

Second National Conference on New Perspectives in ELT
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Employability Sans English is a Myth

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Abstract

English as a global language has spread its wings not only in academics but also in all the spheres of life. If we take “English” out from our life, we can rightly say that human beings will go back to the Stone Age. English occupies each and every gadget that we use in our day to day life. From simple conversation to a complex business proposal English occupies a predominant role. So neglecting “The Language” from our life will make us remain ignorant and become the odd man out.

Globalization has shrunk the world and made everything readily available, within hand’s reach. This paper aims at giving the importance of English to acquire employment. The necessity of developing one’s language skill along with capacity to sell oneself to the prospective employer is the main perspective of this paper.

English can be considered the language of the world due to its widespread use, as well as being acknowledged as the medium of communication that can outdo all barriers. Being knowledgeable and fluent in English is undeniably a commanding tool that can bring about personal as well as global progression and enhancement. Modern life demands fluency in English. The service sector undoubtedly welcomes and offers a better employability to the young graduates. Good language skill will open up a myriad of new opportunities in this internet era as everything depends on this global language. It is therefore necessary to create a market-driven tertiary education system.

Key Words: Importance of global language, English language, Perspectives of employability, Progression of communication skill, teacher's propositions.

Introduction

English language has become indispensable in India; it connects people by default. This is because of the fact that we have a whole lot of multi-cultural and multi-linguistic people among us. It is the official language of communication. As Graddol perceives: "In 1700s, English became the official language of administration and many educated Indians learnt the language as it helped them to go up the ladder". English language plays a vital role in higher education, media and administration of private and government organizations. English has become a powerful agent for change in India". (Graddol, 2010) [1] In particular, English language plays a crucial role in improving jobseekers' proficiency in English which is one of the parameters when a person is scouting for a job. In the current scenario, one has to possess a good sense of English to communicate. It is mandatory for employment.

Employability Issue for the Person Lacking English Compatibility

Employability can be described as "a set of achievements". It is observed that a person who has fluency in English can obtain progression and enhancement. It has been found that a huge number of professionally-sound students have not been successful in job interviews just because of their lack of communication skills. Even though the students had scored university ranks in their studies, they could not go for higher studies to the United States and other English-speaking countries because of their lack of proficiency in English. The students did not score well on their Test of English as a Foreign Language [TOFEL] or International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Their dream of going to foreign countries has become an empty dream due to lack of linguistic aptitude. This affects their prospect of acquisition and retention of employment. It is a question of planning, structuring and integrating various activities for the purpose of enhancing the students' learning.

As Clement and Murugavel observe: "Many engineering graduates in India are found to

be unemployable due to their poor communication skills and lack of confidence. There have been a lot of research papers that have recapped the importance of improving engineering graduates' employability skills. However, the problem of poor communication skills grows unabated in India". (Clement A. and T. Murugavel, 2015, p. 2)

Necessity to Upgrade English

Students who prefer English as a subject must acquire a range of valuable skills, which they can transform to any kind of employment situation. Communication means the exchange of information, ideas, feelings and thoughts. A person is considered employable only when he gets the necessary qualification, experience, interest learning attitude. Good English teachers cultivate all the skills to their places of employment together with sensitivity to literature and language. To create awareness about the importance of language skills in job interviews and work activities, it is mandatory that an English teacher needs to provide a lot of information from newspaper articles and websites. As the students want to learn more about employability, it has become obligatory for the teachers to read and share facts about language proficiency.

In the present day, students of rural areas show hesitation to communicate in English. It has to be boosted up with multi-task effort. As a number of students feel less confident, novel methods of training must be introduced in classes to boost their self-confidence. Videos of great speakers and leaders along with structured training sessions will surely equip the students. Encouragement is an integral tool to motivate the acquiring of language skills, for getting employment in the current scenario.

In teaching ESP (English for Specific Purposes) the focus of a teacher should be on the development of the students' written language skills within genres such as writing documentation, brief articles for journals, magazines and newspapers. Oral presentation, Role plays and Group discussion in meetings and negotiations are adequate activities for developing the student's oral skills.

As Iqbal and Pratap observe: “ESP combines subject matter and English language teaching. This combination is highly motivating because students are able to apply what they learn in their English classes to their main field of studies. To create employable graduates for the 21st century is a challenge and it seems to fall on the shoulders of the teaching community”. (Pratap, 2015, p.3) This is due to the employer, student and the institutions’ need to find their way naturally into the classroom.

Overcome Challenges

The first challenge that needs to be appreciated and recognized is that it is a wider responsibility, not just of the language teacher, but of the trainer, who can build real competencies to bridge the gap between all the requirements. They need to follow a holistic, integrated, skill based, focused and meticulously planned approach for a well-rounded development of the learners.

Second, crucial problem is the great shortage of eminent trained teachers in language teaching. The poor compensation given to the teacher is also a primary reason we do not get enough good professionals. The teachers’ remuneration need to be hiked by two or three times the current level. Emphasis must be laid to teachers’ language skill, overall competency, enthusiasm and professional awareness. Another serious issue is lack of awareness about the latest developments and trends in profession. An English teacher should adopt the right balance of latest trends in both teaching and training technique depending on the need. A teacher of English language, should strive to contribute to the transforming of young graduates into English language proficient, fully skillful and competent professionals, along with the enhancement of English language skills in the wake of threatening employability crises.

Clement and Murugavel point out that the reality of classrooms presents a different picture due to various reasons:

- i. Lack of training for English Professors
- ii. Students of different levels in the same class

- iii. Number of students in each class (60 per class)
- iv. Lack of time to complete the prescribed syllabus
- v. More importance on written exams (traditional method in India)
- vi. Pressure on teachers to produce high percentage of passes in final exams
- vii. Lack of quality text books.
- viii. Use of work books that compile the exercises from previous year question papers
- ix. Lack of support from college management
- x. English being treated as yet another subject to study
- xi. Irrelevant syllabus design
- xii. Lack of relevant methodologies (Clement and Murugavel, 2015, p. 4)

Preventive Propositions

We can obtain maximum benefits by implementing these propositions below:

- To create awareness about the importance of language skills in job interview and work place activities.
- Prior training must be taken to proliferate their presentation skill
- Self-confidence should be motivated
- Separate training sessions must be given to encourage students so that weak students may feel inferior in front of their counterparts who are proficient in English language skills.
- Teachers can create experience-sharing opportunities for students to make use of their experience in doing the assignment.
- Teachers must evaluate and teach oral skills while preparing students for communication activities.
- When easy activities with clear instructions are introduced in the class, students will feel comfortable in exercising their skills with ease, and their difficulty levels should be increased as the students' confidence levels are enhanced.

Conclusion

A successful English language teacher should not confine herself to a single method, since there is no single excellent way to do it. Similarly a method used by a teacher in one

classroom cannot be quoted or used by another to a new batch of students. They always differ and depend upon the group that is under the learning process. There has been a gradual shift from literature-based foreign language learning, to equipping learners with communicative skills for interaction globally. Considering all these factors language teachers should put into practice a great deal of diverse activities which enhances the students' abilities according to their needs. Market driven tertiary education system is the need of the hour. Trainers of today's era should consider all these situations and should be able to bring out the innate language quality of the students through more practical and communicative approach. As we have multi-cultural and multi-linguistic work force in the global job market, English serves as a bridge by default. So the knowledge of English is all the more important and employability without English inside India, or across the Globe remains highly impossible.

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