

ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A PRE-REQUISITE IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE

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ABSTRACT

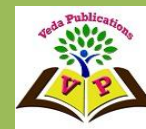
Man is a social human being and he needs language to communicate. So, any language that is taught/learnt serves the larger purposes of communication. It is generally accepted that the English language is widely used in the 21st century. English has been recognized as an associate official language and has been entered as one of the languages in the VIII schedule of our Indian Constitution. It is no longer the language of the elite. Even a common man in the 21st Century needs English to survive in the society. For example, the items in the monthly bill they receive for using electricity, the bus ticket which is computer generated, a currency note of any denomination etc. are in English or at least a major part of it is in English. So, it is obvious that English is so widespread in our society, that we call it a second language and not a foreign language. It has acquired a powerful and dominant position in all walks of life.

Key words: *Communication, Second Language and Foreign Language*

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Language is our primary source of communication. It's a method through which we share our ideas, thoughts and experiences with others. There are thousands of languages in this world. English is chiefly the language of England, but through the historical efforts of the British Empire it has become the primary or secondary language of many former British colonies such as the United States, Canada, Australia, India etc. Currently, English

is the language of media and the language of international banking and business. On the Internet, the majority of websites are written and created in English. It's the primary language of the press: more newspapers and books are written in English than in any other language. This paper aims at unfolding the necessity of English language in a country like India.



ENGLISH FOR TRAVEL AND BUSINESS

With better understanding and communication in English, one can travel around the globe. Because it is the international language, it's easy to get assistance and help in every part of the world. The information on travel and tourism is available in English. English language skills help us in any business venture. Companies, who wish to function at an international level, consider their staff well educated, if they are good English speakers, writers and readers.

ENGLISH AT SCHOOL

The great demand for admission in English medium schools throughout the country is a testimony to show their inclination towards English. Many of the leaders, who denounced English, send their own children to corporate English medium schools. Realizing the importance of English, the State Governments of India (Bihar, AP.....etc) introduced teaching of English language in primary schools.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS

Engineering is a major field of study in the world. English language plays a fundamental role in their academic life. All the subjects in engineering are taught in English and the technocrats are required to have a certain level of proficiency in English communication. In academic life, they have to deal with the countless lectures, tutorials, labs, project/technical reports and research papers in English. Generally the departments of engineering in various institutions conduct guest lectures in English. Moreover, the most appropriate source of information i.e. Internet provides ample information in English.

Over the past few years engineering colleges are producing lakhs and lakhs of graduates in India. However, it was found that most of the graduates were unable to write or speak correct English. According to NASSCOM, only 20 percent of graduates are job-ready and the rest of them are found to be unemployable. Though the graduates possess technical skills they lack the essential language skills required for the job. So, many graduates end up taking menial jobs much below their qualification. Therefore questions were raised

and are raised even now about the efficacy of the English course materials and their relevance in preparing them for industry. The syllabus designers and materials producers responded to the situation and restructured the syllabus and incorporated English Laboratory in the curriculum to equip the graduates with the basic language skills namely, Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR GLOBAL COMMUNICATION

According to David Crystal (1997) "A language becomes global if it is accepted in every country." Globalisation has encouraged the domestic companies to think beyond their nations. In the changed scenario of globalisation, liberalisation and free movement of the public, quite a lot of multinational companies are emerging in India. As a result English has gained importance as one of the crucial requirements to be employable in the corporate sectors. If the companies don't build workforce who are fluent in English, then they remain confined to one particular region and may lose contact with the rest of the world. So a common language is essential to connect the workforce to exchange ideas and share experiences.

For a developing country like India, English comes to our aid in our commercial transactions throughout the globe and is recognised as the language of the latest business management. Mastering proficiency in English language is certainly an asset as it has brought laurels to many Indian business managers. English is a means not only for international commerce; it has become increasingly essential for inter-state commerce and communication.

ENGLISH FOR INTER-STATE COMMUNICATIONS

Modern India has several states. People of each State converse in their own language and often cannot speak or understand the regional language of neighbouring states. In such cases, English becomes the link between these people.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION

English language in the 21st century is widely used at workplace. Most office-goers know English, and use it more frequently than mother tongue or regional language. In India, people travelling from North to South for business mostly



communicate in English, which has become a link language. Keeping this in view, the Parliament has also recognized English as an official language in addition to Hindi. Thus, they communicate with each other in English for their everyday work

ENGLISH FOR EMPLOYABILITY

The corporate sectors demand a lot from job applicants. Besides technical skills, the ability to speak and write accurately in English is considered very important by the recruiters at the time of selection process. Companies prefer candidates who can basically read and understand reports, letters, memos, notices and other any form of official documents drafted in English. The ability to express formal communication in oral as well as in written form is equally considered important by the prospective employers. The knowledge of English is an important employability skill within India and outside to be employed as well as to move higher in one's professional life. As one moves higher one has to be a good presenter, negotiator, and convener of meetings. The mastery over English will aid the candidate to discharge his duties professionally and efficiently.

Unfortunately, most candidates are in short of language skills. It becomes a handicap for the candidates who have good knowledge in the technical domain. Employers will be in a dilemma when they encounter such candidates who have technical expertise, but poor communication skills in English. Employers would be pleased to recruit who possess both communication skills in English and technical skills.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING

The emerging demand for communication skills in English and the remarkably poor level of English taught at school and college drives the students to get outside help in the form of spoken English classes or training programs. The number of such institutions is mushrooming due to the increasing market demand and these institutions are surviving on the sentiments and insecurity feelings of the victims.

In order to cater to the needs of graduates of vernacular medium and in their efforts to procure jobs in the corporate world, the government should bring changes in the English Course Materials. The

emphasis should be on functional English using exercises, tasks and other learning aids. The syllabus should focus on practical oriented exercises and real life situations than mere study of literature.

CONCLUSION

So the need of the hour is to strengthen the English speaking ability of the present generation to have an edge over other developing countries. The modern world is marching towards the fields of Technology, Science, Medicine, Agriculture, Education, Travel, Business, Commerce and Communication networks. In the 21st century, life becomes unimaginable without the knowledge of English language.

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