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**Omani Women: Are Their Language Skills Good Enough
for the Workplace?**

Kiranmayi, Nallan Chakravarthi, M. Phil., M.A. (Hons)

Abstract

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the king of Oman said “We call upon Omani women everywhereto roll up their sleeves and contribute to the process of economic and social development.” (on the occasion of 20th National Day of Oman) “...of paramount importance, are interpersonal and communication skills. And this is where women can shine, because these are skills we learned from the earliest age. For Arab women today, communication skills must include mastery of the English language as the main mode of communication in the international business world”. Dr Rawya Al Busaidi, Minister of Higher Education, Oman, said to the Arab International Women’s Forum on ‘Women as Engines of Economic Growth’ at The European Parliament, Brussels, April 2005.

It is in this context that the presenter, an English Language Instructor for the last six years in Oman wishes to report the results of the survey conducted to know if the English Language Programs offered by higher colleges of education in Oman are effectual in providing the necessary language skills to women and girls in preparation for the workplace.

Key words: English language programs, global Omanis, Oman Women's Association in Muscat (OWAM), *half of Oman’s potential*.

Introduction

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Kiranmayi, Nallan Chakravarthi, M. Phil., M.A. (Hons)

Omani Women: Are Their Language Skills Good Enough for the Workplace?

Oman is situated in the Southwest Asia, nestled amidst the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, and Persian Gulf, bordering the Republic of Yemen, in the south, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and in the west United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is considered one of the fifteen states that constitute the famed "Cradle of Humanity." With a land area of about 309.5 thousand square kilometers and a coastline of 1700 kilometers, it is the third largest country in the Arabian Peninsula.

A sustainable economic advantage stems from a country's resources-human, financial and natural resources. It is recognized that the country's greatest and most precious resource is its people. Therefore, their potential must be developed to enable them to build their present and prepare for the future. Consequently, the development of human resources has been a corner stone of Oman's development strategy.

Statistics of Omani women in education

Table 1 provides with an overview of Omani women in education, table 2 with numbers of men and women working and their percentages and table 3 will show the departments in which women are working.

% Distribution of Omani Population by Educational Status & Gender.

Male%	Female%	Average %	Educational Status
11.81	23.82	17.77	Illiterate
21.17	18.46	19.83	Can read and write
23.66	18.10	20.90	Primary stage of education
19.14	15.78	17.47	Preparatory stage of basic education
17.36	18.39	17.87	Secondary stage
2.77	2.29	2.53	Post secondary non-tertiary
3.50	2.73	3.12	First university degree
0.38	0.10	0.24	Master degree
0.07	0.02	0.04	PhD degree
0.14	0.31	0.22	Not stated

Statistics of Omani Women in jobs

Table 2: Omani population and Omani Labour Force during the period 1993

Gender	Omani Population	Omani Labour Force
Men	755,071 (51%)	250,404 (91%)
Women	725,460 (49%)	24,007 (9%)
Total	1,480,531 (100%)	274,411 (100%)

Table 3: Employment Structure of Working Omani Women in 1995

Source: Sultanate of Oman, Development Council, 1993	
Place of Employment	Population
Government Sector	17,946 (75%)
Private Sector	2,942 (12%)
Self Employed (Own Business)	3,119 (13%)
Total	24,007 (100%)
Source: General Directorate for Women's and Children's Affairs, 1995.	

Encouragement provided by the government

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Since the dawn of the national renaissance in 1970, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has repeatedly stated that Oman's crucial resource is its national human resources. This appeal does not preclude Omani women as proclaimed by His Majesty in His speech: "The education of girls is never absent from our mind, since women form half of our society." In recognition of this fact, a full fledged commitment by the government of Oman has been undertaken to educate, train and develop its national work force as a measure towards nation building and economic development.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has repeatedly called upon female citizens to offer their full support to the continuing development of their country, describing them as representing "*half of Oman's potential*".

The Omani women have a constant presence and active participation in various dimensions of life as they are appointed to some of the highest offices. Sultan Qaboos has continually made clear his wish that Omani women rise to a level of participation in the public and private sector commensurate with their numbers and education. In 1999, the sultan appointed the first Omani woman ambassador (to the Netherlands), in March 2004 he selected the first woman to be a minister in his cabinet, following up with a second chosen in June and later a third in October and in September 2005, he appointed a woman as ambassador to the United States and In both areas, the diplomatic service and the Council of Ministers, Oman was the first member of the Gulf Cooperation Council to appoint a woman to such a position.

When Charles O. Cecil , a retired U.S. ambassador (Niger), served as deputy chief of mission in Oman, among other posts in the Arab world., asked the sultan's special adviser for Economic Planning Affairs, Mohamed Al Zubair, how Oman was preparing itself for the time when oil exports could no longer sustain the economy, he replied that education was the foundation for Oman's future prosperity. "Knowledge of English is the key to being a 'global Omani'....Instead of training Omanis to do specific tasks in Oman," he said, "we must train them so that they can work anywhere in the world." As oil reserves decline, a skilled workforce will become Oman's most important resource.

To achieve the plan of involving Omani women in all walks of life for a robust and strong growing economy, women's education was accorded a great importance. In 1970, there were no schools for girls in the country. There are now 980 state schools providing education at primary, preparatory and secondary levels. The number of female students enrolled at the SQU (only university) for the year 2005/2006 was 50%, (Ministry of National Economy, Statistical Year Book 2006)

This is further supported by some of the reforms underlined and highlighted in education policies contained in "Vision 2020" produced in 1995 on the country's economic future (Ministry of Development, 1997) are based on statement of Ministry of Education are as follows:

- To make secondary education more consistent with the requirements of the future society;
- To improve the teaching/learning of the English language in Basic Education;
- To improve teaching methods and education practices according to the new trends and to encourage the concept of learning by doing.

Encouragement provided by other agencies

The General Directorate for Women's and Children's Affairs, formally established in 1985 is one among the various factors that contribute to the development, advancement and participation of Omani women as equal partners in the country's socio-economic development. Indisputably, this is gigantic step taken by the government which is committed to enhancing the status and role of women in Oman's society. The Directorate, under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs & Labor, has setup a network of Women's Development Centers throughout the country, catering to rural and remote villages as well.

The Directorate aims to set up programs for the care of mothers and children, the eradication of illiteracy, education, the development of traditional and modern handicraft skills, the promotion of healthy and hygienic environment, the teaching of survival skills, and the cultivation of women's minds and roles as citizens of a modern developing society. (Al-Lamki,1999).

Omani Women's Association established in 1971 is contributing hugely to the development of Omani women and has set a positive precedent prior to the inception of the Directorate. Managed as a not for profit organization, the Omani Women's Association acts in collaboration with the efforts and support of the government to carry out a great number of activities aimed at improving and enhancing the role of Omani women in society . "The **Oman Women's Association in Muscat (OWAM)** is now equipped to train women across the country in IT skills and capabilities following collaboration with Microsoft Oman. A group of Omani women are celebrating the completion of Microsoft's Unlimited Potential (UP) curriculum, which will enable them to pass on their new expertise to at least 750 members of the OWAM in the three regions of Salalah, Buraimi and Muscat.

Microsoft donated its UP Curriculum and trainers to OWAM in this first phase an amount of \$52,000. Plans are in place currently to expand the programme following this first phase to the remaining 42 women associations. The OWAM was established in 1970 in order to empower women by building their knowledge and skills, and promoting their personal and professional capabilities." (Press release dated 26 February,2007)

Scenario at the workplace

Language skills required at the workplace at a glance: The recruiters and the HR managers of the companies representing the workplace the researcher spoke to, place an overwhelming importance on the acquiring of language skills.

In addition to the general working knowledge in reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, the employers and employees vocalized their opinion as

- ❖ Almost all of the employees rank English language skills as second only to IT when it comes to appointing the right candidate.
- ❖ Literate employees are better able to solve problems for themselves and do not find it necessary to rely on others to act as intermediaries. They are better able to communicate with their colleagues and supervisors and have self confidence to address work-related issues as they arise.
- ❖ These employees are also able to use their skills to cope better with new technologies and changes in workplace requirements and conditions. In addition, the full set of workplace basic skills increase the capacity of employees to take the next steps in developing themselves. These skills gains spell tangible economic benefits for employees, whose income is closely correlated to their literacy skills attainment.
- ❖ Employee benefits translate into employer benefits because increases in skills of individuals create increased capacity for high performance on the company.
- ❖ As organizations change and come under increasing competition, many employees recognize the need to acquire or improve their core literacy skills. Adequate reading, writing and numeracy skills are seen to be a minimum for keeping their existing jobs or competing for new jobs.
- ❖ The improved ability to read and write, along with better English language skills, is at the base of many of the broader skills. They help employees be better communicators. They are better able to explain themselves and their listening skills and ability to understand others improve.

English Language Programs in

a. General and in schools

Before the 1998, education in Omani schools was General Education based. English was taught from class four. However, at the start of the academic year 1998-1999, Ministry introduced the Basic Education System in two phases: a basic education phase over 10 years and a secondary education phase for two years. English was also introduced from the first year of basic education. The new system has been introduced gradually, starting with 17 schools from different regions.

The teaching of English has assumed increasing importance in recent years, particularly with the opening of Sultan Qaboos University and other higher education colleges. In

1987 the Ministry launched a major project to develop the teaching of English in schools with materials specially designed to suit the Omani school system. Teacher-training plays an important part in raising the standard of English in schools. Omani teachers of English are given additional programmes during their training. Coming to the colleges that the researched studied while conducting this survey, the English Language Programs and objectives, the language programs set out to achieve, are as follows.

b. English Language Programs at the colleges

The medium of instruction in primary and secondary education in Oman is Arabic. On the contrary, post secondary education is taught mainly in English. This is because of the country's reliance on programs imported from the English-speaking countries or from other countries where English is treated as almost a first language. As a result, English language proficiency is the most challenging task for the students and Omani employees. To aid the students who need to enhance their language proficiency in order to further their study in the elected field, the OAC (Oman Accreditation Council) established General Foundation Program to precede the first formal year of higher education.

Most of the colleges in Oman adopted a GFP program in the academic year 2008-2009 as stipulated by the Ministry of Higher Education. Four areas of learning have been specified in the program and they are:

- a. English Language
- b. Mathematics
- c. Computing and
- d. General Study Skills

It is interesting to note that though the English Language and General Study Skills areas are designed to help the students to orient themselves towards higher learning, they indirectly contribute to achieve most of the soft skills that are greatly required at the workplace. (Appendix 1 and 2)

In addition to the GFP, each college in accordance with the guidelines set up by the Ministry of Higher Education has other English Language Programs which orient the students towards achieving their goals of higher education. For example,

❖ **Scientific College of Design:** The English Language Programs that are offered in this college are

1. Remedial English: After GFP, this course aims at providing training in all the four skills of language learning. These courses are prescribed by the Lebanese American University to which the college is affiliated.
2. English 101: It is designed to give the students practice in listening, speaking and writing for academic and critical thinking.

3. English 102: It is designed to help students build on the skills acquired in English 101. It focuses on research methods leading to a well-written research paper.
4. English 201: Fundamentals of Oral Communications: This course trains the students to develop strategies and critical thinking skills that help them prepare for academic achievement and employment.
5. English 202: Sophomore Rhetoric: This course equips the students with the necessary skills to express their opinions substantiating with reasons and persuade people to accept their viewpoints. These skills are part of reading and writing material selected for the course.
6. English 100: Designed for Fashion students. This course is intended to introduce the students to the vocabulary, expressions and language needed for their majors of study.

❖ **Modern College of Business and Administration:** The ESL Program comprises of the following four distinctive components of the language skills:

1. ESL 301 - Conversation & Pronunciation: to develop fluency and correctness in conversational English.
2. ESL 302 - Listening & Note-Taking: to increase listening and comprehensive skills necessary for taking down effective class notes.
3. ESL 303 - Reading & Writing: to develop writing skills, including essay development, organization, vocabulary, and editing. To develop reading skills and strategies.
4. ESL 305 - Grammar: to review grammar rules and understand the meaning and use of structures in American English. To recognize and use these structures correctly in speaking and writing.

❖ **Oman Tourism College:**
General English

This course provides students, through task based exercises, the opportunity to develop their speaking, listening, writing, and reading English skills so that they are able to function effectively in social and job-related situations, improve grammatical accuracy and pronunciation and develop independent learning skills.

English for Tourism and Hospitality (ESP)

Upon completion, students from diverse educational backgrounds should have acquired a basic overview and understanding of the language required to prepare them for the tourism and hospitality industry. It will allow them to enter into more demanding, sector specific studies delivered during the diploma and vocational programmes at OTC. Candidates will develop their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills to a level that allows them to operate effectively during their first year at OTC. Practical organization of small tasks will provide them with first-hand experience of the skills learnt.

Methodology

To generate the needed information for this study, the researcher employed the following methods and procedures:

1. Designed questionnaires and conducted personal interviews to gather information from people in HR, working Omani women, female students in colleges.
2. Pilot studied the questionnaires on a sample of people from the above list to determine whether the questionnaire elicits the needed information.
3. Distributed the questionnaire to a sample of people in HR, Omani women in colleges, banks and other companies and students.
4. Collected and analyzed the questionnaire responses to determine the general requirements of the workplace in terms of language skills from the HR, working knowledge of Omani women in language and the students' expectations in terms of achieving language skills from the English Language Programs in colleges.
5. Interpreted the results and proposed possible conclusions and suggestion of practices and patterns for strengthening and promoting the effectiveness of English Language Programs in colleges of Oman.

Subjects for the survey

Subjects for this survey are a group of students selected from various colleges, experienced recruiters, HR managers (including the Head of Quality Assurance and Program Management of my college) other experts who satisfactorily characterize the larger picture.

Analysis of the data

The data collected using questionnaires, personal interviews and informal discussions were analyzed to spot the individual opinions and responses.

Findings of the survey

a. From the workplace

People from HR and Omani women who are working have expressed the following during the personal interviews and filling out the questionnaires:

1. English language plays an important role in forging relationships through oral and verbal communication.

2. All the four language skills are vital to improve the efficiency of the workforce.
3. English language helps them to write reports, projects, presentations, reading and giving instructions and communication.
4. Omani women contribute a lot in terms of economic development of the companies and other workplaces.
5. People in HR feel that Omani women who they are recruiting tend to score low on the practical application of the language.
6. They are able to speak fluently and confidently but when it comes to reading, writing, they face some difficulty.
7. As the language skills required all over the world are more or less the same, Omanis should have acquired those skills to a fair extent in the colleges.
8. ELPs at the colleges can include a component of practical aspect of language learning.
9. Language is for communication and in a working context like Oman, where English is second language and where most of the business is conducted in English, employees need fairly good command over language.
10. Most of the employees acquire practical knowledge of the language after having worked for six months or so. This goes to prove the importance of inclusion of practical training in the colleges.

b. From the colleges

Majority of the students expressed satisfaction at the ELPs offered by the colleges. A few of them suggested that there should be a practical component of practical use of the language incorporated in the regular programs. The results from the personal interviews and questionnaires are as follows:

1. Students in various colleges when spoken to expressed their satisfaction at the way English Language is taught in their colleges.
2. Students are of the opinion that the ELP (English Language Programs) offered in their colleges are helpful in developing their language skills.
3. Students opine that the ELPs help them to write assignments, project reports and submit term papers that require them to do some research.
4. Students feel that their ELPs help them in achieving their goals of going for higher education.
5. All the language skills viz., reading, writing, listening and speaking are integrated while taught and thus they help in improving their overall language ability.
6. The ELPs help them more in the academic front than in preparing them for the workplace.
7. Some of the students who have been educated abroad (New Zealand, Australia or America, albeit for short periods of three months to one year) feel that the ELPs offered in the colleges of Oman are highly satisfactory and that if there is any problem with their language skills, it is only because of their lack of practice.

8. Students feel that the ESP programs offered in colleges viz, Oman Tourism College is very practical and workplace oriented.
9. Most of them have expressed their concern on the lack of practical application of the language skills that they learn in the colleges.
10. They feel that there should be a chance for them to work in various companies or other workplaces during their summer breaks so that they have first hand knowledge of what is required in terms of language skills.

The opinions expressed by the recruiters, students and other related people are used to arrive at a general conclusion. Further research needs to be done in this area as Oman is marching grandly ahead with its ambitious plans but achievable plans of developing "global Omanis".

Conclusion

The following can be concluded from the findings of the survey.

1. The ELPs offered in colleges are academically oriented: Students in various colleges feel that the ELPs offered in their colleges are academically oriented and that they promote language skills required for academic style of language use.
2. Gap between what is learnt and what is required: Students feel that there is a gap between the academically oriented ELPs and language skills required at the workplace. Also, the students who passed out of the colleges recently vouch for this fact. They are of the opinion that the colleges not preparing the students for the workplace.
3. Need for bridging the gap: This glitch can be rectified by providing some practical component of language use in colleges.
4. Expected returns: Government and other agencies that invest in the education industry expect returns in the form of skilled personnel who in turn prove to be an asset to the industry and contribute to the growth/ development of society or economy. Therefore, it is the sacred duty of the higher education providers (HEPs) to assure an enriching and fulfilling environment in terms of ELPs offered to the students.
5. The ELPs offered by the HEPs should prepare the students for their internship/workplace placements, including programs in developing oral and written communication skills relevant to their workplace.

Suggestions

- ✓ Conducting market research to know the needs: It is very pertinent for the higher education providers (HEPs) that they conduct market research to know the needs of the workplace. It helps them in providing the students with the skills necessary to survive in the market.

- ✓ Integrating workplace skills into general English programs: Once the HEPs understand the needs of the workplace, they can integrate the same set of skills with their academic courses and train their students with the skills necessary to survive in the market.
- ✓ Creating awareness among students about the various job opportunities: It is very essential for the students to be aware of the various job opportunities so that they can brace themselves for the challenges that they are likely to face in the workplace.
- ✓ Vocationalization: The ELPs should aim at providing the students with the necessary and basic life skills and improve vocational preparedness. the importance of 'dignity of labor' has to be stressed upon the students by integrating skills required for the selected vocations into the ELPS
- ✓ Forging strong relationship with alumni for knowing the pulse of the market and also to help upgrading the language programs: The students who graduate from the colleges and start working have a clear picture of what is learnt in colleges and what is useful in the workplace. Therefore, they can forge a strong bond between the theoretical aspect of learning in the college and practical aspect needed at the workplace.
- ✓ Encouraging on-campus selections for the students to know the needs of the market: This is the best way to familiarize the students, faculty and the administration of HEPs with the opportunities existing and their expected levels of language skills in the workplace.
- ✓ Conducting workshops by people who are well-versed with the needs of the market: A strong bond should be forged between the HEPs and the experts (people who are experienced in recruiting and other related jobs) from the workplace. These experts can visit the HEPs from time to time and conduct workshops in workplace-related areas and suggest a few ideas which can be implemented while teaching the language.
- ✓ Sending students for on-hands experience in close association with the banks / colleges/ offices and other agencies for a short period: It is very important for the students to have an idea about the workplace firsthand and they can have it by working in their semester breaks. These opportunities can be provided HEPs in close association with the experts from the workplace.

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Appendix 1

The General Foundation Program prescribed by the Ministry of Higher Education to be followed by higher education providers has the following learning outcome standards.

3 ENGLISH LANGUAGE

3.1 Aim of the Area

To extend the English language skills of the student to enable active participation in their postsecondary or higher education studies.

3.2 Learning Outcome Standards

Having successfully completed GFP English language a student will be able to satisfactorily:

- a) Actively participate in a discussion on a topic relevant to their studies by asking questions, agreeing/disagreeing, asking for clarification, sharing information, expressing and asking for opinions.
- b) Paraphrase information (orally or in writing) from a written or spoken text or from graphically presented data.
- c) Prepare and deliver a talk of at least 5 minutes. Use library resources in preparing the talk, speak clearly and confidently, make eye contact and use body language to support the delivery of ideas. Respond confidently to questions.
- d) Write texts of a minimum of 250 words, showing control of layout, organisation, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary.
- e) Produce a written report of a minimum of 500 words showing evidence of research, notetaking, review and revision of work, paraphrasing, summarising, use of quotations and use of references.
- f) Take notes and respond to questions about the topic, main ideas, details and opinions or arguments from an extended listening text (e.g. lecture, news broadcast).
- g) Follow spoken instructions in order to carry out a task with a number of stages.
- h) Listen to a conversation between two or more speakers and be able to answer questions in relation to context, relationship between speakers, register (e.g. formal or informal).
- i) Read a one to two page text and identify the main idea(s) and extract specific information in a given period of time.
- j) Read an extensive text broadly relevant to the student's area of study (minimum three pages) and respond to questions that require analytical skills, e.g. prediction, deduction, inference.

6 GENERAL STUDY SKILLS

6.1 Aim of the Area

To equip students with fundamental study and academic skills needed for postsecondary or higher education studies.

General Study Skills may be taught either as specific course/s, or may be embedded into each of the English, Mathematics and Computing courses. This will require careful attention to ongoing curriculum and instructional design by HEP faculty.

Students who meet the English, Computing and Mathematics standards upon entry testing are awarded the GFP certificate in full, and thereby exempt from the Study Skills standards in the

GFP (see 2.4(c)). Therefore, it is expected that HEPS will also be able to demonstrate how they have incorporated these Study Skills standards into the first year of their diploma and degree programs.

6.2 Learning Outcome Standards

6.2.1 Managing time and accepting responsibility

- a) Work in pairs or groups and participate accordingly i.e. take turns, initiate a discussion, interrupt appropriately, express an opinion.
- b) Follow university policies on attendance and punctuality.
- c) Bring required materials (pens, pencils, folder, etc) to class.
- d) Work to imposed deadlines.
- e) Show respect for teachers and others and their rights to have a difference of opinion.
- f) Use a variety of study techniques.
- g) Create term planners and study schedules noting key dates/events.
- h) Complete homework on time.
- i) Continually revise one's work.
- j) Independently access and use computer labs and the internet for language learning.
- k) Identify preferred study strategies based on learning styles.
- l) Organise a feasible study schedule that accommodates other responsibilities.
- m) Describe learning experiences, challenges, insights in a daily journal.
- n) Organise and maintain a system of recording vocabulary (keep a vocabulary log).
- o) Organise and maintain a portfolio of one's work.

6.2.2 Research Skills

- a) List the key ideas to guide search for information.
- b) Use the library system for finding, borrowing and returning library material.
- c) Use an English-English dictionary for language learning.
- d) Use a contents page and an index to locate information in a book.
- e) Extract relevant information from a book or article using a battery of reading strategies (e.g. skimming, scanning, etc.).
- f) Locate a book/journal in the library using the catalogue.
- g) Find topic-related information in a book/journal in the library using the catalogue.
- h) Find specific information using internet search engines and electronic resources.
- i) Cite a source in accordance with academic conventions.
- j) Classify and sort new information.
- k) Select or reject a source based on difficulty level, relevance and currency.
- l) Assess the reliability, objectivity and authenticity of a source.
- m) Summarise and paraphrase information in one's own words.

6.2.3 Taking Notes

- a) Recall and define main concepts.
- b) Utilize abbreviations and symbols.
- c) Use English rather than Arabic for notes in margins and glossing vocabulary.
- d) Extract and record key information (the gist) from a written or spoken source based on own interpretation of information.
- e) Adopt a note-taking strategy (e.g. Cornell system; mind mapping).
- f) Support key points with relevant additional details.
- g) Organise information to enable quick reference at a later date.
- h) Date one's notes.
- i) Use notes to create a summary.
- j) Reproduce key information and supporting details from notes in one's own words.
- k) Sort out information and reject irrelevant pieces.

6.2.4 Giving Presentations

- a) Outline and define main concepts.
- b) Address questions from the audience.
- c) Plan and conduct a presentation based on information from written material, interviews, surveys, etc.
- d) Speak in a clearly audible and well paced voice.
- e) Follow a presentation format.
- f) Use presentation language (discourse markers etc.).
- g) Achieve the key aim of informing the audience.
- h) Make use of audio/visual aids when giving oral presentations.
- i) Tailor content and language to the level of the audience.
- j) Maintain some eye contact with audience.
- k) Speak from notes in front of an audience using index cards.
- l) Observe time restrictions in presentations.
- m) Organise and present information in a logical order at a comprehensible speed.
- n) Invite constructive feedback and self-evaluate the presentation.

Appendix 2

Dear friend,

My name is N.C. Kiranmayi and I am working in Scientific College of Design as an English Instructor. I am presenting a paper in a conference in Singapore and the topic is

"Omani Women: Are their language skills good enough for the workplace?"

and I need to collect some data regarding the level of English of the female Omani students and employees. Could you be kind enough to take some time out of your busy schedule to fill in the questionnaire, please?

It will be kept confidential and you don't have to write your name anywhere. I promise you that the data collected will be strictly used for academic purposes only.

I. Questionnaire to the employees.

1. How long have you been in this job?
2. What is your qualification?
3. How many years of English did you study to receive the qualification?
4. What do you feel about the language programs in your college?
5. Were the programs useful to improve your language skills for the workplace?
6. If the answer for the above questions is yes, please tell me how it is useful.
7. If the answer for the above question is no, tell me
 - a. Why?
 - b. What do you suggest to change in the English programs for better results?

Thank you very much for the time and patience.

II. Questionnaires to the HR Managers

1. How long have you been in this recruiting business?
2. How many people approximately do you interview a month or a year?
3. How many of them are Omani women?

4. What are the language skills that you are looking for?
5. Are the candidates' language skills up to the mark? If no, where are they lacking?
6. Do you think the institutions of higher learning can make any changes to improve the language skills of the candidates? If yes, what are they?

Thank you very much for the time and patience.

III. Questionnaire to the students.

1. How long have you been studying?
2. What are you going to major in? _____
3. For how many years have you been learning English?

4. Why are you learning English?
5. What are you learning in the English language programs offered by your college?
6. Do you know what is English used for when you start working?
7. Do you think the English language programs are preparing you well for the jobs?

Thank you very much for your patience and time.

Colophon

This is a revised version of the paper read in RELC, Singapore, 2010.

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