

**The ‘Collective Subconscious’: A Goldmine awaiting Exploration
by Teachers of ESL**

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Abstract

This paper intends to highlight the supreme role of the ‘emotional element’ in the three-fold process of linguistic communication, viz., Emotional, Intellectual and Speech realms. Among the three, the first and the primary element of all linguistic communication, it is felt, is not accorded due recognition and role in teaching pedagogies of ESL in the Indian context where the emotional connectivity of the learners with the concepts and ideas being taught through the target language dynamics is of immense importance. The fact that the content being totally alien is assumed to be the root-cause of the inefficacy of most of the teaching-learning practices, especially at upper-intermediate and UG levels and it is discussed in all its ramifications. It is suggested that content from the native literature taps the ‘Collective Subconscious’ of learners assuring better outcomes as the teacher is able to establish a reliable connection with the students at a deeper level of things in this pattern.

Keywords: Collective Subconscious, Emotional Element, Second Language Learners, Native Content

Introduction

Life is a vehicle which always moves indefatigably and language is like a windscreen through which one can see the world or vice versa. While riding the vehicle of 'LIFE', one needs to ensure a perfect windscreen wiper to steer one's way safely to reach the desired destination. To evolve into an effective communicator in any language, one needs not mere acquaintance but deep intimacy with the language. This happens when the users of language establish an inner relationship with the target language at subconscious and emotional levels. The present scenario of the teaching of ESL in India, to a large extent, is not in line with this concept. The outcome of this is reflected in the inverse proportionality existing between the ever increasing number of engineering graduates and their English communicative abilities. Their analytical abilities, competitive spirits and learning interests are far inferior to those of the technical graduates produced a few decades ago. The lively interest that the learners evince in language learning and the factors that motivate them are of vital importance.

Communication includes three most essential stages. Firstly, the emotional feeling that initiates the process of communication followed by the intellectual thought which transforms the idea into expression and finally the speech medium which gives a form to the expression. So, when a person gets motivated to speak, it primarily deals with the emotion which drives him to articulate his feelings and ideas. Emotional response triggers intellectual mechanisms and they, in turn, manifest in speech patterns. The intellect, when it is made active by the thought, has to respond and produce the expected outcome. For this to take place, the intellect should be trained in such a way that it responds immediately without any difficulty. For intellect to respond and receive the inputs provided through teaching methods, the core emotional element should first get connected with the ideas or content which then stimulates the intellect to grasp the essence of inputs and transform it into a skill, the communicative skill. The 'Collective Subconscious' of the target student group is the indispensable data, which is the storehouse of ideas, concepts, ethics, emotional constructs derived from his race, culture, society and civilization. The teaching methods and materials should stimulate this great repository of the students through the agency of emotional content which ensures desirable outcomes.

In the Indian context, these three stages of speech transmission are called 'Pasyanthi' the stage of perception, 'Madhyama', the medial stage where a mental formation of the structures of language is made and 'Vaikhari', the final stage when the actual verbal expression is emitted. So, these three elements (Feeling, Thought and Speech Medium) are

interrelated and interdependent and an understanding of this synthesis may lead to a more tangible and customized second language teaching methodology apt for the Indian classroom. While the methods that address the second and third factors have been well researched and are in vogue, the first and the primary element of all linguistic communication, i.e., the emotional element, is not accorded due recognition and role in teaching pedagogies. This factor, if appropriately incorporated into the curricula, could go a long way in complementing the existing methodologies and make them more contributive and wholesome.

In order to attain a proper balance among these factors, self-motivation is required.

Major Factors of Motivation

The factors that play a significant role in increasing second language learners' interest and motivating them towards spending quality time on language learning are - Attitude of students, Teacher, Content, Method and Environment. Of all these factors, the teacher has to first understand the attitude of students which is an alloy of interest and self-motivational levels, since the cardinal principle of learning requires students to be motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically.

Learners' Interests

"Total commitment, total involvement, total physical, intellectual and emotional responses are necessary to successfully send and receive messages in a second language." (Brown, 2000, P.1). Firstly, if learners are highly committed and deeply motivated, it will ensure an unbounded enthusiastic environment in the class room leading to an effective learning. The learners' inspiration and motivation is the crux of the whole exercise. "I have no special talents. I'm only passionately curious" says Albert Einstein.

A student, who is unwilling to learn, though provided with all the modern learning aids, is like a warrior who doesn't want to fight even after having the most powerful arsenal with him. This was the exact scenario when the Bhagavad Gita was born and used as a weapon for motivating a nonchalant warrior who had everything at his beck and call but lacked the basic spring of inspiration inside. Hence, a catalyst that stirs the interests of learners is the need of the hour and it requires serious contemplation from all those concerned.

Teacher

Research into the role of teachers in influencing the learner's motivation asserts that teachers are one of the most essential factors of L2 learners' motivation. It is the Teacher only who can ensure that the interests of the students are always set alight in the class room.

As stated by Douglas Brown (P 81, Teaching by Principles), a teacher should not just concentrate on delivering the information but rather play the role of a facilitator who sets the stage for learning by stimulating the students to recognize their capabilities and channel them in the right direction. To be an effective teacher and motivator, the teacher should enjoy the entire process of teaching like a passionate gardener who takes an avid interest in nurturing the plants and relishes not only the fruit of his labours but every tiny labour involved in the process of gardening.

A teacher should not serve as the driver of learner's vehicle; rather, he/she act as a trainer for the future driver. He lends his hand to the learners for constructing the steps which lead to their success. Ramage(1990) states that teachers should be the nucleus of learner-motivation that engages the learners in their learning activity positively and actively. Zoltan Dornei and Kata Csizer (1998:215) recommend the following 'Ten Commandments' for motivating learners.

1. Set a personal example with your own behavior.
2. Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the class room.
3. Present the tasks properly.
4. Develop a good relationship with the learners.
5. Increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence.
6. Make the language classes interesting.
7. Promote learner autonomy.
8. Personalize the learning process.
9. Increase the learners' goal-orientedness.
10. Familiarize learners with the target language culture.

In addition to these prescriptions, a teacher is free to select efficacious content that grabs the attention of the specific student group and ensures a lively environment in the class. Taste of a dish is the basic trigger of one's hunger which makes eating a favourite practice. If the content used in the class room takes hold of students, motivates them and helps them overcome most of the stumbling blocks and hindering snags on their way to language proficiency like anxiety, lack of confidence etc., students will voluntarily take to the rewarding experience of language learning. Hence, due consideration must be given to the selection of content that can make the journey of students highly exhilarating.

Content

The next step in this process of pedagogic exploration is the need for a deep investigation into what content should be used to teach the language to upper-intermediate and Engineering students from rural backgrounds. A rural teacher may not find the methods like TBLT, CLT or CLIL very effective to motivate them as these students are very inhibitive, nervous and embarrassed. The background that these rural students hail from is completely at odds with the ethos and ambiance which form the canvas of the native speakers. The usually prescribed methods which require the learners to be proactive and spontaneous can't be used in this type of environments. Instead, contexts and texts which find an instantaneous acceptance and relish from the students may prove to be more productive. This kind of materials from the native literature taps the 'Collective Subconscious' of learners assuring better outcomes as the teacher is able to establish a reliable connection with the students at a deeper level of things. This is the reason a handful of experts today are prescribing the effective practice of 'From the known to the unknown approach' to teaching the second language.

Today, the mainstream English language teaching, especially the English being taught to the students of professional studies like engineering and management, at the UG and PG levels, is called content-based language teaching. But the point escaping the curriculum designers is that the regular learning of hosts of technical subjects is itself Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). This makes us feel that the function of English teaching as well as the content of syllabi must be different from the regular technological stuff. The content should be carefully chosen that it triggers the imaginative and creative faculties of the student and evokes in him an urge to communicate in the foreign language with gusto and enthusiasm. Here comes into the picture the fertile indigenous subconscious background of the student. Any language teaching pedagogy that ignores this ground reality is bound to fail in delivering the expected outcomes. This is, in a nutshell, the debacle of English teaching in India to a large extent. The characters and contexts in the Indian epics that have become inseparable part of the Indian conscience, the rich cultural ethos that is manifest in innumerable idioms, anecdotes and language usages that dance day and night on the lips of Indians, the typical linguistic expressions that have shaped the Indian manners, courtesies and belief systems have to be incorporated in framing the content of the syllabi of ESL in the Indian paradigm. A Chanakya would do better than a Machiavelli, a Rama than

Hector and Panchatantra than Harry Porter. Arthur W.Ryder (2011) uses the following lines to describe the majestic grandeur of Indian literature.

“One Vishnusharman, Shrewdly gleaning
All wordly wisdom’s inner meaning,
In these five books the charm compresses
Of all such books the world possesses.”

This verse exemplifies the richness of Indian literary content with which both language and character of an individual could be profoundly influenced. The core principle of Indian teachings is to transform a student into a complete human being who is integral in character, captivating in speech and decorous in manners.

A further elaboration of this advantageous approach may explain this indigenous concept in detail.

Easy connectivity with “From the Known to the Unknown Approach”

It is a fact that people prefer known elements to those unknown to avoid ambiguity and obscurity. The comfort that students draw from teacher’s lessons is very essential as this creates a conducive environment where students feel supported and encouraged. When various texts of different alien cultures and nations are used to train the students on language skills, the rural students who are the majority would find it difficult as they are not aware of the cultural and phonemic background of the target language. Most of the students and even the teachers can’t pronounce the words like their native counterparts. The names of persons, places and many other components of target language are totally different from those of the native variety. Insisting on the immaculate pronunciation of words at the incipient stage of learning an alien language will slacken the enthusiasm of learners. This difficulty may lead to low confidence levels. ‘Low self-esteem and ego will make the student feel unappreciated and unrecognized. As such, the educator must do what is necessary to support the student to a higher level of need satisfaction so that the student can focus his or her attention on learning. Even at the level of self-actualization, the educator may need to provide encouragement or opportunities. (Maslow, 1943)

A qualitative change in Preferences

Day and night prescription by the teachers regarding ‘book-reading’ has not been very successful for the sole reason that the teacher himself/herself is not clear about what specifically to read and which really appeals to the aesthetic tastes of their students. In most of the cases, given the Indian scenario, the teacher himself has to first introduce the student to

the delights and delicacies of book-reading by providing him with a highly savoury book. Hence, not mere prescription but a clear description based on observant selection is the responsibility of the teacher. A wrong prescription, i.e., a book which is totally alien to the beliefs and tastes of the students may mar the very purpose of the idea and potentially affect the students' interest in forming the ambrosial habit of reading books. When the content connects with the core beliefs of learners and generates interest among them, they will naturally get habituated to spending quality time on reading. Here, the crux is, reading is taken to for the aesthetic enjoyment that it provides and language acquisition is unconscious, immanent and yet continuous. But today the vice-versa is being attempted and the result is known to all.

The time slots given for English instruction in India, especially at upper-intermediate and UG levels, are generally from three to five in a week. The teacher doesn't even spend one hour with students every day. The one hour classroom instruction of language should be looked at as a motivating session rather than a strict instructional module. The impetus received during these highly stimulating sessions must influence the students to spend time on practicing whatever has been discussed in the class. Ghosn (2002) says that literature can change the attitudes of the learners. So literary works don't only give aesthetic pleasure but also influence one's habits. The content of native Indian texts selected and exploited appropriately would possibly drive the learners to spend more time on language learning.

Apart from the afore-mentioned advantages, other crucial factors like healthy association between teacher and students, increase in the lecture attendance and saving teacher's preparation time etc., could also be achieved by using the native literary translations.

Conclusion

It is essential that second language teachers and trainers must be fully aware of the modern methods and strategies of language teaching and learners must be exposed to the structural patterns, phonological variations and the cultural background of the target language. But, it is equally important to keep an eye on the learning competencies of Indian rural students, their apprehensions and inhibitions. The second language training imparted should be planned and unfolded in such a way that it builds upon the core competencies of students in their native language but not taught as a totally independent, alienated learning exercise which is more often at loggerheads with their native tongue. At this point, it is not just the structures or the vocabulary that count, but also the content, i.e., the situations, contexts, references, quotations, anecdotes, idioms and stories which form the basis for

academic tasks, practices and assignments which are included in the teaching pedagogy. If these essential ingredients are chosen from the Indian literary milieu, the students at once get connected to the learning process at a deeper emotional level and will also be able to draw heavily upon their inner reserves of imagination and creative impulses which are obviously steeped in their cultural and ethnic inheritance.

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