvst]

[oːu] is realised as [o] or [ɔː]
eg: [oːumɪt] 'omit' [oʊˈmɪt]

[ɔʊld] 'old' [ɔːl d]
\[
\text{[i ə] is realised as long [i:] plus [y] plus [a ə] in n-ending words.}
\]
\[
\text{eg: [i ə] 'ear' [i: y a ə]}
\]
\[
\text{[e ə] is realised as [e] plus [y] plus [a] and sometimes as [e:] only.}
\]
\[
\text{eg: [e ər i] 'serial' [e y a r i]}
\]
\[
\text{[s ə r i ə l] 'serial' [s: r i y a l]}
\]

Whenever there is a chance of vowel sequence, an onglide [v] or [y] intervenes in Malayalam; English.
\[
\text{eg: [i a ə r o u] 'Iago' [i y a: g o:]} \]
\[
\text{[a i ə m b] 'iamb' [i y a: m b u m]}
\]
\[
\text{[e i e r i a n] 'sion' [e y a r e: s a n]}
\]
\[
\text{[a i e r i s] 'Irish' [a y i r i s u m]}
\]
\[
\text{[a u r] 'our' [a v a r]}
\]
\[
\text{[o u r]} \quad \text{[o v a r]} \]
\[
\text{[o u s l a i t] 'colite' [o v u l a y i t u m]}
\]

5.4.1.2 Consonant Beginning

Among English stops the aspirated [pʰ, kʰ, tʰ] do not occur in the initial position in Malayalam. Malayalam speakers substitute [p, k, t] for them.
\[
\text{eg: [pʰ o u s t] 'post' [p o: s t u m]}
\]
\[
\text{[kʰ i n] 'king' [k i n u m]}
\]
\[
\text{[tʰ e i l] 'tale' [t e y i l]}
\]

English alveolar voiced stop [d] does not have an equivalent in Malayalam. A short or long retroflex voiced stop is substituted for it.
English affricates [ts] and [dz] in the initial position are substituted by [ç] and [ʝ].

eg: [ts ə p] 'chap' [ç ə p ɪ ə m]

[dz ə i ɪ ɫ] 'jail' [ʝ ə ɪ ɪ ɫ]

All fricatives except [h, s] cause difficulty for Malayalam speakers initially. [f] is realised by educated speakers. Others replace it with [ph].

eg: [f ə n] 'fan' [f ə n] or [ph ə n]

[θ] is one of the most difficult sounds for Malayalam speakers. They substitute [tʰ] or [t] for it.

eg: [θ s ɪ t] 'thought' [tʰ ə s ɪ ə m]

[θ i ə s i s] 'thesis' [tʰ i ə s i s ɯ]

English [θ] is realised as a voiced dental stop [d] initially.

eg: [θ ə i ɲ] 'thine' [d a ɪ n]

[f] is substituted by [ʃ]

eg: [ʃ ə k] 'shock' [ʃ ə k ɪ ə m]

[ʃ] is realised as [s]

eg: [ʃ i ə l] 'seal' [ʃ i ə l]

English [l] is realised as a short alveolar fricative lateral initially.

eg: [l i s t] 'list' [l i s t]

English biallabial [w] is another difficult sound for Malayalam speakers. It is realised as the labiodental semivowel [v] in Malayali English. The marked lip-rounding of the English sound is absent in Malayalam.
eg: [ w e i l ] 'wail' [ v e y i l ]

English [ t, d, f, θ, s ] as the first member in initial two consonant clusters are substituted by [ t, d, pʰ, t, s ] respectively.

eg: [ t r i p ] 'trip' [ t r i p w ]
[ d r o p ] 'drop' [ d r o p w ]
[ f l a u e ] 'flower' [ pʰ l a v a r ]
[ θ r a i ] 'thral' [ θ r a i ]
[ f r a d ] 'shrawn' [ s r a d w ]

[ l, r, w ] as the second member in two consonant clusters are substituted by [ l, r, v ] respectively.

eg: [ p l a n ] 'plan' [ p l a n ]
[ p r i m ] 'prim' [ p r i m ]
[ s v i m ] 'svin' [ s v i m ]

All the initial three consonant clusters create problem for Malayalam speakers. These clusters are realised by changing the third element [ l, r, w ] into [ l, r, v ] respectively.

eg: [ s p l e n d i d ] 'splendid' [ s p l e n d i d w ]
[ s p r e d ] 'spread' [ s p r e d w ]
[ s k w i k ] 'squeak' [ s k w i k w ]
5.4.2. **Final Elements**

5.4.2.1. *Vowel Ending*

The English final [ə] and [eː] are very complicated sounds for Malayalam speakers. They substitute [ə] with [a r] or [aː r] in 'r'-ending words and [a] in other words.

Example:
- **[m e i k ə]** 'maker' [m e y i kː a r]
- **[p o u l ə]** 'polar' [p oː l əː r]
- **[p a n o r aː m ə]** 'panorama' [p a n oː r a m a]

[əː] is realised as [aː r] or [eː r] in 'r'-ending words.

Example:
- **[s e i]** 'sir' [s aː r]
- **[s t e i]** 'stir' [s t e r]

All English diphthongs are difficult for Malayalam speakers in the final position because there is no diphthong in Malayalam. [e i] is realised as [eː]

Example:
- **[g e i]** 'gay' [g eː]
- **[w e i]** 'way' [w oː]

[a i] is realised as [a y]

Example:
- **[t a i]** 'tie' [t a y]

[o i] is realised as [oː] plus [y] glide

Example:
- **[b o i]** 'boy' [b oː y]

[a u] is split up with [a] and [u] and an onglide [v] comes in between.

Example:
- **[k a u]** 'cow' [k a v u]
[o u] is realised as [ɔ:]  
*eg: [flou] 'flow' [flɔ:]  
[ʃou] 'show' [ʃɔ:]

[i e] is realised as [i:] plus [y] onglide plus [ar] in 'r'-ending words.  
*eg: [diə] 'deer' [diːər]

[e o] is realised as the first element without change plus onglide [y] plus [ar] in 'r'-ending words.  
*eg: [tʃeə] 'chair' [tʃeə]

[u e] is realised as a long [uː] or short [u] plus short [a] with onglide [v] in between followed by [ə] in 'r'-ending words.  
*eg: [ʃuə] 'sure' [ʃuəvə]

Wherever there is a change of vowel sequence in the final position [v] or [y] intervenes.  
*eg: [flaʊə] 'flower' [pʰlaʊər]

5.6.2.2. Consonant Ending

All word final consonants except [l, l, r, n, n, m, y] are difficult for Malayalam speakers. After every consonant an [w] is used i.e. it has a vocalic seal.
release. Final voiceless stops [ p, k ] are geminated, [ t ] sometimes made into retroflex [ t ] and geminated.

eg: [ k Ñ p ] 'cup' [ k a p i u ]
[ k i k ] 'kick' [ k i k s u ]
[ k Ñ t ] 'cut' [ k a Ñ t : u ]

Voiced stops [ b ] and [ g ] have vocalic release and [ d ] is realised as [ d ] plus [ w ].

eg: [ m o b ] 'mob' [ m o : b u ]
[ f o g ] 'fog' [ p h o : g u ]
[ m Ñ d ] 'mud' [ m a Ñ d : u ]

Final [ tʃ ] is substituted by a geminated [ c ] with vocalic release and [ dʒ ] is substituted by [ d ] plus [ j ] followed by [ w ].

eg: [ m Ñ tʃ ] 'match' [ m a c : i u ]
[ l o dʒ ] 'lodge' [ l o : Ñ j u ]

Final [ f ] is realised as [ p h ] with a vocalic release.
For example [ s t Ñ f ] 'stuff' [ s t a p h u ]
[ k Ñ f ] 'call' [ k a Ñ p h u ]

Final [ ð ] is realised as [ tʃ ] with vocalic release.

eg: [ l o u ð ] 'loth' [ l o : t : u ]

[ s ] is realised with vocalic release. [ #i [ f ] ] is substituted by [ s ] followed by [ u ],

eg: [ b Ñ u Ñ f ] 'brush' [ b Ñ e s u ]

English labio-dental voiced fricative [ v ] is realised with [ w ] in the final position.

eg: [ m u : v ] 'move' [ m u : v u ]
Finally [ θ ] is realised as a voiceless dental stop [ t ′ ] with vocalic release.

eg : [ w i θ ] 'with' [ v i t ′ u ]

Final [ z ] is realised as [ s ] with vocalic release.
[ n ] is realised as [ h ] with vocalic release. Malayalam speakers fail to recognize the clear and dark [ l ] and substitute Malayalam retroflex lateral [ l ]

eg : [ d a l ] 'dull' [ d a ]

Sometimes final [ n ] is realised as [ n ]

eg : [ k o n ] 'corn' [ k o n ]

[ ð ] is absent in Malayalam, so it is realised as [ s ] followed by [ u ]

eg : [ r w ð ] 'rouge' [ r u s u ]

Final consonant clusters are not possible in Malayalam. So English consonant clusters are realised with vocalic release in [ w ] and the clusters ending in [ t ] are split up by [ t ] and [ t ] is changed into [ d ]

eg : [ h e l p t ] 'helped' [ h e l p d u ]

[ l u k t ] 'looked' [ l u k d u ]

[ w o t t ] 'watched' [ w o c d u ]

[ d ] - ending two consonant clusters are split up by [ t ] and [ d ] is realised as [ d ] floowed by [ u ]

eg : [ n æ b d ] 'nabbed' [ n æ b d u ]

[ b æ g d ] 'bagged' [ b æ g d u ]

[ θ ] ending clusters are realised with [ θ ] changed into [ t ] followed by [ u ]
eg: [d e p θ] 'depth' [d e p t u]

[z] ending clusters are realised with [z] changed into
[s] followed by [w]

eg: [f j u: m s] 'fumes' [p h y u m s w]
    [p a b s] 'pubs' [p a b s w]

Similar changes occur with the word final three
consonant clusters. [t] - ending and [d] - ending clusters
are split up with [t] and have a vocalic release.

eg: [g r a: s p t] 'grasped' [g r a: s p t d w]
    [p l a n d z d] 'plunged' [p l a n c i d w]

[θ] - ending and [z] - ending three consonant clusters
have the similar change like that in case of two consonant
clusters.

Certain word final three consonant clusters are realised as
two consonant clusters

eg: [t w e l f θ] 'twelfth' [t w e l t w]

Certain word final four consonant clusters are realised as
two three consonant clusters.

eg: [θ a u s e n t θ s] 'thousandth' [θ a v u s a n θ s w]

Syllabic consonants in the final position are
treated as [a] or [i] plus consonant.

eg: [m i d i l] 'middle' [m i d i l]
    [b a t n] 'button' [b a t a n]
5.5. **Influence of the Mothertongue**

It is not easy for a speaker of a language to pronounce the sounds of another language even though he is not suffering from any speech defects. He is not able to hear the sounds which are not available in his language. So he tries to transfer his own language system when he studies a new language. When he learns a new language he transfers his sounds and its variants. He hears his own sound units. The differences of sounds in the second language are missed by the learner if the learner's language has no such differences in sounds. Malayalam speakers who learn English do not hear the English aspiration in [p, t, k] in the initial position. When a Malayalam speaker tries to learn English, if he finds a sound which is not existing in his language he will substitute some other sound from his language. Thus in the learning of a second language the practice the learner attained from his own language comes in his way. Each language has its own system and structure. In second language learning the student hears and speaks on the basis of the system of his own language.

Malayalam has [ɔ] and [oː] instead of English [ɔ] and [oː]. The difference between [ɔ] and [oː] is not always observed by a Malayalam speaker who learns English.
eg: [ p o: t ] 'port' and [ p o t ] 'pot' are pronounced with the same vowel in [ p o: r t: w ] and [ p o: t: w ].

English [ æ ] and [ ã ] are not available in Malayalam. So [ a: ] and [ a ] are used respectively.

eg: [ t s p ] 'chap' [ c a: p: a: w ]

[k ð p ] 'cup' [ k a: p: i: w ]

The distinction of vowel sounds in Malayalam English is not similar to that of British English. Malayalam speakers do not use weak vowels in unstressed syllable of words.

eg: [ t i k i t ] 'ticket' [ t i k a: t: w ]

[k o l i d ž ] 'college' [ k o: l e: j w ]

Malayalam has a tendency to change [ a ] into [ e ] after a consonant in the first syllable of a word. This tendency forces a Malayalam speaker to pronounce the word [ b r ã j ] 'brush' [ b r a: s w ] into [ b r e s w ]. A Malayalam speaker does not use the weak forms of words.

eg: [ o v ] 'of' [ o: p h w ]

[e ] 'a' [ e ]

[w a s ] 'was' [ v a: s w ]

Sometimes [ i: ] is used for [ i ]

eg: [ p a: t i s ] 'parties' [ p a: r t i: s w ]

[k a: p i s ] 'copies' [ k a: p: i: s w ]

In Malayalam there are no [ e ] and [ e ]], hence the speaker substitutes his [ a ] and [ e ] plus [ ã ] in 'r'-ending words.

[ ã n d e ] 'under' [ a n d a r ]

[ s t e: ] 'stir' [ s t e: r ]
As there are no diphthongs in Malayalam the Malayalam speaker pronounces diphthongs as monophthongs.

eg: [klɛi] 'clay' [klɛi]
    [fɔuk] 'folk' [fɔ:kɔ]
    [piɛriod] 'period' [pi:ri:də]
    [pɛərent] 'parent' [pɛərəndə]
    [tju] 'tour' [tuə]
    [mju] 'moor' [mʊə]

English voiceless plosive sounds [p, t, k] have aspirated counterparts in stressed initial positions. A Malayalam speaker uses his unaspirated plosives [p] and [k] in all positions. [t] does not occur initially in Malayalam. So when Malayalam speakers speak English [t], it is substituted by [ʈ] in that position.

eg: [pʰin] 'pin' [pɨn]
    [kʰin] 'kin' [kɨn]
    [tʰin] 'tin' [tɨn]

Malayalam has no [d] sound, so it is substituted by [ɖ] in all positions. [ʈʃ] and [ɖʒ] are pronounced as [c] and [ʃ]. A Malayalam speaker hears [θ] and [ʒ] as equivalent to his sounds [ʈ] and [ɖ]

eg: [ʈʃin] 'chin' [cin]
    [ɖʒin] 'jín' [ʃin]
    [θin] 'thin' [tɨn]
    [ʒis] 'this' [dɪsɪə]
[r] is pronounced as [ɾ] in clusters by the Malayalam speakers because they use a retroflex [ɾ] when it is present in a cluster in their language.

eg: [train] 'train' [tɾayn]

[l] is pronounced as [ɭ] in clusters by Malayalam speakers because they use retroflex [ɭ] when it is present in a cluster in their language.

eg: [klisn] 'clean' [klisn]

Malayalam has only one sound [v] for English [v] and [w]. So far as a Malayalam speaker is concerned it is difficult to make a distinction of English [v] and [w].

eg: [vent] 'vent' [vənt]
    [went] 'went' [wənt]

Malayalam speakers sometimes tend to pronounce a few sounds in English words as they are spelt.

eg: [vimos] 'vahemence' [vɐhɪməns]
    [vihikules] 'vehicular' [vɪhɪkələr]
    [kwesstʃən] 'question' [kwɛstʃən]

The 't'-ending final clusters are pronounced with [d] instead of [t]

eg: [askt] 'asked' [aːskd]

[ŋ] is realised as [n]

eg: [snə] 'singer' [sɪŋə]

Most of the consonants are absent in the final position in Malayalam, so as a result Malayalam speaker pronounces most
of the words with vocalic release.

eg: [ʃɪp] 'ship' [ʃɪpɪ] [ʃɪp]
[ˈpɑːk] 'park' [pɑːrk [pɑːrk]
[moʊ] 'mob' [mʊb [mʊb]
[ˈmæd] 'mad' [mæd [mæd]
[bʊʃ] 'bush' [bʊʃ [bʊʃ]

A Malayalam speaker cannot hear the English syllabic consonants because syllabic consonants are absent in Malayalam. He pronounces a vowel with them.

eg: [mʌtn] 'mutton' [maʊtɪn]
[ˈfɪlm] 'film' [pɪlm]

A Malayalam speaker is not aware of the stress in words with more than one syllable. He stresses all the syllables uniformly. All syllables are stressed or unstressed in his speech. In English some words are stressed on the first syllable as in [ˈæsərɪn] 'aspirin', some on the second syllable as in [ˈæsərɪtɪ] 'asperity', some on the third syllable as in [ˈæsərɪʃən] 'aspiration', and some on the fourth syllable as in [əˈsɪmɪleɪʃən] 'assimilation'. This complex system makes it difficult for a Malayalam speaker to attain the mastery of English. He is confused to see that the same word receives stress on different syllables on different occasions. In Malayalam stress does not play as important part as it plays in English but vowel length may show some clear change in meaning.
eg: [p a t a m] 'picture'
    [p a t a m] 'paddy field'
    [m a l a] 'mountain'
    [m a l a] 'garland'

Because of these differences in the sound system the native speaker is forced to transfer his own sounds when he tries to speak a foreign language.
Reference


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