



LANGUAGE-LEARNING FOR BETTER TEACHING-LEARNING EXPERIENCE: FINDINGS AND IMPLICATION

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Abstract. *Outlining the problems faced by language learners in the Educational scenario is one key aspect that requires immediate attention in the present era and innumerable studies have indicated that success or failure of students in education is directly or indirectly related to language learning. Ideologically, the different social, political, economic and linguistic aspects individually and collectively played an important role in shaping the quantity and quality of the educational system. However, as a medium of informational exchange between students and teachers, language enters the most vital tool that directly or indirectly influences quality education. The concern therefore attempts an empirical study on students learning English as a second/third language; the socio-psychology of learning English language and the role of attitude and motivation towards language learning vis-à-vis the teaching-learning experiences in the classroom setting. The corpus of the study is elicited from four institutions in Shillong viz. St. Edmunds in Laitumkhrak, St. George in Nongmynsong, Government Boys in Jaiaw and Church of God in Mawlai. The findings in this study will perhaps throw light on the importance of language learning in the educational scenario and how successful language learning underscores better teaching-learning processes and hence quality education.*

Keywords: Shillong, Language Learning, Education, Socio-Psychology

INTRODUCTION

Successful teaching and learning experience in the classroom is ideologically a complex phenomenon where different interrelated factors: socio-psychological, economic and linguistic factors individually and collectively played an important role in determining the quality of education. These different parameters directly or indirectly contribute to understanding the socio-ecological environment and background information of the learners. For instance, *social* differences like the learner's gender, ethnicity and socio-cultural values etc., *economic* differences associated with economic strength or background the learners are brought up from and stratified in the classroom settings. Apart from these environmental issues, there are differences in linguistic

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competence among learners especially of the second or third language (English in particular) which is the language used as a medium of instruction and informational exchange in the formal classroom. The latter will be of particular focus in this paper and attention will be drawn on the problems of learning English as a medium on one hand which correlates to success or failure in the teaching- learning process hence directly or indirectly influences quality education. Further, since language learning depends on the socio-psychological factor associated with attitude and motivation, attempt will be made to evaluate the importance of socio-psychology which greatly influences language learning. Though the role of language both as a medium of instruction and communication processes has received very little attention in the contemporary educational system in the state of Meghalaya, attempt will be made in this paper to evidentially depict the importance of language learning in the contexts of four schools viz. Saint Edmunds, Saint George, Church of God and Government Boys in Shillong.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Shillong: An Educational Hub of North Eastern States

Shillong, the state capital of Meghalaya is one of the important learning centres in North-Eastern region of India. According to Lyngdoh (2013, p.55) Shillong has 'many educational institutions comprising of more than eighty schools including government and private schools. There are two types of government schools: some are affiliated to Meghalaya Board of School ad Education and others are affiliated to Indian Certificate of School Education. The others are private, government-aided and some are deficit'. People of different ethnic groups, speaking different languages are found in both public and private institutions in Shillong Dkhar and Singh (2015, p.48). As a medium of instruction 'the pattern of linguistic preference in educational programs has different variation in the implementation of the three language formula depending on Government versus Private Schools. One may argue that the 'socio-cultural stability' in safeguarding mother tongues and the creation of pan-Indian linguistic culture as Hindi for 'national cohesiveness' as a lingua franca in education is applicable in both Government and Private schools but significantly more in the former. However, 'the emergence and growing influence of English, being an official language for 'development needs' especially as one goes up the higher education at the various

academic ladders has perhaps engulfed rapidly thereby reducing the scope of using other regional languages' Dkhar (2014, p.132).

METHODOLOGY

For our study, both quantitative and qualitative methods are employed where questionnaires and interview methods essentially form an important tool for eliciting data. The setting for eliciting data is appropriated in the classroom setting where questionnaires were administered to 80 students from four schools in Shillong. Additionally, few students (two from each school) were selected for the interview where recorders were employed. To ensure uniformity of the samples, all subjects were selected from classes-x. The demographic details of the samples are summarised in **Table-1** below:

sl.no	Names of Schools	Location (in Shillong)	Gender		Educational qualification
			Male	Female	
1	St. Edmunds	Laitumkhrah	20	nil	classes-x
2	St. George	Nongmynsong	nil	20	classes-x
3	Church of God	Mawlai	nil	20	classes-x
4	Government Boys	Jaiaw	20	nil	classes-x

Table-1: *Demographic background of the samples*

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Problems of Language Learning in the Classroom Setting

The pilot study on the problems faced by language learners point to the issue of language used as a medium of instruction in the classroom. According to Dkhar (2014, p.131), 'In educational institutions, English is widely use in the various levels of formal education'. His findings further shows that as a medium of instruction, English has superseded the use of other local languages (Khasi and Garo) and national languages (Hindi and Bengali) especially at the higher level of education in Shillong. In consistent with these findings, English was reported to be the only language of instruction in all the four schools selected for the present study. The problems of learning English as a second or third language is expressed by students of the four different schools in Shillong. Following their opinions, it is identified that learning English as a second or third language which is the language used as a medium of instruction and

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communication in the classroom settings is the major setback that impede progressive learning and prevents active interactions in the classroom as pointed out by certain segments of the learners. However, this view contradicts significantly from other segments of learners who are of the view that English as a medium is the best choice of language used for interaction in the classroom since it is the language which is more expressive, more specific and more technical. Apparently, two paradoxical views emerge which maybe stated as follows:

(a) English is the major setback that impedes progressive learning and prevents active interaction in the teaching-learning environment (\bar{x} = 31%)

(b) English is the best choice of language for progressive learning which is highly expressive, more specific and more technical (\bar{x} = 69%)

This ambivalent feeling in expressing the issues of English as a second or third language used as a medium of instruction is rather antilogous and derives from the problems associated with how well or how low the pupil has learn English and the relative level of competence. The data-set below (Table-2) stipulate the problems associated with English as a medium of instruction faced by students in the learning environment of the classroom setting.

PROBLEMS OF LANGUAGE DISRUPTING SUCCESSFUL LEARNING		Response (in %)	
Sl. No	Problems	Yes	No
1	Do you think that English is the best choice of language used as a medium of instructions?	90%	10%
2	Do you find English more feasible for daily interacting with your teachers?	85%	15%
<i>Mean Average(x)</i>		87.5%	12.5%
3	Do you feel that English is a major obstacle that prevents you from having a liberal interaction with your teacher?	25%	75%
4	Do you feel shy to ask questions/ participate in the classroom activity because you cannot speak English properly?	35%	65%
5	The incapability of speaking correct grammatical English makes you to inactive in class?	32%	68%
6	You lose your self-confidence in speaking or raising your queries in the classroom since you cannot put your doubts into questions?	30%	70%
7	Many times you remain silence and passive recipient because you are scared that your answers may articulate incorrect grammatical response?	35%	65%
<i>Mean Average (\bar{x})=</i>		31%	69%

Table- 2: Frequency distribution of the problems of English faced by learners

The data clearly shows that the average of 87.5% of the students cohered to the relative importance of English as a medium of instruction (f=90%) and more feasible language for interaction with educators (f=85%) in the classroom (*see. item-1 & 2*). However, a significant number of the total response (\bar{x} =31%) indicates the different problems associated with English which not only prevents them from any active participation in the classroom (*see item 3, 5 & 7*) but also reduced their level of confidence in the learning environment (*see item 4 & 6*). Analytically, one may conjecture that student's level of competence in English largely determines their perception towards language and indirectly affect learning.

Socio-Psychological Factor Affecting Language Learning

The complex nature of learning a second or third language cannot be dealt with through mere instruction or reinforcement by the teacher in the classroom but requires a profound understanding of the learner's socio-psychology which played a mediating role in determining the individual linguistic behaviour. Often socio-psychologists draw aspects of *attitudes* and *motivation* which played an important role in language learning. Gardner (1968) for instance, explores the role of *attitudes* in second language acquisition based on the review of some of the research conducted as he mentioned the works of (Feenstra, 1967; Gardner, 1960; Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Lambert, Gardner, Olton & Tunstall, 1960; also Gardner, 1968) reported that student's attitudes are related to second-language achievement. The generalization based on these findings, according to him, supports the claim that second-language achievement is facilitated by an integrative motive, and that the development of such a motive is dependent upon a particular attitudinal atmosphere.' Gardner, (1968: 145). Similarly, in their exposition to the two types of *motivation* Gardner and Lambert (1972) in their study of language learning of the English speaking students in Montreal found out that 'when attitudes and intelligence were held constant, those students with an integrative orientation were more successful in certain aspect of learning French than those with an instrumental orientation Lewin (1987, p. 361).

These studies suggests the importance of attitude and motivation in language achievement and since quality education demands quality teaching and learning

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process, one must examine the tools for articulating information that would stimulate learning and since *language* is an essence to education and learning process, the importance of understanding the socio-psychology of the learners towards language must be met. Arguably, one can perhaps claim that one's attitude (positive or negative) and motivation (instrumental or integrative orientation) are crucial factors that can either alleviate or aggravate teaching-learning process.

The data-set generated below exemplifies the kind of socio-psychological perception displayed by students of the four different schools. Here, pupil who shows deficit in language competence (English) was identified. The selection is purposely done in order to examine the different socio-psychological nuances like *attitude* and *motivation* they possessed towards learning English language. The attitudinal and motivational factors that affect language learning as expressed by the students are stipulated in **Table-3** below.

SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING LANGUAGE LEARNING		Responses (in %)	
A	Attitude towards Language	Yes	No
1	Do you like to learn English language?	60%	40%
2	Do you feel the need to learn English because you are interested to do so?	70%	30%
3	You are not enthusiastic in learning English at all	30%	70%
<i>Average of Mean (\bar{x})=</i>		53%	47%
4	Do you learn English language owing to pressure from teachers?	50%	50%
5	Do you learn English owing to pressure from your friends?	30%	70%
6	Do you learn English owing to pressure demanded by school curriculum?	35%	65%
<i>Average of Mean (\bar{x})=</i>		38%	62%
B	Language Motivation		
5	Are you motivated to learn English because you are curious to know about it?	40%	60%
6	Are you motivated to learn English and wants to know more about the language?	30%	70%
<i>Average of Mean (\bar{x})=</i>		35%	65%
7	Are you motivated to learn English because it will help you blend in with your friends?	60%	40%
8	Are you motivated to learn English because it will help you communicate and interact well in the classroom?	70%	30%

9	Are you motivated to learn English just so to pass in the examination?	70%	30%
<i>Average of Mean (\bar{x})=</i>		66.6%	33.3%

Table-3: *Socio-Psychological Factors affecting Language Learning*

The response against the different items ranked by the respondents in the dataset shows that the total average of 53% of the respondents shows a *positive* attitude towards English language learning while significantly 47% on the other hand perceives English language learning *negatively* (see item 1-3). However, 38% of the students indicates a *negative* attitude towards learning English but were subjected to *pressure* from teachers, peer groups and the school curriculum which completely disregard the pupil's subjective interests in language learning thereby underpinning forceful learning. The average mean of positive evaluation to items on integrative motive (see item 5 & 6) indicates that the average of 35% of the students shows *integrative* motive to learn English while majority of the students (\bar{x} =66.6%) are *instrumentally* motivated to learn English to achieved some value ends like to blend with friends, for communication and to pass in the examination (see. item 7-9).

Diagnostic Approach: Some Findings

Lack of competence in English which is the mode of interaction in the classroom not only leads to negative perception towards English but consequently reduced interaction and active participation between teachers and their interlocutors in the classroom. The pupil's inability to speak the correct grammatical English language axiomatically causes him to remain passive recipient and consequently loses his self-confident for any verbal interactions in the classroom. Thus, how well a student interacts in the classroom is built on confidence level which is indirectly related to the competence in the concern language. The study also portrays how success in learning English as a second or third language is congruent to the feasible *attitudes* displayed by the pupil and the kind of atmosphere the teacher creates in the classroom. Attitude towards language learning can be seen in two ways:

- a) *Students who display a positive attitude backup by self-interests.*
- b) *Students who perceived language learning negatively but were forced to learn the language owing to pressure from outside.*

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The kinds of motivation ideologically perceived and displayed by the students to a great extent determine the nature of language learning. Arguably, students who shows deficit in learning English generally perceived an instrumental motivation towards learning the language concern and hence showed learning stigmatization. The finding underpins the relative importance of integrative motive in learning English, a characteristic that is absent in those students who shows deficit in learning the said language.

Prescriptive Approach to the study

The importance of language-learning as a medium to successful teaching-learning process in the educational scene should be the foremost criteria to be dealt with strategically since failing to check on language competence in student's performance would by default leads to many unfavorable *socio-psychological* factors like anxiety, adversative attitude and demotivation towards learning and other *personality* factors like lack of confidence and passiveness among students in the classroom. If education demands meaningful, resourceful and quality teaching-learning experiences, the value of language as a medium of informational exchange and as a tool for effecting learning process must be examined.

This call for the role of educators to create favorable environment that would allow students to express their difficulties and problems associated with language learning and to devise strategy that will motivate the pupils to learn the language. An exigency for proper monitoring and proper teaching techniques from educators is therefore required to stimulate a feasible attitude towards students learning English by inculcating in them the peripheral value of language as a medium and as a goal to the ultimate end, the end being successful learning. Educators, through proper planning techniques must also be entrusted with the task of encouraging student's instrumental motivational perception but orient their learning process through integrative orientation. Teachers should not therefore motivates students to perceived English instrumentally to achieve some valued ends which underpins forceful learning process like blending in the classroom with friends, to passed in the examination and to be able to communicate in the classroom but should motivate students to learn the language

interactively by creating an environment that will stimulates interests in learning language as a means to the greater end.

CONCLUSION

Albeit intelligence, personality and cognitive factors contributed significantly to achievement in the educational system, one cannot fail to foresee the importance of language learning which plays a mediating role in the teaching-learning process and hence directly or indirectly affect quality education.

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