



Reticence among Young Learners towards English Language Learning: Problems and Solutions

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Abstract:

English language has disseminated the delightful smell of aroma with its bank of jargon and stream of familiarity and has grabbed the attention of millions and millions of people throughout the globe with its brilliance and adaptability. Its rapid emergence has been the justification for globalisation. It is not a distortion to argue that the English language is the forerunner of globalisation. Globalization has undoubtedly conquered the entire planet. The English language has unquestionably been affected by globalisation. Though English language teachers have been striving for bringing out the excellence among the young learners, the results have always been discouraging, the problem of reticence being one of the significant reasons for low English proficiency among young learners. The present paper focuses on the acquisition of English language, the problem of reticence, and anxiety among L2 learners, and the methods of overcoming the problems of reticence.

Keywords: reticence, English language learning, anxiety, psychological factors, mother tongue influence etc.,

In the majority of instances, but not always, the first language a child experiences at school is his or her native speech. Typically, it is the language of the child's neighbourhood and groups of similar, and in the majority of cases, it is also the language spoken at home. As a result, a person's first language is the one to which he or she is most frequently exposed, as well as the one in which he or she is most proficient and uses the most. The second language plays a major role in the social and organizational life of the community. In a community whose members speak a language other than their original tongue as their first language, it functions as a means of communication. Consequently, a second language may be advantageous in multilingual settings. Despite the fact that the second language in India, a multilingual nation,



may or may not be a mother tongue according to the three-language formula set by the government, the remaining components of the defined term being completely relevant to the Indian context. A second language is typically an official or socially dominant language (such as English in India), and it is essential for education, employment, and other basic activities such as communication.

Language Acquisition and Learning

Acquisition is a natural process comparable to how a child acquires his or her native language. According to Krashen (1981), the acquisition of a language is an unconscious process including the naturalistic development of language competence through participation in natural, meaningful communication settings that require both comprehension and use of the language input. It is possible to acquire a language, that is, to develop the ability to speak effectively in it for use in natural communication contexts when there is no risk of mockery or correction.

Learning is the deliberate process of familiarising oneself with a language in order to use it. Studying the rules of a language and having a cognitive knowledge of its grammar and vocabulary are necessary for comprehension. It requires conscious effort and is best performed in a coached setting. When a person puts forth a concerted effort in an explicit manner, such as learning and practicing the rules of grammar with the aid of textbooks or instructions from a teacher or another person, this is considered as learning the language. Typically, this is done in a structured setting, such as school. The widespread agreement is that it is crucial to learn a second language in addition to one's native language and first language.

While collaboration can be measured in a variety of ways and differs somewhat between teachers in terms of such interactional exercises and their utility, a common goal is to increase student engagement (Bean and Peterson, 1998). Students are often expected to fully participate in classroom conversation with the help and encouragement of teachers. In any event, the ESL classroom might be disappointing when the majority of students are mute and only a few rate participants speak up (Fritschner, 2000). Despite the fact that students recognise the relevance of English communication and are encouraged to invest their time and effort in learning the language, numerous educators report an increase in inactivity and slowness in ESL classrooms. In their demeanour, students are characterised as uninvolved, cool, or distant. This



behaviour is usually referred to as "reticence" in the field of second language procurement. This is a worrisome emotion for ESL instructors, as it signifies that their instructional strategy is ineffective. Despite their vast demonstrating experience, a substantial number of teachers continue to strive to decode their students' ingrained behaviours and devise persuasive strategies to get them to participate more in classroom discussion. This experience also encourages us to learn about hesitance, which has long been viewed as a negative trait that hinders the development of English language speaking skills.

Learning a second language is a very complicated and varied process that is hard to explain in a simple way. There are many different internal and external factors that interact with each other and have an effect on learning a second language. The social setting or social component, as well as language input and interaction, are all important external factors to think about. There are internal factors like the learner's age, intelligence, language aptitude, knowledge of L1 (first language), inter-language (IL), learning processes or strategies, and other factors like attitude, personality, motivation, reticence, negative attitude toward learning due to anxiety, self-efficacy, beliefs about language learning, and so on. There are also external factors like the learner's cultural background and language skills. All of these things interact with each other and help you learn a second language. Because of these two factors, individual variability and contextual variability, learning a second language is a complicated process. Different SLA theories use different parts of these two factors to explain second language learning.

Problems of Second Language Learners in India

1. The learners view English as a subject, as opposed to a global life skill.
2. They are unaware that the acquisition of the English language involves some crucial skill sets: a good attitude toward English language learning, an aptitude for learning, and the ability to think and behave with a learning mindset.
3. They limit their language acquisition to the pages of a textbook or, at best, to the four walls of their classroom or even their home, as opposed to incorporating it into their real-world activities.



4. They are blind to the notion that their linguistic skill and conversational fluency in the language depend on their broad and ongoing use in actual communication with real people.
5. They frequently lack inventiveness and determination in investigating multi-directional and multi-developmental techniques to enhance and accelerate their English language acquisition. All these factors lead to reticence among learners making them develop negativity toward English language learning.

Reticence

According to Hedge (2000), communicating in, as well as other language skills, necessitates special consideration of children's cognitive ability. Diverse experts examine incessantly talking modesty from diverse perspectives. Speaking hesitance or corresponding trepidation refer to a sensation of intuition that students experience when speaking in front of a large group of people or an individual, and the terms are also used interchangeably. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), verbal hesitance is a form of modesty characterised by apprehension or fear of interpersonal contact. There are a few external indications of hesitation.

The capacity to speak and utilise English is referred to as English competence. However, speaking English well is difficult, and many students of other languages are anxious about strengthening their speaking skills. Reticence is one of the most fundamental psychological factors influencing the English-speaking abilities of students. There are numerous potential causes for reticence. For instance, students are prone to reticence if they choose to remain silent in response to all of the instructor's questions throughout class sessions. It is challenging for learners to overcome reluctance and anxiety. They fear communication the most. Oral language development that is neglected within the classroom may result in reluctance to communicate. In addition, teachers employ oral language more frequently than their students (Al Hosni, 2014). As a result of the influence of reticence, students continue to lack opportunities to improve their English-speaking fluency. Regardless of their English language proficiency, individuals appear reticent during speaking sessions. Students remain unmotivated to communicate in English throughout speaking classes despite the professors' best attempts to apply a number of active teaching tactics.



In 1965, Gerald M. Phillips published the first essay on reluctance in the subject of voice communication, claiming that certain individuals have trouble talking in a variety of situations (Keaten and Kelly, 2000). This foundational effort has laid a solid groundwork for correspondence specialists to continue studying the concept of reticence in a variety of contexts. This notion has been modified and reconceived over time, and revised ideas have been presented. Phillips' original description of reticence categorised it as a personality and anxiety trait. However, in his work, he elaborated on this concept and emphasised the social aspect of the structure more. This modification switched the emphasis from character-driven reluctance to a depiction of reluctance prompted by correspondence difficulties (Phillips, 1984, 1997).

Due to their apparent inadequacies in social correspondence and public execution, he discovered that the major characteristic of hesitant individuals was social withdrawal or evasion. To emphasise the educational nature of hesitance, he stated, "We call it hesitance when people avoid talking out of fear of losing more by speaking than by remaining silent" (Phillips, 1984, p. 52). This is the most important psychological and exhaustive explanation of the concept, taking both psychological and social features into account. The hesitance hypothesis of Phillips combines psychological and social components. The behavioural aspect comprises evasion and discomfort induced by weaknesses in the five logical cycle groups (innovation, attitude, style, conveyance, and memory), whereas the cognitive aspect entails the erroneous conviction framework that rationalises the aversion to communication among the hesitant (Keaten and Kelly, 2000). T

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According to relevant studies by Li and Jia (2006) and Liu and Jackson (2009), Asian students in English language classes are typically portrayed as timid and uninvolved, contributing almost nothing to class discourse. The majority of Students are portrayed as inert or lifeless for the entirety of class and during gathering talks, which constitute constant movement in the vast majority of English language classes. This circumstance will deteriorate into something more regrettable if left unresolved for an extended period of time. This is due to the fact that students may mistakenly assume that their behaviour is typical or the norm in language studies.

In a recent study done throughout Asia, numerous factors related to ESL students' hesitation or reluctance to cooperate orally in class were discovered. Fear of losing face, low capability, negative assessment, social convictions regarding appropriate classroom behaviour, abundant information, educator demonstrating procedures, lack of certainty, inner-directedness, tension, and observed informative ability are among the most frequently cited reasons. (Tsui, 1996; Li & Liu, 2011; Delima, 2012). The bulk of these studies attribute reluctance to students' linguistic skills, socio-cultural, psychological, and personality traits, as well as pedagogical factors. Such an abundance of data in the current body of research has made it easier for academics to discuss the underlying causes of students' hesitation. Due to a lack of sufficient understanding of reluctance, many teachers have an inaccurate opinion of their students' classroom abilities. When students do not participate in class discussions or voice their opinions verbally, teachers usually believe that they lack a desire to learn, according to Donald (2010). As many classroom evaluations of learning are based on easily observable and quantifiable student actions and behaviours, this might alter instructors' judgement when evaluating students' language performance (Hamelock & Friesen, 2012).



Some ESL practitioners assume that hesitation is most prevalent among students with weak English proficiency; nonetheless, the same behaviour has been found among students with adequate English proficiency. A few able students engage in English-language communication seldom and are unwilling to participate in class, despite the fact that sufficient correspondence opens up extraordinary chances. For instance, Wen and Clement (2003) identified a disparity between students' high levels of grammar and jargon competency and their inability to participate in English debates.

Problems related to Physiological factors

According to Wrench et al. (2012), reluctance to speak is associated with a variety of physical signs that are plainly seen on the bodies of students. Students frequently observe their palms growing wet, hearts racing, and knees quivering. Additionally, it is reported that a dry mouth, quivering voice, and rapid breathing might result in poor articulation of simple syllables. It is difficult for students to maintain a good balance between their actions and ideas since they lack the ability to manage both.

Behavioural factors

When a learner demonstrates verbal reluctance, other behavioural signals are observed. Students with an extremely high level of speaking reluctance typically avoid speaking settings in particular. Children with low communication skills due to verbal reluctance, according to McCroskey (1976), would avoid communication the bulk of the time. This does not mean they will never interact. When students with conversational reluctance and a negative attitude toward English language acquisition are in direct touch with others, they choose to maintain silence. In addition, they lack confidence when expressing their opinions and ideas, and frequently interpret the inquiries of others as criticisms. In addition, speaking reticent students have feelings of insecurity and inadequacy, according to Burgoon (1976). The majority of the time, they choose to remain silent and exhibit their incapacity to connect since they are not only frightened but also humiliated when they express similar opinions with others.

Psychological problems

Students usually exhibit a number of psychological or psychological markers of speaking hesitation. According to Kanar (2011), children with speaking reluctance demonstrate



multiple psychological symptoms, including negative self-talk, speaking reluctance, convoluted thought processes, and a sense of inferiority. Kanar (2011) asserted, on the one hand, that when students begin to speak, they experience both physical and psychological sensations. Before speaking, students with psychological disorders become "tongue-tied." On the other hand, Achbi and Sebaa (2011) stated that these learners are acquainted once they begin communicating.

Personal factors

Oral communication anxiety, according to McCroskey et al. (1977), is a form of the communication anxiety construct. A high level of anxiety during oral communication is specifically connected with low self-esteem. In addition, students with low self-esteem are more likely to display substantial degrees of reluctance in speaking settings because they believe they lack adequate language skills, resulting in poor performance. As a result, students lack the incentive to participate in class discussions and are continually unwilling to do so. With this personality type and characteristic, students' reluctance and anxiety have intensified in response to any speaking challenge, regardless of the topic or audience. Moreover, extra personal circumstances contribute to their reluctance and make them reluctant to speak.

Restricted Vocabulary

To develop their oral skills, students must employ appropriate language and accurate phrasing when speaking. Thornbury (2005) argues that words and expressions constitute a substantial portion of spoken language. In addition, students frequently struggle with their English-speaking ability due to their restricted vocabulary and phrases when seeking to convey their ideas. Students with limited vocabularies may be reluctant to speak English language because they cannot adequately express their thoughts. Students' discourse hesitance in foreign language courses is primarily due to a lack of jargon; some members admit to being somewhat reticent and unable of speaking due to their limited jargon, and as a result frequently experience anxiety when speaking in front of their classmates. Thus, a lack of jargon fosters speaking reluctance, which affects students' engagement in speaking exercises.

Fear of making mistakes



Anxiety over making mistakes is a big factor in students' reluctance to speak English in the classroom (Tsui referred to in Nunan, 1999; Robby, 2010). According to Aftat (2008), this anxiety is associated with negative judgement and remedial concerns, as students want not to appear ignorant in front of their peers (Kurtus, 2001). Furthermore, the fear of being reprimanded by the instructor and ridiculed by other students hinders a student's speech growth and prevents them from developing an enthusiastic attitude toward language acquisition in class. Therefore, students are unwilling to engage in speaking exercises (Nguyen, 2011). Fear of making English-speaking errors, such as syntactic and articulation errors, is the primary obstacle preventing students in an EFL environment, such as Vietnam, from expanding their English-speaking capacity.

Shyness

When learners are compelled to speak only in English in the classroom, they may acquire shyness, a serious disorder. Gebhard (2000) said that shyness not only hinders students' English class learning activities, but also substantially degrades their speaking abilities.

Competence from the Peer

Students will compare themselves to their classmates, and therefore competition might contribute to students' expressing reluctance in the classroom. According to Wrench et al. (2012), the perceived resemblance between students and their peers has a significant effect on the level of conversational reticence. Furthermore, Young (1991) identifies rivalry as a role in students' reluctance to communicate.

Fear of Mockery

Laughing at students' perspectives, mistakes, and pronunciation makes them hesitant to finish the presentation. Additionally, it prevents kids from answering professors' questions voluntarily. According to Liu's (2007) study, one of his learners lacked confidence in public and was reluctant to speak because she feared making a mistake and being ridiculed by a classmate. Moreover, the interaction of students with teachers, other students, and course content is considered a crucial component of education (Garrison & Shale, 1990).

Classroom environment



The classroom environment is the state of mind, atmosphere, or sensation formed by the class meetings, which may reflect the contribution. According to McCombs and Whisler (1997, p.51), "learning occurs most effectively in an environment that develops excellent relationships and cooperation and in which students feel valued, recognised, acknowledged, and accepted." According to a few studies, a repetitive or quiet classroom setting may demotivate students' inclination to interact, but a friendly classroom environment can encourage students' desire to speak. Consequently, the classroom environment has a substantial effect on students' unwillingness to speak up.

Teacher's Feedback

The manner in which teachers provide students with feedback, explanations, and encouragement, as well as create opportunities for students to speak, can have a substantial impact on students' reluctance to talk. As a result of their anxiety and "stupidity," they will experience embarrassment and reticence to speak when chastised by the instructor (Young, 1991). Furthermore, some teachers may regard their role in the classroom as that of a controller who constantly corrects students, and they may not permit students to work in groups or pairs out of concern for class management. Students become frightened of conversing with their teachers as a result, which may contribute to a considerable proportion of students' verbal shyness.

What can be done to Overcome Reticence among Language Learners

Nunan argues that in order to speak a foreign language, students must possess linguistic proficiency, enough vocabulary, and command of sentence structure (1999). Communication in English language requires more than merely linguistic proficiency. Nunan (1999) adds that in addition to language competence, learners also need socio-linguistic and conversational abilities in order to know how to communicate, what to say, to whom, and when to speak. Johnson (1995) focuses on Nunan's assertion that communicative competency is necessary for students to participate in class and learn from classroom experiences.

Students must focus on how to overcome reticence and difficulties in contacting teachers and peers in order to increase their language proficiency by boosting their motivation and attitudes. Motivation, self-assurance, a will to learn, the ability to listen, and feedback



during language development exercises allow students to enhance their language skills. As a result of the rapid development of technology and the students' familiarity with it, it has been observed that they have adapted to using social media sites such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Hike, and LinkedIn, which can be used to chat with friends or send important messages to their teachers, or even to browse the internet for information pertinent to their studies or areas of interest. Improving self-motivation and cultivating a good attitude toward language learning are also facilitated by such an interest in Internet usage. It is crucial for students to be abreast of current events so that they can achieve greater academic success.

English instructors must encourage their students to speak the language as frequently as feasible. Educating students deserving of challenge is a sensitive undertaking for English teachers, as is the endeavour itself. When teachers have a solid understanding of their students' positions and motivational conditions, they can operate as effective and efficient mediators. To bring about the desired improvements, it is vital for learners to be actively engaged in literacy and excited about language enhancement.

The usage of digital tools such as GoLearn, Pod Casts, and Blogs, and Virtual Language Environments (VLE) and other Online mode of teaching, such as teaching with the flipped methods utilising smart phones, and audio-visual aids enables learners to take an active role in the process of learning English. These new techniques will make the English language classroom student-centered and will enable the students to acquire English language proficiency, which will assist them in achieving their future employment aspirations.

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