



Teaching Communicative English -- Hurdles and Remedies

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Abstract

Everyone knows the importance of effective, flawless and simple communication, whether it is oral or written. If one has to drive home his point in person, be it while making a presentation to a gathering or facing an interview, the way of expression plays a crucial role. Even if the person has in depth knowledge of the subject, if he does not know how to speak appropriately, he cannot succeed. Some of the self styled guardians of local language (mother tongue) started misguiding the vulnerable youngsters advising them that they should not learn any language other than their mother tongue. Due to these factors, even a capable student loses the confidence and feels incompetent in the class where the students with ample exposure to conversing in English dominate the scene. The eradication of language fanaticism will go a long way in the nurturing of English language teaching.

Keywords: Communicative English, Hurdles, Remedies.

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Introduction

Everyone knows the importance of effective, flawless and simple communication, whether it is oral or written. If one has to drive home his point in person, be it while making a presentation to a gathering or facing an interview, the way of expression plays a crucial role. Even if the person has in depth knowledge of the subject, if he does not know how to speak appropriately, he cannot succeed. Similarly, let it be a project report, a technical note, a paper for possible publication or a thesis for a research degree, the language used, the style, the mode of presentation can either make it a success or a failure. To be successful, effective communication is equally important, though not more, than the technical or scientific knowledge. Technically brilliant boys and girls fail in the personal interviews and the reports of technically capable persons do not make it to the end. To summarize, brilliance and knowledge get buried in bad English. This is indeed a sorrowful state of affairs. This was not the case a couple of decades back. This paper is an honest attempt to find the why of it and tries to suggest possible remedies in terms of removing the barriers as well as guiding to regain the lost glory.

Reason for the Present State of Affairs

As stated earlier, the present state of unfortunate situation was not there decades back. Most of the educated persons, leave alone graduates, even matriculates were in a position to communicate

flawlessly in English. A critical look at the back will throw some light on the possible reasons.

Language Fanaticism

Some of the self styled guardians of local language (mother tongue) started misguiding the vulnerable youngsters advising them that they should not learn any language other than their mother tongue. They were made to believe that if they learn English, they are not respecting their mother tongue, say, mother. (Language fanaticism, religious fanaticism and communal fanaticism have combined together and caused irreparable damage to the individuals and the society. Even the educated have fallen prey to these and the beneficiaries are self centered, unscrupulous, immoral politicians!). It is to be remembered that these preachers sent their wards to prestigious English medium schools! This wrong idea of hate English has gone into the minds of a large number of people who have lost their sense of proportion.

Paucity of Capable and Dedicated Teachers

It is a fact that most of the intelligent youngsters opt for professional courses since that may pave a way for better employment. The basic sciences are the second preference and languages are the last choice. Thus, most of the academically weaker students only go in for language courses. After getting qualified in language courses, for many of them, teaching is the last option. This is true in the case of professional courses also. Of course, there are a handful of individuals for whom teaching is by design, and, not by default. If it is kept in mind that flow can take place only from a higher level to a lower level, the first requirement for a teacher (to be an

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intellectual) will become obvious: the flow of knowledge is possible only from an intelligent person to a seeker of knowledge. It is essential that the giver of knowledge is not only has the required knowledge potential, but also has a deep commitment to give the knowledge to the seeker. In other words, the combination of capability and dedication is a must for a teacher: do we have now? The state also plays its role effectively for the capable persons (in English) to run away from teaching by discrimination. It is indeed unfortunate that a professor of English does not get the salary a professor of Engineering gets in the same college!

Attitude of Parents and Relatives

The parents and relatives put pressure on the students to study the professional subjects since excellence in that only may take them to a good job. They even dissuade the children from concentrating on language subjects. If they find their wards studying English and discussing with class mates, they discourage them saying they are wasting their time. They put pressure on them to concentrate only on core subjects.

Lack of Motivation and Losing Interest

Due to such persistent comments and pressure, even the motivated and interested (to learn English) students lose motivation and interest to learn English. They will rather waste their and not learn English. They are not told in no uncertain terms that without good communication, they cannot survive, leave alone excel!

Role of Surroundings and Circumstances

In a village atmosphere, the students who converse in English are likely to be made fun of! The situation becomes worse, if there is no one in the house who can converse in English. The student has no opportunity to practice speaking in English. There may not be even news papers in English. There is no way they can improve their vocabulary. This results in inertia and the student becomes an introvert.

Psychological Impact

Due to these factors, even a capable student loses the confidence and feels incompetent in the class where the students with ample exposure to conversing in English dominate the scene. He shies away from discussions in core subjects also and tends to become a failure.

Remedial Measures Fanaticism

In general, fanaticism in any dimension should be curbed at the beginning itself if possible, and never be practiced. The entire society, the illiterate or educated, the young or old, the rich or poor, all should be educated and made to realize that fanaticism is venomous at any cost. It is possible that being fanatic may help someone to achieve his goal very fast: but the consequences, in the long range, will cause irreparable damages. This can be compared to the use of nuclear weapons which may help to destroy the enemy: and the long time effect like the radiations will affect everyone including the user. The services all right thinking persons, agencies, societies and NGOs should be effectively used for this purpose. It should be included in the curriculum at all level and all out attempts should be made to eradicate this evil from the world as it was done in the case of small pox. The eradication of language fanaticism will go a long way in the nurturing of English language teaching.

Concluding Remarks

There is an urgent necessity to have intelligent, dedicated and committed teachers in English. For this, those who are interested in teaching should be spotted when they are young, made to understand the importance of English communication and motivated to take up English teaching. The state has to play an important role which will attract the gifted to take up English teaching. This can be done only by treating the language teachers in terms of salary, perks, facilities, and promotion avenues at par with the teachers of core subjects, say, in engineering colleges, the teachers involved in engineering subjects.

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