



An introduction to Englasian

My friend's daughter works in a fast food shop in Hong Kong. I watched her and her friends in action the other day. The weird thing is that the staff can communicate perfectly well in English with anyone from Hong Kong, South Asia, East Asia, or pretty much any other part of the region.

But when a fresh-off-the-boat tourist enters the restaurant, communication gets difficult. Monolingual English speakers from America, for example, "hear" Asian-English words differently.

Fast food server: Harlowelcumkaneye L. pyoo?

Customer: What?

Fast food server: Harlowelcumkaneye L. pyoo?

Customer: Er, yes, I'd like one cheeseburger please.

Fast food server: Dull Swiss wit Baygon?

Customer: Excuse me?

Fast food server: Dull Swiss wit Baygon?

Customer: Oh, no, I don't want a double-Swiss with Baygon, I mean bacon. I just want a normal cheeseburger.

Fast food server: Humburger wit jees. Setter Al Eckart?

Customer: Pardon me?

Fast food server: Setter Al Eckart?

Customer: Ah, got it. A La carte, please.

Fast food server: One-for-ice wee tat?

Customer: No, I don't want rice, thank you very much.

Fast food server: One-for-ice wee tat!

Customer: Oh, yes, please, I want fries with that.

Fast food server: Smormy dyumludj?

Customer: I'm sorry, would you mind...?

Fast food server: Smormy dyumludj. U juan smor, me, dyum, ludj?

Customer: Medium.

Fast food server: Ad too duller soup a size.

Customer: What?

Fast food server: Ad too duller soup a size.

Customer: Not supersized, thanks. I'm fat enough already, ha ha!

Fast food server: Wad rink u juan?

Customer: Fresh orange juice, please.

Fast food server: Fray soringe ad too duller. Chippa u buy set.

Customer: Okay, gimme a set.

Fast food server: Wit set you juan?

Customer: Cheeseburger.

Fast food server: Dull Swiss wit Baygon set?

Customer: Excuse me?

Fast food server: You juan dull Swiss wit Baygon set?

Customer: No, I don't want actually, maybe I do want Baygon. At least it would kill my appetite.

How come Asians can communicate with other Asians using this bare-bones English, while tourists struggle with it? Because English is really a whole group of languages. A tourist who speaks only "the Queen's English" limits himself to communicating with speakers of that dialect. But if you speak Asian English -- which I propose we call Englasian -- you end up with a language the majority of people on Earth can understand.

In fact, I reckon we should train the Queen of England to speak it. I can just picture her on her next tour of Asia stepping off the Royal yacht and saying: "We are most amused to be here. My husband and I would like to say harlowelcumkaneye L. pyoo."

For more expertise in the English language, visit our columnist at: www.vittachi.com.

Water, water, everywhere, nor any price to pay

Efficient and effective water pricing systems provide incentives for efficient water use and for water quality protection. They also generate funds for necessary infrastructure development and expansion, and provide a good basis for ensuring that water services can be provided to all citizens at an affordable price.

QUAZI ISLAM and SYED IRMAN

ANYTHING scarce and in demand commands a price; this is one of the basic principles of economics. In Bangladesh, water for industrial and household use, as well as drinking, is depleting fast. Therefore, appropriate pricing of water, particularly with regards to industrial use, is extremely important. Market-based solutions lead to rational allocation and use of resources.

Water scarcity is an increasingly common phenomenon in Bangladesh. We often come across long queues for collecting water, and see water tankers distributing water across the city. In many cases the armed forces are also deployed to protect water installations. Often, the sewerage and water lines break, spreading filth and odour and leading to numerous health hazards.

And all this is on top of the fact that surface water in the city and surrounding areas is highly polluted due to untreated industrial discharge. The media often projects such scenarios to the public, and there is a lot of development work directed towards improving water services and scenarios.

However, what is sorely lacking is a viable policy-level decision that takes into account the economic cost or consequence of a scenario with very little available usable water.

The continuous drawing of ground water is the primary culprit for this depletion. For example, Wasa supplies 190 crore litres of water every

day against a demand of 205 crore litres. Almost 85% of this water supply comes from underground water.

The situation is deteriorating every day due to the increase in textile and other water consuming industries, and also because of rampant population growth. The water bodies are now vulnerable, aquatic life is endangered, and users are facing serious health problems due to contamination by hazardous chemicals from these industries.

Consider just the example of textiles. Almost all textile units in the country meet their water needs by using groundwater through digging boreholes. These boreholes then require a special submersible motor that pulls the groundwater up.

The cost for installing such a borehole/pump and motor to generate the groundwater varies from Tk.35,000 to Tk.60,000. A few selected factories pay a yearly fixed charge of Tk.60,000 (may vary depending on pipe diameter), but numerous others are not monitored and continue to use groundwater, paying no tariff.

This means that water cost amounts to almost an insignificant amount of a factory's operating expenditure, which automatically leads to a wanton disregard for water usage amongst industries in Bangladesh.

An average 5-ton washing-dyeing factory, with the most prevalent machinery in the market, uses nearly 120 litres of water to dye a single kilogram of fabric. This means water cost per kg of fabric dyed is a minuscule Tk.0.0038.

Water usage is lower for white fabrics, but when you compare it to the cost incurred to use that water, the market failure is readily evident. There is no incentive for the factories to either take measures to curb water use (such as recycling wastewater, etc) or to invest in technology that reduces the water requirement by a significant amount.

The textile factories alone discharge about 22 crore litres of waste water daily from their operations, causing spiraling social and economic damage. Efficient use of water doesn't make much business sense, as it is almost free.

But herein lies the irony. The quality of underground water is almost good enough for drinking and, just to gain a price estimate, bottled drinking water is priced at Tk.10-12/litre!

Unfortunately, the groundwater replenishment rate is much slower than the extraction rate. In 2001, deep tube-wells in Dhaka could strike water at a depth of between 200-300 feet. In 2010, this figure has risen to 1,000 feet.

This is alarming, not only with regard to water supply. A large vacuum between surface and under-groundwater might lead to landslides. As long as the regulating authority does not impose a limitation on groundwater use by commercial/industrial users or, more realistically, set a proper price on the water used, this problem will only escalate, maybe to catastrophic proportions.

Much of recent government talk has centred around making our industries more environmentally friendly by incorporating cleaner production techniques and installing effluent treatment plants.

However, all this threatens to fall flat due to a lack of any form of monitoring or regulation as regards water use. As mentioned, if factories continue to pay zero tariff for unlimited use of water there is no incentive or driver for change.

Currently, Bangladesh does not have any regulation on ground water use.

Groundwater, as we all know, is a natural resource. All natural resources of the country are owned by the state and the people have the right to use them, but in a regulated manner.

Almost every country has its own regulations on groundwater, except Bangladesh. Water is not an unlimited resource, and continuous lowering of the water table day by day could cause geological imbalance and meteorological change in the country. All commercial/industrial users of groundwater should, therefore, be brought under a metering control system.

Water pricing varies from country to country, and depends largely on whether the water company is privatised or state-owned. Also, water rates are generally higher in countries with severe water scarcity (such as Algeria, Sudan, and Israel) and institutionally developed water economies (such as Australia and Israel).

The industrial and power sectors in a country usually pay the highest water rates and receive a higher level of service throughout the year, as do domestic users. Agriculture pays the least, but also receives the lowest level of service.

Efficient and effective water pricing systems provide incentives for efficient water use and for water quality protection. They also generate funds for necessary infrastructure development and expansion, and provide a good basis for ensuring that water services can be provided to all citizens at an affordable price.

The metering of water consumption is a pre-requisite for the application of efficient water pricing policies. Although imposing tariffs on commercial/industrial water use might prove to be a politically unpopular choice, it is one that the government has to take sooner or later.

That is, if all this talk of being environmentally friendly really holds any weight.

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Working together for a better tomorrow

This world is about haves vs. have-nots. Some people have more than others. Without true philanthropists, who give to a cause to improve the conditions of human suffering to eliminate social problems, we may as well be living in the dark ages.

ZEENAT KHAN

THE Greek word "agape" has been translated both as "charity" and "love." Another Greek word "philanthropos," in a broad sense means "lover of

Human-kind." When people can let go of self-interest and selfish thoughts by transforming them into a greater understanding, then the result is the manifestation of charity.

From the time of the ancient Greeks to modern day -- both philanthropy and charity have gone hand in hand. Philanthropy is practiced with the objective of supporting a charitable cause. It aims to end social problems, while charity mainly tries to eliminate sufferings of human kind that are caused by social problems.

Whether it is by adopting philanthropy or charity, a person can contribute hugely in removing the suffering of humans.

In an effort to improve the well-being of Bangladesh, the annual 20th convention of the North American Bangladeshi Islamic Community* (NABIC) recently came together at the Islamic Society of

the Boston Cultural Centre in Massachusetts, USA.

The non-profit organisation started with initiatives of the expatriate community of North America who feel strongly about helping Bangladesh by funding different projects in social sectors. NABIC holds an annual gathering in an effort to enhance social awareness and commit themselves to helping Bangladesh move along with the rest of the world in the 21st century.

NABIC started two decades ago with a few members. Like any non-profit organisations it had to struggle in the beginning and faced many challenges. The organisation's president and other members stayed firm to achieve their mission, and their persistence paid off. The organisation's Board of Directors is more committed than ever as it steps into its 21st year.

Many talented Bangladeshis, who have made North America home, are now NABIC members. A lot of them also join for the social betterment and spiritual fulfillment. Their primary goal during the convention was to reach a target amount of money, which could be

used in several upcoming and ongoing projects in Bangladesh.

The three most notable speakers this year were Dr. Mohammad Karim, Dr. Iqbal Qadir and Dr. Ingrid Mattson. Dr. Karim is an electrical engineer and the vice-president for research of Old Dominion University in Virginia. He serves on the NABIC's board. Dr. Qadir founded Grameen Phone Ltd. He is also a recipient of Science Education and Economic Development award in Bangladesh. Dr. Mattson is a Canadian Muslim, professor and activist. She is now director of Islamic chaplaincy and professor of Islamic studies at the Hartford Seminary in Connecticut, USA.

Despite the downturn in the US economy, with a concerted effort the NABIC members were able to put together a successful fund-raising campaign for the year 2010. They raised \$230,000 in 2009. With that money, they supported many development projects in Bangladesh.

According to NABIC's annual report of last year, \$131,771 was distributed to the following projects in Bangladesh -- NUSRA Poverty Alleviation through micro credit program, Volunteer Association of Bangladesh to build ten computer centres in rural Bangladesh, and an association named Karmirath for the dowry-free marriage campaign.

NABIC helps sectors in Bangladesh that otherwise do not get much attention from other aid agencies. It works closely with Brotee Samaj Kallayan Sanghastha and has developed a project called "Rehabilitation of women and children of

SIDR affected areas in Satkhira district."

In Satkhira, NABIC has another project that aims to supply clean water for the villagers, a day shelter for the children -- where they get a hot meal -- and support 30 orphans for one year in the local orphanage.

Recently, NABIC president Dr. Rashed Nizam, a board certified ophthalmologist and chief of surgery at Moberly Regional Medical Center in Missouri, visited Bangladesh with other NABIC representatives to attend the foundation-laying ceremony of Glaucoma Research Eye Hospital. It is going to be a joint project with BECS.

NABIC has built a three-storey school in rural Shujanogor in Pabna. It provides education to about two hundred students from grades one through eight. Other than the traditional subjects for each grade, this school also focuses on history and science that many Bangladeshi schools do not offer so early on. They also have computers for them so that they can learn about technology.

NABIC also sponsors Nusra hospital, a small fifteen-bed hospital in Madhabpur, Habiganj.

In 2009, NABIC co-sponsored computer literacy programs in ten rural Bangladeshi high schools. This year, they added five more schools to that list. They selected two teachers from each school and qualified instructors from D.Net, and trained those teachers via Internet to monitor their progress for the CLS program. The instructors coordinated the classes from Dhaka. The organisation

also gives hands-on training to high school teachers and students.

This year, NABIC donated funds to Mirpur Eye hospital for state of the art machines for glaucoma testing and cataract operation. Eye disease is a very common problem in Bangladesh. With more advanced equipments, the doctors will be able to give a proper diagnosis to the patients, discuss treatment options and help them improve their quality of life.

The 2010 NABIC conference proved to be a large gathering of highly motivated and spirited people. The partners and the patrons came together in fellowship to aid this great humanitarian cause. To establish accountability, videos of all the recent projects in rural Bangladesh that NABIC is involved in were shown.

The NABIC members are true givers, with passion and purpose. Without the generosity of its members a non-profit organisation cannot survive nor thrive. NABIC members are dedicated to their cause, and have vowed to raise more money to eradicate some of Bangladesh's problems with active participation in the organisation's true mission.

Helping a homeless, hungry person with food and money is easy -- but that doesn't help that person in the long run. When someone makes a point of finding out the cause of poverty and helps that person then that is real help. In Bangladesh, NABIC is trying to eliminate some of the human suffering that is caused by social problems. For the last

twenty years NABIC has been working relentlessly in North America and Bangladesh.

This world is about haves vs. have-nots. Some people have more than others. Without true philanthropists, who give to a cause to improve the conditions of human suffering to eliminate social problems, we may as well be living in the dark ages.

From the time of the ancient Greek civilisation to the modern day, philanthropy and charity took up human causes to eliminate suffering. The "first great American," Benjamin Franklin, and icons like Bill Gates created the personal system of philanthropy in America.

Without Bill and Melinda Gates' philanthropic work through the Gates

Foundation, we would not know much about Africa's problems. Their generous contribution in eradicating disease and hunger in many African countries brought Africa to focus of the rest of the world.

Historically, all philanthropists have made significant contributions for the betterment of mankind.

NABIC's high moral and ethical standards make it a unique organisation that sends a positive message for working together for a better tomorrow.

*NABIC 20th Annual Convention brochure was used for some factual data.

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