

The Role of English Language for Overcoming Cross Cultural Sensitivity

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Abstract:

Human race is same even if colors and tongues differ. Redeeming the gaps between cultures will give a chance to the human to know each other and deepen their understanding of each other. What creates enmity and wars between people because they are away from each other. English as an international language provides in the context of interlingual and intercultural transfer of meaning and promotes a greater awareness of the world around you and keeps us informed about the happening that helps us in shaping the society we live and to the society we move. Language plays a crucial role in understanding humanity and can illuminate on human nature and existence in its fullness and overcome the complexity of communicating cross cultures; nations and linguistic border. Lack of cultural sensitivity has hampered business relationship and has caused lot of embarrassment. The main challenge is to overcome the cross cultural barrier. Globalisation has led to multicultural environment/workplace as well. There is an urgent need to appreciate and understand one's countries cultural rule to overcome mutual abhorrence and develop brotherhood among nations. Cultural sensitivity is the awareness of the difference in a culturally competent atmosphere. In order to live a peaceful life one must understand one other's culture to form a multicultural society or a globalised society that would help us to appreciate the complexity of cultures.

Key words: Culture, Language, Globalization, Universal brotherhood.

Self discovery is one of the biggest challenges in this society. The word self discovery opens up several new dimensions for the recognition of potential of success. It open ups all the unexplored hidden dimensions. Learning languages put the Asians where it is impossible to extricate oneself. The built-in illogical rules and regulations where there is a confusion to which language one should really prefer. The situation worsens, in order to learn one language make the original position worse. The question of negativity and disbelief arises. Though, Language plays a crucial role in understanding humanity and can illuminate on human nature and existence in its fullness to overcome the complexity of communicating cross cultures; nations and linguistic border, learning the characteristics nuance of language has been a challenging work starting from the existence of mankind. Dialect to first language to national language to international language confuses to humanity. The journey seems to be endless where one tends to learn languages in the whole lifetime losing its grasp from its originality. The world has made us a savage to its changing scenario. In one hand the globalization has made the world smaller, it has put behind the traditions. This has given rise to mutual intolerance, mutual heartedness where people cry for “my space, my time”. The tradition is diminishing with angry and disconnected people giving rise to existential vacuum.

This language barrier is having a long term psychological effect on mankind and affects their performance on macro level. It happens that sometime the level of talent is judged by the soft skills of a person which may not be true. The people who are masters in their first language are unable to cope up with their second language. There seems to be a clash between the mother tongue and the other tongue. The question that lies here is to which should be given more preference. Expressing abstract concept and ideas are too difficult in the second language and leads to serious break in communication. The language taught in schools are different from the language

learnt in home and the language of the nation is entirely different from the earlier. People fear to speak being cognizant of their language competence. Certain languages in India are unwritten and learning a new language for them could be equally annoying and maddening. Bewilderment occurs when the parents are illiterate there is a societal disruption. Indians in fact are sandwiched between cultures, languages, religion, ethnicity and the list is endless.

History shows that people are always inclined to the rich and powerful people. The popularity of English can be traced back to the colonial period, the industrial revolution and the power of money. The two powerful nations of the world continue to speak English. At the present scenario more than 2 billion people speak English and the statistics rise every second although the concept of the global English is a very recent phenomenon. After the industrial revolution all the scientific terms came into the English vocabulary.

One earth, seven continents, hundreds of countries and thousand of languages. Such is the diversity when it comes to language and communication. Thus there is a necessity of one global language which can unite all. Spread throughout the world dues to the conquest and expansion by the British. Language changes at each boundary and dialects vary at each step. Without a common medium of communication we are alien to many cultures. Known for its simplicity English language is the first choice all over the globe over French, mandarin, Chinese etc. Other than our mother tongue and oriental language, English is the key to unification and wiping out all cultural and social barriers. "All men are born equal", a saying popular by patriots and writers. But does this fact hold true ? Society attempts to create barriers but it inadvertently creates them as people from different cultures have different ideas, thoughts and altogether a different psychology. The British travelers faced this throughout their journey. However they learnt that these cross cultural barriers could be lowered

by communication. The modern world has realized that the English language is crucial in maintaining global stability. We are just an email away from the people around the world. Understanding the differences between cultures gives an edge over others as a professional. Since the world has shrunk into a global village our first priority is to integrate the cross cultural barriers. Out of the blue the English language has spread all over the world quickly. The intrinsic relationship between culture and language is expressed by Bassnett. "Try as I may, I cannot take language out of culture or culture out of language" (Bassnett, 1998 81).

A neutral language was formed called Esperanto which was considered to be a language bridge for the nations. It was an easy to learn language with an expandable vocabulary. The pronunciation was phonetic too unlike English. It was an idea that never took off and it became a failed artificial language. It was also felt that a language can't stand without having its own culture and it did apply to Esperanto. Esperanto therefore could not replace English language.

India, a multilingual country where its countrymen have a mastery over many languages and are flexible with the kind of change that comes their way. History is a witness to their past struggles. Unity in diversity is the glory of the country. India has an edge over other counties which are monolingual. English is the lingua franca of India besides Hindi being the country's national language. The real question therefore lies in the comfort level of the user. Multilingualism preserves our diverse culture and makes every Indian proud of it. Consensus has changed considerably over the past three decades, with the development and use of new testing. Children with bilingual ability offer an opportunity for researchers' to explore the connections between language and thought(Bialystok 2002 13) Personally and professionally language has always played an important role, choosing the language to use could bring success, greater confidence and greater energy and the

dynamism of English language. English is increasingly becoming the lingua franca for the international community, something that has been accelerated by the fact that 80% of the world's electronic databases and communications networks are in English (Jandt 1998 115).

India has the largest population of the English population at the conversational level. English accent as such cannot be identified as American or British. It has moved beyond this zone. Now we have Indian accent, Scottish accent, South African accent, Australian accent and many more in the list. English language is growing bigger day by day. The variation in the English language has become an unprecedented affair. Half of the world languages are dying and endangered. "English has damned as a killer language, responsible for the extinction of innumerable indigenous languages, dialects, and cultures around the globe". (Schneider 233) World is essentially a multilingual place but the local identity has to be respected. English has taken a plural form in the post colonial context as New Englishes that has been regarded individually. They have their own vitality and correctness. There are three types of models in the language teaching world. ENL(English as a native language), ESL (English as a second language) and EFL (English as a foreign language). English has started playing a vital role in the countries like Japan and China. The models have become plural in sense as one English gives way to many Englishes. The standard form of English has started diminishing as the new Englishes do not adhere to the Received Pronunciation or BBC English or the Standard English. Some media giants are aiming for New Englishes. Now English is not fixed to a particular area. If the US falls(as the super power), the future of English may be at stake.

As per the bible God has confused the language in all the earth. In Genesis 11.1 to 11.10 *The Tower of Babel* describes : "Now the whole earth has one language and the same words.

And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, let we be dispersed over the face of the whole world earth." And the lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the Lord said, "Behold, they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will be now impossible to them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." So the lord dispersed them from over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth."

In global perspective, especially in business situations, we need to learn how to communicate cross cultures. It's important to have face to face communication with people of different cultural background. There are political implications for communicating cross-cultures. In recent years even China has preferred English as a major foreign language as it saw a wide gap in technologies between Japan and USA that led to the downfall of China's economy. The impact is the globalization of the language (English) to match the pace with advance countries. English is not only limited to English speaking countries but is now open to the whole world. Lackoff says "Language is not "just words". It enables to establish ourselves, as individuals and as members of group; it tells us how we are connected to one another, who has power and who doesn't."

There are number of languages and dialects spoken in different parts of the country. The majority that is spoken by

majority of people is Mandarin, Spanish etc. History reveals that the British play a major role in spreading the language. English language had established its first base camp in London thousands years ago. The language that was confined to one island has spread its roots all over the world and 21st century accepted English as a global language or the language of business. It is said that “The sun never sets in the British kingdom”. When the sun was finally set i.e. after the outbreak of the 2nd World War, US emerged as a super power and the language came into prominence and was spread all over the world. Statistics show that the Asians speak English more than any other region these days. And yes it of course had a great impact of the decreasing use of the native language.

Language and cognition has immense effect on the brain. Bilingual people eventually become better thinkers in terms of mental flexibility. They probably ignore irrelevant things. In UK language learning is a priority. Therefore people donot havr the urge or motivation to learn language. It is high time that our attitude should change about multilingualism and try to propagate the researchers, the policy makers and the people about the positive effects of bilingualism. “Midway through the last century, the opinions changed rather suddenly and researchers found that bilingualism was, after all, a real asset for the child. Many studies came to the conclusion that bilinguals are more sensitive to semantic relations between words, are better able to treat sentence structure analytically, are better at rule-discovery tasks, have greater social sensitivity, and so on.”(Grosjean June 16, 2011)

World’s finest literature is written in English language. One cannot deny the dynamism of English language. English language has become the backbone of various cultural resource programs and bigger trade ties. With civilization comes the process of socializing and English has helped in overcoming the cross cultural sensitivity. The world is full of cultural diversities, traditions and linguistic differences Language

changes at each boundary and dialects vary each step. Without a common medium of communication we are alien to many cultures. . But English language is one color that the entire world drapes in. “Crystals (1997) reports that 85 percent of international organizations make official use of English, at least 85 percent of the World’s film market is in English and about 90 % of published articles are written in English. In addition, Zai, Zheng and Zhang (1999) report that more than 80% of the scientific paper are first published in English and over half of the world’s technical and scientific periodicals are in English. Furthermore, five of the largest broadcaster (CBS, NBC, ABC, BBC and CBS) reach a potential audience of about 300 million people through English broad casts, computer program instructions and software are often supplied only in English, 85% of the international communication are conducted in English, and English is the language of medicine, space and the Olympics” (Crystal 1997 78).

Across boundaries English language plays even more significant role. It facilitates diplomacy and major policy decisions. Cross cultural sensitivity refers to the intermingling, understanding and developing a sense of respect for various cultures and is possible only when one is able to communicate in one language. To develop cultural unity the world needs, a common tongue, a common color, a common shade and that is English language. Technology has wrapped the assorted world into a small parcel. Body language and gestures has always led to misunderstanding as they are culturally conditioned. Colonialisation has left English as a matrix language from east to west. Both British and American English forms are now embedded and given the language an enormous internal diversity for whom the English has been an acquired language.

Every culture has got different languages. Various methods and techniques have been evolved in order to overcome cultural differences. The difference in language for having an interaction was a serious setback and the need for a common

language was always felt and due course of time English has evolved as a world language. Globally speaking English has already taken a prominent place of its own. It is independent of any form of social control. “English for All” is the campaign of the hour. Learning global language does have a positive impact. Mutual acceptance, mutual respect, mutual understanding and mutual tolerance are the essence of universal brotherhood. To exist in a global world there is a need to rise above those differences.

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