

English for Employability

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Abstract: This article examines the means to enhance English language for getting a better employment. Contemporarily English is the world's most important language having communicative and educative value. It is used all over the world not out of any hassle but because of the realization that it has certain distinctive advantages. However, the problem of poor communication skill grows unabated in India. It has been noted that many third year students lack confidence to face their campus placements that take place in their final year of study. Over the years, the English language has gained an edge over other languages as it is a progressive language, both dynamic and flexible. The English for Employability series recognizes the critical role that English plays in taking the learner closer to success – both social and professional.

Key words: communication, performance, enhancement, employability.

INTRODUCTION

Employability is a vital issue for India. It's about a person's ability to get a job, keep that job, and move on to a better job. Language and communication skills are a key foundation to employability, to which this article makes an important contribution. It recommends actions we can take to build an India-specific framework for language and suggests a new entry level for English language skills. Effective communication is a fundamental building block to successful employment. A candidate's ability to present their knowledge and skills effectively to employers is vital during the selection process; and the employee's skills with language – speaking, reading, or writing – will have a major impact on their performance on the job with customers, with their supervisor and with colleagues; and as a result, their prospects for promotion. Many English language learners study English with the aim of getting down to the essentials of the language they need for their profession. Whether the learner is an engineer, a lawyer, a nurse, a police officer or a salesperson, simply teaching general English or even English for specific purposes is not enough. We need to improve our learners' skills for employability.

ENGLISH IN WORKPLACE

Paul Grice, a philosopher of language, proposes that every conversation is based on four maxims: quantity, quality, relation and manner. He believes that if these maxims combine successfully, then the best conversation will take place and the right message will be delivered to the right person at the right time. The four maxims take on deeper significance when it comes to the workplace, where things are often more formal and more urgent. Many human resources (HR) managers have spent hours fine-tuning workplace conversations simply because a job candidate or employee has not been adequately educated to the level of English language that a job role demands. It is a fact that many companies across the globe are adopting English as their official corporate language. It has resulted in a new requirement in the world of business: mastery of the English language. It would not be satisfactory for an employee to be turned down for a job vacancy, to be disqualified after a while; or fail to fulfill his or her assigned tasks, because their English language profile either does not associate with what the job fully expects or does not possess even the basics for the job role.

English not only opens up career opportunities beyond national borders; it is a key requirement for many jobs. It's also no longer a case of just learning English for employability, but mastering English for business – and that means an on-going commitment to learn. Learning English offers educational options beyond the borders of one's own country and enables them to develop the skills to work for global companies that operate across national boundaries. It gives a privilege to work in different countries in roles that have spanned functions, geographies and markets – and one's ability to learn and evolve English skills is an underlying factor throughout.

Recently, progress in language learning is measured in broad levels. Common scales, and the curriculum tied to them, are not always best designed to reflect the four skills or different applications such as academic versus business. These measures are increasingly being exposed as incomplete and no longer being fit for purpose. It is that need that has led to the extensive global research and development into the Global Scale of English (GSE) – a precise, standardized measure of proficiency from 10 to 90 across the four skills. The GSE extends the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), its steps are much more granular and it provides a powerful, focused motivator for further learning throughout your career. It includes sets of learning objectives as 'can do' statements at each level and because these are tailored to the learning environment – say, for work – learning goals and measures of progress are more relevant and accurate, that in turn, leads to greater engagement and increased motivation.

The future of language learning

The key trends of personalization and adaptive learning are driving the future of English language learning. Online methods and the using big data analytics and tools continues to expand and increase in sophistication, enabling English language learning to become more specific to individual needs, learning styles and capabilities while offering improved measurement of impact and result. This is vital because language learners learn at different levels and in different ways. Technology is also providing support on micro-skills and competencies hence, we can become better equipped and concentrate on what's important for English learners and their careers, such as interviewing in English, running an effective meeting or being able to better express thoughts in writing. Finally, it's important to remember that we never stop learning. We always find new words and expressions that open up new possibilities – both in and out of the workplace.

Role of faculty member

However, it has been found that the methodologies of faculty members need to be enhanced as large number of students want more interactive sessions to improve their language skills. The teachers are the key figures in the learning process. Being role models, teachers can use themselves as a model of enthusiasm, dynamism and inspiration for learning. A cheerful, smiling, confident and interactive trainer with positive attitude, good sense of humor and positive approval and appreciation for student's efforts can work wonders. One more key factor is motivation, which is such an integral, crucial part, that it is called the backbone; the "neglected heart" of the learning. Without motivation there is no pulse; there is no life in the class. Even other factors such as classroom environment, classroom management, tolerance, patience are also important. We need to create a warm, friendly, learner-centered, low-anxiety, personalized atmosphere and make the Classroom a cheerful place where learning is enjoyed, recognized and valued. Perhaps, there are limiting problems at the institutional level like lack of facilities, open atmosphere, and failure to prioritize and allot time for training needs.

Learner-centered teaching or training

The key lies in using truly learner-centered innovative notions of various relevant, interesting techniques, activities, games, puzzles, cues, pictures, visual aids, videos, movies, role-plays, and presentations etc. Even English songs, poems, newspapers, special articles, success stories can be explored as food for thought. Learners should be encouraged to regularly present and face the class through various interesting activities like power point presentations, skits, news broadcasts with audio-visual clips, television shows, panel interviews, pep talks, debates, discussions, organizing quizzes, games, presenting cricket commentaries, food recipes, singing English songs (solo or group), tongue twisters, puzzles etc.

They should be motivated and guided to take responsibilities as anchors, quiz masters, team leaders, time keepers, organizers, supporters etc. Team building, problem solving, and other activities to enhance inter-personal and other soft skills, also should be included for integrated skill enhancement. Teachers should involve learners, invite suggestions, and keep taking feed-back from them to understand their needs and interests better and make changes so to ensure that they enjoy learning. They should strive to improve each learner's language proficiency, vocabulary, confidence and other life skills to the point that they are ready to face the recruitment process and the challenges of the real world of work in future. It is important to plan class activities for best use of the learner's time through a pair work, group work and individual presentations. It is absolutely important to see that every learner actively participates and is not forced to just passively listen to others. A trainer should go around closely monitoring the activities and maintaining classroom dynamics and a sense excitement, and fun.

First things First

The basic rule of 'First things First' should not be forgotten. The areas crucial for recruitment process like oral communication, and presentation skills, just a minute round, group discussions and interview preparations should be given enough time and priority. Intensive practice sessions, mock sessions, seminars and workshops should be planned for each activity.

Subscribing to English Newspaper

Another measure is to encourage students to subscribe to English newspaper, (A bulk order can be placed by the institution) It makes them regularly read a newspaper which enhances their vocabulary, language skills, knowledge and general awareness.

Curricular, co-curricular activities

In addition to these regular activities, planning innovative extra-curricular, co-curricular activities, events and competitions every semester is part of campus life. Activity clubs like Debate club, elocution club, movie club encouraging regular, active participation and initiative in campus events, contests, and students' activity clubs is crucial for developing language skills, self-esteem and leadership skills. Starting an E-Plus club, a concept started by 'The Hindu' publication to help students from rural background better their communication skills and English language is also a good idea. A club comprises 30-like-minded students who are good in academics but lack proper communication skills.

CONCLUSION

The universities and the institutions should develop a holistic integrated approach, facilitating and linking the different aspects of competencies for employability along with improving English language skills and incorporate employability enhancement in curricula. For teachers of English language, it is mandatory to strive, to contribute, to transform young graduates into English language proficient, confident, skilled, and competent professionals. Teachers should be always alert and focused about the final goal of integrated, multi-skill development of the learners, along with enhancement of English Language skills in the wake of threatening employability crisis. ELT community needs to constantly update and upgrade their skills, professional awareness competency, knowledge, content and effective training and teaching techniques. One should recognize the constant change that the field is ever going through and embrace it, realizing that learning is ongoing life-long process.

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