

Apprehension in Learning English

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Abstract :

The explosion of technology in the modern years has paved way for global interaction in English. Learning English has become mandatory and fashion of the day. Meanwhile it has become a frightful experience to learners. They are put in an uncomfortable emotional state in which they sense powerless and experience stress in using English. Learners' self perceptions of the mastery of English, communication apprehension felt towards teachers and peers, tests in an unfamiliar language, teachers' questions and corrections in the classroom environment, decline in the regular usage of English for communication and the negative attitudes towards English courses may be some of the reasons for the stimulation of the anxiety in learning English. Now, the process of learning English has become simpler because of the umpteen numbers of online and offline resources. Though learning English has become easy, English is still atypical to many ordinary people. The learners have to overcome the threats that loom over its existence. One of the best methods to overcome the language anxiety is to THINK IN ENGLISH.

APPREHENSION IN LEARNING ENGLISH

Techno- boom is one of the wonders of the modern times. The explosion of technology in the modern years has made human life simpler than ever before by connecting the farthest parts of the world and sowing seeds for global interaction. In this set of connections, the language that emancipated as a common mode of communication without any tough fight is English. English, once a borrowed language, has become the language of choice in education, and commerce. In the education system, English language has begun to prod out space with the vernacular languages. So, Learning English has become mandatory and fashion of the day as it promotes the life style of the people by enabling them to get a job and determining their social status. Learning a second language like English can be a frightful experience to a large number of people. However, humankind has always accepted challenges with enthusiasm and resilience. This promising attitude of human beings has made English knowledge and skills reach the doorsteps of the ordinary non-English speakers of our country.

English has always been an exhausting challenge for students. English tags along with students

in all walks of their life even if they don't like it. It is seen in the text books, internet, computers, cell phones, tabs and everything they use. As the presence of English is ubiquitous, it is no longer feasible for any person to flee from it. The inevitability of acquiring and practicing English has created an apprehensive attitude towards the learning of the language. The pressure on students to accomplish reverberation in English results in anxiety that is specific to the second language classroom. Foreign Language Anxiety is "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the (foreign) language learning process" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). The second language learning anxiety is an outcome of the personal believes of the learner, the teacher and at large the society.

Learners' self perceptions of the mastery of English fabricate anxiety. The anxiety emerges from the learners' impression of their own ability to acquire and use English. The learners are twitchy and disconcerted when they are exposed to the second language. The sources leading to low self esteem regarding the acquisition of English are fear of making verbal or spelling and grammar mistakes. This fear makes the learners lose their self-confidence and creates a reluctance to learn and use English. The learners assume English to be complicated and this supposition results in building a strange kind of fear and complex quandary where even the brighter ones could not cope with the pressure of competing with the confident users. These psychological lacunas were largely responsible for hampering the sound footing of English in the native soil.

Communication apprehension felt towards teachers and peers prevents the students from using English. It is the human tendency to seek affirmative expressions from all directions for each and every undertaking. First of all, the learners of English look forward to speak English without error and earn applause from others. However, they have the fear of pessimistic judgments conceded by the reviewers/listeners. In the class room, the students are scared of being evaluated by the teachers as well as the peer group. The anxious learners imagine that their skills in language are weaker than their peers' and will be looked down by them. They are afraid to speak out

aloud in front of the class, during speaking practice or to write any concept in English for the perusal of others. Though they don't want to hoist their fame, they desire to be on the safer surface without getting negative criticism. This expectation to get affirmative remarks creates an anxiety that serves as a hurdle in speaking or writing English courageously. They are afraid of being observed and commented on.

Kitano (2001) argues that "...speaking skill is usually the first thing that learners compare with that of peers, teachers, and native speakers" (p. 550). In English classes, students look upon speaking ability as the most essential one. In everyday life as well as in the class rooms, most of the students never search out chances to speak English. When they are compelled to speak English, students fail to communicate in English. They compare their own skills with students who speak English fluently and also with the proficient orators and native speakers of English, which lead to anxiety emerging out of embarrassment and shame that they are not speaking exactly like the native speakers. Unlike reading and writing that allow contemplation and alteration, speaking demands concentration in a short time frame and must be controlled by the student as there is no opportunity for the rectification of error. As there is only one chance to process the communication profitably, the pressure on student increases.

The target language's sound patterns and structure being produced in their own voice makes foreign language learners anxious. The students are familiar with their own voice in their mother tongue. However, when they speak a foreign language, they feel their own voice to be strange and peculiar and have the feeling that they are wrong in their speech. When English is spoken by the teacher, students report to hear only a raucous buzzing sound in the initial stage of their learning. Moreover, English is one of the unphonetic languages that confuses and irritates the learners who study the language out of compulsion. Many students have aversion for English due to its strange sounds and vocabulary that varies from their mother tongue. They never like to master LSRW skills in English. As English is the second language, the students need arduous practice prior to the concrete presentation in front of the class. They skip off the pre learning and rehearsals due to the repugnance for English. This fear of not being ready for the lesson and fear of being named in class for answering in English creates inhibition. Finally, the fear of making obvious mistakes was associated with all anxiety-provoking factors. The fear of committing error while speaking discourages the students from conversing in English.

Students experience a great deal of test anxiety. When students are conscious of the fact that

they are tested, they become nervous. When many grammar items must be remembered, many students report that they knew the grammar, but forgot it while taking the test in English. They make a mistake and write down an incorrect answer due to their nervousness. Many times, the students feel that they are able to get hold of the right answer after coming out of the exam Hall. Fear of forgetting vocabulary and sentence structure while speaking as well as fear of failing in the expression of ideas in English generate test anxiety. During the period of anxiety students experience feelings of fret and dread, have trouble in concentrating and become forgetful. Test anxiety is intensified by the complicated question types written using unfamiliar words in English. If the students never recognize the specific question format or words that are new, they experience test anxiety during that test and is extended to future tests also. Young (1991) states that, "...the greater degree of student evaluation and the more unfamiliar and ambiguous the test tasks and formats, the more the learner anxiety is produced" (p.429).

For most of the students, teachers' questions and corrections in the classroom environment were the factors intensifying their anxiety. The students develop negative attitudes towards the language as well as the course, if the mistakes committed by them are corrected often by the teachers and the classmates. These amendments with a view of improvement hinder their flow of thought as they start focusing on grammar and spelling and lose their focus on the content. The learners ultimately lose the confidence. The fear of negative evaluation is triggered by the assumption that the teacher is a fluent speaker and his judgment on the language is the ultimate verdict. The teachers' questions in English for which the student is unprepared, as well as the teachers' corrections and comparisons with native speakers triggers a negative attitude towards the language.

As there is decline in the regular usage of English for communication, the inhibition towards it mounts up. In India, Most of the class rooms exist as watertight compartments for monolingual users and the lessons in English are taught in the vernacular language. So, in this scenario there is less chance for the learners to get exposure to English. The learners can never approach English with the same confidence as they do with their mother tongue. The learners imbibe the vernacular language in natural surroundings in which an ample opportunity is given to them to listen to the vocabulary and grasp the sentence structure with ease. No such ambience is provided for the non-native learners of English. They are directly plunged into the vocabulary and grammar without proper underpinning. This haphazard method of teaching and learning makes

the learners lose self-assurance and develop abhorrence towards the language and reluctance in the usage. This scenario is aggravated with the increase in the number of unskilled English trainers who misguide or mislead the learners through wrong usage of the words and phrases and grammar.

The negative attitudes towards English courses sow the seed of anxiety in the learners. Some learners are so emotionally tied to their mother tongue that they hate other languages. Their blind affection to their native language makes them rebuff English irrespective of its significance. In addition, others' negative judgments about the language are correlated with communication apprehension. The language skills possessed by the learner, motivation to learn, teaching methodologies adapted, proficiency of teachers, tests administrated, exposure to an assortment of sources of language, encountering various situations demanding the usage of English and culture are other factors arousing anxiety.

In the past, the learners of English found it difficult to use English and scamped after the capsule courses that run across the length and breadth of the country with no positive results. But now, the process of learning English has become simpler because of the rich resources available in the form of printed materials in English and the soft copies in the form of the e-books or audio-video materials. Umpteen numbers of ways and means to master English is available in internet. The learner no longer feels humiliated as the learning often takes place in virtual settings and proffers him enough scope to improvise, develop and keep informed of his language status from time to time. Using these resources, one can master the language even without the proper guidance of a teacher. Though learning English has become easy, and there is extensive usage of the language in the urban areas, English is still atypical to many ordinary people.

However, there are several strategies that the learner has to take charge of while learning English as it plays a key task in the life of every individual in the promising global village. The learners have to overcome the threats that loom over its existence. One of the best methods to overcome the language anxiety is to THINK IN ENGLISH. It is apt to get support from Manish Gupta, the author of the book *English Bites*, who says that thinking in English is an asset that is compliant to those who wish to speak high-quality English. He says, "Hindi was a predominant mode of communication at home as well as school and so it is very tough for me to disassociate or disentangle the link I have with Hindi. So, I continue to think in Hindi and I translate that into English." This is the position with many non native speakers of English. People often

translating the content can triumph over their fear of the language by making English their mind language during the intrapersonal communication. Everyone should get proficiency in English by acclimatizing various technologies that suit their aptitude and capabilities.

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