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NECESSITY OF UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS IN LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN TEACHING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Abstract: Developing effective Communication Skills is one of the primary objectives of language teaching practices these days. Almost all professional courses like Engineering, Management Studies, Computer Sciences and applications, etc. have included the study of Communication Skills under different heads: Communication Skills, Business Communication, Technical Communication, Communication and Soft Skills, Communication and life skills, etc. More often, the teaching-learning activities in the communication skills classes are centered on the traditional procedural methods wherein more emphasis is given to teaching rigid rules and regulations instead of understanding the real nature of problems faced by the students in acquiring effective Communication. As a result, many teachers fail to develop these necessary and 'employable skills' in the students. The teachers need to understand the various barriers or problems faced by the students for developing their (students') Communication Skills and achieving quality teaching. The present paper will be centered on the discussion of various psychological barriers faced by the language learners in a more scientific way. For understanding these barriers, let us first understand the concept of Communication.

Keywords: Necessity, Communication Skills, Language Learners

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is a systematic attempt to share human experiences, thoughts, ideas, information and knowledge. Communication includes all the activities of listening, speaking, reading, writing and understanding and responding. It is the set of all the skills used in creating and sustaining human relationship. Aristotle defined communication as 'who says what to whom with what effect.

Effective Communication is the essence of one's personal and professional life. The ability to communicate effectively is viewed as one of the important 'employable skills' in the modern world. However, not all are gifted with effective communication. There are several factors which affect the process of communication. These factors are called barriers to communication. Among these factors psychological barriers play a major role in blocking the communicators. The language teacher's clear understanding of these various factors may assist him in teaching communication effectively.

Defining psychological barriers to Communication:

The factors which affect the process of effective communication are called as barriers to Communication. In Communication Theory, these factors are called as 'Noise'. Shannon and Weaver studied the concept of 'noise' for the first time in communication theory. These barriers are classified in the five major types: Physical, Mechanical, Socio-cultural, Psychological and the linguistic barriers. Psychological barriers can be defined as the psychological factors which affect the process of effective communication. These psychological problems are of several types.

1. Negative self-image:

Unfortunately, many students hold a negative self-image. This low-self-image not only blocks the process of communication but also the overall development of the student. This self-image might be created by the hostile environment or the lack of self-realization of the student. However hard the language teachers try to teach communication skills, especially oral skills, yet they fail to achieve success because they do not understand that there is a need to develop the student's self-image as positive one.

2. Underdeveloped Personality Traits:

There is need to understand the student's personality traits for developing his communication skills. Many communication skills learners have under developed personality traits which block

the process of acquiring and practicing Communication skills. Personality complexes such as Inferiority complex may affect the social interaction.

3. Fear /Phobia:

The fear of public speaking is rated as the first fear in the world according to many grapevine surveyors. Technically, the fear of public speaking is called as "Gloss phobia." The students who suffer from this phobia often shun every occasion of public speaking. Many teachers are unaware of this type of problem. They view these students as negative or uninterested or dull students. They usually reprimand the students for not speaking effectively. However, even a clever student will fail to speak effectively, if he has this fear of public speaking. There is another phobia which is relevant to our discussion- Agoraphobia. It is the fear of public places or social interaction. The students suffering from this fear avoid group communication events like group discussion, meeting, etc. They feel extremely uncomfortable at the social situations. In addition to this, there are other fears/phobias namely fear of being evaluated, fear of being insulted, fear of failure, and other such fears. The students cannot eliminate this fear easily. Due to this, the student's communication is marred. Every teacher needs to understand these phobias scientifically to plan his remedial sessions or counseling sessions.

4. The Halo Effect:

An individual either likes because of his preferences or dislikes because of his prejudices. There are a majority of the learners who dislike formal communication situations. The teachers' efforts go in vain because of the students' apathy to communication practices. This becomes a major problem for the student in his/her later life. Teachers should work hard to remove the 'halo' effect in the students. Negligence of the halo effect may result in various other psychological problems in the students.

5. Emotions:

Fear, anxiety, anger, nervousness, shyness, etc. are the major emotional blockages faced by the students. These emotions can be result of mistrust, ego-centrism, dissonance arising from the past experiences and the feeling of loss aversion. These emotions cast a negative effect on the communicators, thereby their communication becomes ineffective.

The Effects of these barriers on language learners:

One can enlist numerous other such barriers. But the writer would not be lured to discuss every type of psychological problem in the present paper. Rather, he has enlisted the major

psychological barriers briefly. The effects of the psychological barriers are crucial from the point of view of developing communication skills of the students. In spite of all the efforts taken by the teachers to teach communication skills to the students, yet almost sixty to ninety percent of the students lack basic communication abilities. Whenever, the teachers try to take some steps for assisting students in developing their (students') language skills, they try to teach mere grammatical rules and usages. However, this cannot eliminate the psychological barriers in the students. Lack of proper communicative competence arising due to psychological problems can block the professional development of the students. There is greater need to modify our teaching learning practices and include some methods to remove these barriers.

Teachers vs Psychiatrist: Ethical Dilemma

Many readers will doubt, on reading this discussion, whether the writer is propagating the fact that the language teachers should act as psychiatrists or consider all learners as psychic. The writer neither holds any such an opinion nor will he ask language teachers to act as doctors. But, a good teacher is a good counselor if not the doctor. Even modern teaching methods view "teacher as a counselor." Psychological barriers cannot be overcome easily. There is need of careful planning and scientific methods by teachers to assist the learners in overcoming these barriers.

CONCLUSION

The paper has attempted to discuss the various psychological barriers and its effect on the language learners. The writer thinks that the teachers need to understand the problems faced by students to assist them in developing their (students') communication skills. The paper is devoid of large quotations and citations from the books and other sources. However, that does not decrease the authenticity and the reference value of his discussion. As the conference aims at discussing 'English Language and Literature Today', the paper might be useful for understanding the recent trends and challenges in language teaching classes.

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