English Teaching in Bangladesh

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THE popularization of English in this subcontinent was the result of the efforts made by Macaulay-Bentick in the early 19th Century. English became the medium for higher education then. Further, in 1835 English became the official language of the English rulers in India. As a result the learning and practice of English spread widely throughout the subcontinent. In the schools, colleges, universities, courts and almost everywhere English became very popular. Though the process was lengthy and staggering, it continued successfully. By the end of the nineteenth century, English had a sound footing and the Indians mainly the educated class had mastered the language quite successfully.

In Bangladesh, English is treated as a foreign language rather than as a second language. As such the learning of it depends more on the aptitude and ability of the teacher and the usage and, or necessity of the learner. Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan and before that East Bengal) has undergone a series of political and socio-economic changes that have greatly influenced the learning of English as a foreign languages. The partition of Bengal in 1905 and its unification in 1906, the creation of Pakistan in 1947 and finally the birth of Bangladesh in 1971 have all had their impacts of the attitudes and motivation of learning English. In 1971, the spirit of Bengali nationalism dimmed the urge of English as an international language. Also the cost of education rose and the poor people especially those living outside the capital were deprived of higher education. As a result, in the post-liberation period in Bangladesh the learning of English has deteriorated and the practice still continues.

The reasons for the decline in learning of English are not difficult to find. The learning of English, or any language for that matter is a two-way action. That is the teacher and the learner. This is, of course, to be supported by the social, economic and political environment, The necessity of learning English as an international language has to be felt and understood. The merits and advantage of English has be nationally accepted and given due attention. This aspect is primarily known as motivation for learning. Unless you have a clear and comprehensive target for learning English the pursuit of English will be deterred.

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We often hear the maxim for learning 'there is one and only one pre-condition for successful learning, and that is a good teacher. "This is, of course, true . However, we have to take into consideration other factors that, to a great extent, govern successful learning. In learning a foreign language, it is, as has been quoted, assumed that learning depends almost entirely upon the teacher with his language proficiency, professional and academic qualifications, teaching methods and his ability to co-operate and interact with the students. However, researches have proved beyond doubt that the learner's proficiency varies according to aptitude, social environment and with or without attitude and motivation. Researches and investigations have shown that the learner's attitude and motivation greatly influence the learning of the English language.

Bangladesh has a monolingual setting. Bangla is the only language that reigns here. It is the state language and the mother tongue of the majority of the population. In this set-up it is not very difficult to propagate a motivation for learning English as a foreign language. The motivation has to be created indicating the privileges and advantages of learning English in the present era of globalization. Once the motivation is established, the attitudes of the learners will be significant and positive.

Measures and practical steps are necessary to be taken to generate interest in learning foreign language. Although there is prevalent a fifty-fifty ratio regarding general interest of students in studying of foreign language. the ratio can be favorably changed by constant advice on the importance and facilities of studying a foreign language, through lectures, seminars, radio show etc. Once the general interest is successfully generated among the students-attitudes will follow and learning of English will become easy.