
ENGLISH – THE ESSENTIAL ROOT OF LEARNING

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Abstract:



Every creature on this earth starts their breath by learning. It's an automatic process that makes one adapt to the surroundings for their survival. A just born kid naturally learns the ways to search for food and comfort. He/she cries giving a signal to his/her mother that he/she needs to care. It's a natural instinct that makes them learn the first lesson in their life. Though all the creatures learn in one way or other, it is only human beings that they need a separate code for identification and communication. So language obviously helps them to define themselves through learning. As a Chinese proverb says 'Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.' To learn and communicate in this modern world, language is an essential part for stepping into the global world. In the globalized competitive world, English has gained its importance and has given rise to a number of English medium schools where the medium of instruction is only in English. The present article focuses on the importance of English as a language in learning various subjects.

Key Words: primary language, content-based learning, vernacular languages and so on

‘Never stop learning because life never stops teaching.’ Yes, it’s a fact. A day for any human being starts by learning. The methods of learning may differ from one individual to the other but the common factor that helps them to understand one another is language. A child starts his learning by listening to his mother tongue spoken by the members of his family. When he starts going to school he learns the second subject other than the vernacular language that is English. They try to learn and understand the new vocabulary and words by learning the meaning in their mother tongue. Though the new language is a little complicated for the beginner the charts, the expressions and so on make it easy for them to identify and learn the new word. The process of learning through English develops in all subjects thus making them aware that they need to learn things in a foreign language other than their mother tongue.

As it is a well-known fact that language is a systematic means of communication by the use of sounds or conventional symbols, it is just that the methods of learning the language should be organized and effective. Language is the written and spoken methods of combining words to create a specific meaning when used by the people. Human beings are the only species on this earth for whom language is specific and remains potentially communicative medium capable of expressing ideas, concepts, moods, feelings, and attitudes. Why has English attained a great status in the learning hub? The reasons are crystal clear. As far as English is concerned it may not be the most spoken language in the world, but many countries have adopted English as the official language. A survey puts forward a rough estimate that there are 2 billion people in the world who use English for communication on a regular basis.

English has become a dominant language as there is no other option for the people to choose the language as they have to enter a global workforce. The research conducted throughout the world also shows that cross-border business communication is most often conducted in English. Even the entertainment wings treat English as the king of communication. It helps in improving the cultural understanding and creates access to a great wealth of entertainment. Today, as we all, are aware of the fact that most of the youth are spending their time on the internet, 50% of the content on net is in English. It is a link language as it helps communication between people of different regions. The advanced knowledge of Science, Technology, and Medicine is also available in English.

As the fast-growing economy is increasingly globalized and interactions across overseas have increased, the importance of learning a second language has become self-evident. English helps the students to communicate across cultures and conduct business on alien lands. Students can also address the customers in the language that they understand best and communicate in turn comfortably. Learning English emphasizes the diversity of earth's cultures and the amazing array of people that make up our global community. English is a universal language for communication where people from different countries are able to interact and run their business transactions efficiently as they have a common language to deal with their transactions.

While the importance of English has gained much importance in the lives of the general public, would any country ignore it? No, it can never happen. Even in India, the land of diversity English has safely ranked its position. India has its own traditions and cultures. Different people speak different languages. A person residing in Kerala may not speak Hindi, he can speak in Malayalam but the person who is speaking in Hindi may speak may not know Malayalam. So the common language that can be used for understanding is English. A greater percentage of Indians speak English than any other language, with a sole exception of Hindi. English speakers in India outnumber those in all of Western Europe without including the United Kingdom. Added to the above an amazing fact is Indian English speakers are more than twice the UK's population. Many countries are retaining the use of vernacular languages, though English is used as the primary language.

To learn a subject such as Biology, Chemistry or History through a foreign language and learning a foreign language by studying a content-based subject, CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning has become the umbrella term. CLIL helps to integrate the language into a broad curriculum. Language seen in real life situations is the natural language development which builds on other forms of learning. It has many advantages as the preparation of the learner can aim for an International certification, improve his specific language competence and develop multilingual interests and attitudes. In the past few years, CLIL has added its own weight in Europe and the other parts of the world. English was not only confined to teach as a subject but CLIL focuses on the subjects that are taught through the medium of the second language.

The common complaints heard from the teachers about the students on learning subjects in English are

- It's difficult to explain in English
- Students find hard to read in English
- Want to teach in the mother tongue
- Don't like to listen to the classes taught in English
- Difficult to make them participate in interactive sessions which involve the language component

Maybe in the above situation, teachers can be categorized into two sections. The first one is the teacher who has to teach a subject in English, rather than teach just the language. The other teacher is the subject teacher who now has to adapt to teach their subject in English. In fact, in many countries, English teachers have to teach other subjects other than their own subject English. For example in Austria all teachers including language teachers each more than one subject. The language teachers have a problem of teaching the subject but not the language. An English teacher always has the advantage of being able to communicate in the classroom with confidence. As English is a communicative subject, it is quite suitable for the teachers to

make their students interact in the sessions with the peer group as well as with the mentors. In classrooms, a language is really a tool rather than an end itself.

As a coin has two sides, one side of the coin focuses on the ease and ability of the language and the other side of the coin spotlights on how subject teachers teach their subject in English. The major gap between the learner and the teacher is a language which is a real problem as it causes a crisis in confidence. When it comes to core subjects the concentration would be obviously on the key points which the learner should learn in English but with less interaction. If there is a problem in the communicative language they need to use strategies which reduce their need to speak. How can I teach my students words that stand for concepts that are new to them and they would not know the meaning in their mother tongue?

- How much can the mother tongue usage influence that it helps them to learn both subject and language?
- What can I do to make sure that their self-esteem is boosted to enjoy the difficulty of learning a subject through a foreign language?

As Brian Herbert says 'The capacity to learn is a gift, the ability to learn is a skill, the willingness to learn is a choice', it's true that to learn through a foreign medium it's a valuable gift. In spite of the doubts that the teachers have in their mind, there are many activities which make the language and subject clear to the student. The communication between the teacher and the student should be rather in a way that best suits the student for better and comfortable learning. The following tips can somewhat people to learn things easily

- Connect ideas together
- Learning by connections
- Prepare concept checklists
- Learn through stories
- Link with daily life situations.

The common complaint from the students who study in their mother tongue medium is they can understand the subject but they find it difficult to read it in English. In such cases, the student needs to concentrate more on learning the language rather than the subject. Once their concentration would be on the language it becomes easier for them to refer scores of books on their core subjects. In the sphere of a student life, it is just that they have to use English in their student life and professional life. So there is no other alternative for them to learn the language. Language can be acquired by reading magazines, stories, and newspapers and so on. Even the peer group interaction of their daily routine also helps them to use refined language. Leonardo Da Vinci statement must be reminded in this context 'Learning is the only thing the mind never exhausts, never fears, and never regrets.'

Let us look into the experience of Kamlesh Raut. He is a budding multilingual poet who writes in Nepali, Bhojपुरi, Maithili, and English. He says that he was more than seventeen years when he began learning English. He looks back and recalls how his teachers had oriented him in the journey of learning English, His native language Bajjika helped him to learn English more effectively as he was interested in learning both the languages. His teacher in grade IV spoke sentences with translation in Nepali but he was not familiar in the language. He translated the sentences into Bajjika. He saw the first English textbook in grade IV which contained some pictures and stories. Parroting vocabulary was almost regular to them in the classroom. He couldn't recognize that language was a powerful medium of communication. Neither his teachers nor his friends talked in English. he considered English as a hard subject as the other subject teachers gave homework and asked them to memorize things.

He was introduced to basic grammar when he was in X grade. The teacher naturally gave importance to the things that were tested in the exams. Only after eleven years he could realize the importance of the four skills in the language and felt sorry for wasting his ten years of time in memorizing vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, meaning, understanding the text, mugging up the questions and reproducing them in the exam papers. He was startled to find out that he could hardly speak any good sentence in the speaking exam or listen and understand at least 30% of things from the cassette. He was not even satisfied with the teaching of his teachers at the university level. he feels sad when he sees people speaking fluently in English. He feels he would have been taught the language in such a way that it made him confident in speaking. He wants the teachers to teach language in a different manner rather than exam oriented.

Maybe it's not the aim of Kamlesh Raut alone. Every student wants to learn Language as it is the vital element in his life for deciding his success. Never should one forget this saying, 'Persistent questioning and healthy inquisitiveness are the first requisites for acquiring learning of any kind.' It is what millions of learners need to know and develop for their healthy sustenance in the globalized world. so it's the duty of every learner to learn to speak in English for their communication and understanding the essence of their core subjects.

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