EMBRACING THE KNOWN FEAR OF THE ESL LEARNERS

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Establishing the English language in non-native speakers is a constant struggle. Adequate language proficiency in English subject is a preparation in facing globalization in this modern world. It is not just an academic requirement but also plays a great deal. It drives foreign investment to the country that provides opportunity for economic growth. Speaking a non-native language is quite challenging and there will always be a room for improvement for the learners. Even the native English speakers do have their flaws in speaking their own language. It could be their accent, grammar, sentence pattern, functionality of the words and many others. Nevertheless, the communication will be effective when it is understood the way it should be. Expressing oneself vividly, engaging wholeheartedly in a conversation and asking questions will make the communication effective. It will always be a two-way process whether it is in a formal or informal setting. These are the heart of the communicating in English as secondary language.

Among other Asian countries, Filipinos are well known recognized English speakers globally for a very long time. Filipinos bear the pride of being highly proficient in English language compared to other Asian countries. Philippines even offer English language course and most the students from neighboring country prefer to study here because it is cheaper but of high standard. However, recently according to the 2020 the Philippines was out of top 20 in English Proficiency Index but remained second in Asia.

Nevertheless, the Filipinos, particularly the students find it difficult or challenging. Most of the students do understand it however they are having a trouble expressing it. Their receptive language is better than expressive one, Language anxiety overlay before English
word being said. They fear communicating in English particularly in a class where English should be the medium of instruction. They are not confident enough in expressing their ideas or thoughts. The ‘nose-bleed’ syndrome as you may call seems to be acceptable in the society. It becomes a popular phrase of the students in contemporary linguistic life. It reveals that students’ self-confidence is below average or lower.

Students have their fear – the fear of committing an error in grammar, dictions, context, syntax, semantics, and others. Because at the back of their mind, people will laugh at them or worse mock them. So instead of trying to express themselves, they will simply say, “ay, nose-bleed”! Some will still try to speak in English as much as possible, but some may just quit and admit it right away that English language is difficult. Although it might not be the scenario always because for some it is just a way of their humility and humor at once.

How to overcome the language anxiety?

Embrace the fact that you are only human and tend to commit mistakes in English language. This is not only applicable to the students but as well to all non-English speakers. Remember, you are a learner, and learning is a continuous process. Growing up in an environment where Filipino language is the official language of the country and English as unofficial secondary one, means there will always be limitations, but it is a good exploration.

Building up linguistic confidence. Bear in mind that practicing the learned skills makes it perfect. Everyone has its own ability and capability at its own phase. Do not mind other’s ignorance with their laughter. Believe in oneself not on others judgement.

Try to communicate in our second language which is English as much as possible. Grab every single opportunity to communicate in English. It could be from a simple conversation, reading books, watching movies, listening to music, writing a letter and
other variety of ways. Learning through mistakes is remarkable and a good reminder. There is always a room for greater improvement.

Do not give up. As an ESL learner, keep on trying and believing. The ‘nose-bleed’ syndrome should be disregarded as fear of English language.

Be proud. Not all individuals can become a bilingual or multilingual. It is a gift to be nurtured.

The teachers should also embrace the students fear of English as a Secondary Language (ESL) by creating a conducive and non-judgmental classroom set up.

References:


