

LIBERAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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A quarrel is being carried on between two groups of extremists in language. One insists that language should be kept "pure", while the other says that language is an organism, and takes its shape without any control from us. Most of us range between these positions of dogmatic absolutism, BUT everyone generally agrees upon one point that English language should be successfully taught.

Those who look to the conventional rules of grammar, to dictionaries, to lists of frequently mispronounced words as absolute authorities, are against all liberalism in language. The "liberal" attitude towards language, is directly in opposition to the tenets and practices of the purists,

Here it is necessary to clear away some erroneous conceptions in connection with linguistic liberalism. This may best be done by pointing out, this change in attitude and defining the standards of Good English, the liberal grammarians uphold.

The rules of Grammar, however, originated with certain English grammarians of the eighteenth century notably William Ward, Robert Lowth, and James Buchanan. They were not as interested in reflecting and codifying the actual spoken English of their time as in setting up an ideal language.

These grammarians assumed that language is static and it might reach and be kept at a state of perfection. In the nineteenth century we learned the evolutionary concept to the language and realised that the language is in a state of continuous development. Along with our increased knowledge of the history of the English language

came the realization that many of the rules of so-called correct English did not reflect actual speech habits and were virtually foreign to the genius of the language.

According to the liberal grammarians, there has been in existence an accepted or received standard form of each language based upon the speech of the class and section of the country which was politically, economically, and culturally dominant at the time.

London English, just one of many English dialects, became the standard speech of England chiefly because the city of London rose to a position of prime importance in the affairs of English-speaking people. Such an attitude is usually spoken of as a doctrine of usage with full concentration on the form or construction in accord with the developing tendencies or patterns of the English language.

A careful examination of English of the last five hundred years shows that such constructions have been in constant use, so as to speak English naturally and clearly. Unfortunately, a number of misconceptions have arisen in connection with such a proposed standard of usage. The doctrine of usage does not legalize the language of the gutter, for the wholly uncultivated speech is not apt to prevail as Standard Spoken English. BUT the liberal grammarians are still committed to the speech of the people who direct the affairs of the community as a standard. It has been pointed out that rules for the speaking of correct English have existed only two hundred years of the fifteen hundred since the Angles and Saxons first came to

the British Isles. Accordingly, when English is considered in the light of its millennium of existence as a separate language, one is inclined to feel that the rules have had relatively little effect in either hindering or accelerating the main trends of development.

As one eminent linguist has written "To the conservative grammarian all change is decay. Although he knows well that an old house often has to be torn down in part or as a whole in order that it may be rebuilt to suit modern conditions. He hasn't the slightest insight into the line constructive work in rebuilding the subjunctive."

At present the greatest need is for new textbooks and grammars with the forms and syntax of present-day English. It must therefore be the principal function of the grammarian to describe the language as it exists rather than to prescribe a state of perfection for it. Here one cannot underestimate Miss Ruth Mary Weeks' remarks that "Language is a living thing and the greatest law of life is change. Dictionaries,

grammars, books of rhetoric are not eternal statutes. They are history, not dogma, description not command - description of the changing speech habits of the mass of men. "As our speech changes, so do dictionaries and grammars change; so must they change if we are to prepare our students to speak the language of their own time, or to secure from the better speech of our own day reinforcement of our teaching."

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TEACHING IN THE CLASSROOM

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The teacher is the key figure in the educational system. It is his behaviour in an institution in general and in the classroom in particular that must eventually be the focus of our attention as he ultimately influences the national build-up through our educated young generation. There are three aspects of his behaviour in the classroom. Firstly, the teacher acts as a socializing agent. Secondly, various styles of leadership used by the teacher affect the behaviour of children. Thirdly, the teacher relates to the peer group that is constituted by the classroom group.

General patterns of interaction between teacher and pupils:

1. "Adult rule, child obedience", in which the teacher, assuming that he holds absolute authority and that pupils should respond unquestioningly with the demanded behaviour, acts accordingly.
2. The pattern in which emphasis is upon individual attention and individual initiative, but group interaction is curtailed.
3. The pattern of adult-directed group planning, where group interaction is allowed for, and where children plan

The teacher and a socializing agent: The most important part of the lesson, inadvertent though it may have been on the teacher's part, is induction of competitiveness. Thus the teacher, with or without awareness, and directly or indirectly transmits not only information and knowledge, but also a wide variety of cultural values and attitudes. It is in this sense that the teacher is a potent socializing agent in the life of child and adolescent.

Leadership in the classroom: The teacher is the authority figure in the classroom and acts in the role of group leader with considerable variations.

Types of leadership: As one watches each teacher has a style of his own. It is as he has a model in his mind of what the classroom should be like, and acts in ways to make the classroom conform to this image which may include the Socratic discussion, the town meeting, apprenticeship, boss employee or army model, the business deal, the good ol' learn and the guided tour.

who sets a warm and friendly atmosphere with all his members of the group, promotes good group relations among students.

Sociometric methods can be used successfully in situations in which the teacher knows relatively little about his students. Groupings made on the basis of students' choices are as successful with university students as with elementary students; and in special subject-matter classes as well as in regular home-rooms.

Aspects of the use of sociometric methods: The teacher uses sociometry as an aid in understanding the existing social network within the classroom for the benefit of the

their activities within the boundaries set by the teacher.

4. The pattern of group self-management through group planning.

The teacher and the peer group: The successful teacher works with, rather than against, the peer group. This does not imply that he merely follows and abets whatever values and social patterns exist among his group of children. Rather it implies that the teacher must understand the social organization that exists within the classroom.

Source of information: The teacher obtains his information by his own observation through noticing the friendship patterns or by listening to students in the course of formal or informal talks with the teacher and in the course of regular classroom activities.

Sociometric methods: The sociometric method is necessary for obtaining picture of the entire structure of relationships that exists within the students. It offers a means of checking the teacher's own evaluations against those of the peer group. The teacher peer group. Also it modifies the network and brings about certain desirable changes.

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