

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS AN AMPLIFIER IN SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYABILITY: A SURVEY OF POPULAR FOOD CHAINS IN ALIGARH

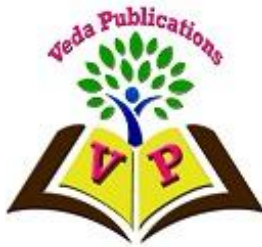
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ABSTRACT

Out of many aims of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), one is to maintain a balance between human and their economic well-being. Sustainable development corresponds to sustainable employability. In this 21st century, it is an undeniable fact that there exists a causal link between English language and employability. In most cases, the higher the employees' command over English the higher their life chances. In other words, English language amplifies the sustainable employability. This paper aims to support this argument by providing evidences gathered from the survey done on the employees of some popular food chains like KFC, Pizza Hut, Dominoes and Café Coffee Day. The methodology adopted for the survey was an interview of the working staff from overt departments of these chains. Furthermore, this paper explores the aspects of English for Specific Purpose (ESP). Finally, the recommendations and suggestions of incorporating ELT to enhance the employability are included in this paper.



Keywords: *ESP, Role of ELT, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Employability, English at Food Chains*

Citation:

APA Siddiqui, M.M & Naz, T (2016) English Language As An Amplifier in Sustainable Employability: A Survey of Popular Food Chains in Aligarh. *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature- JOELL*, 3(2), 1-4.

MLA Siddiqui, Mustafa Masihuddin and Talaia Naz "English Language As An Amplifier in Sustainable Employability: A Survey of Popular Food Chains in Aligarh" *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature- JOELL* 3.2(2016):1-4.

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INTRODUCTION

Education for Sustainable Development is a concept emerged out as a precaution against the repercussions of unorganized, unsystematic and unsustainable use of resources over the years by the human race. It aims in enlightening the minds about the sustainable development. Sustainable development is based on an optimistic approach. It claims that an intelligent and economical management of our earth's natural resources is sufficient enough to achieve social, environmental and economic development. It promises a good present and a better future. One of the key aims of sustainable development is to develop the life chances of people. It intends to make the economy consistent at the global level by fostering employability. This paper attempts to testify the causal link between the English language and employability and hence sustainable development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In his definition of sustainable development, Ikeda [1] has included the economical, ecological, social and educational aspects of sustainability. Sustainable employability is one way of attaining sustainability at the economical level. Knight and York [2] claim that employability "does not rest when the first graduate job is achieved but needs to be constantly renewed to be sustainable". Sustainable Employability aims to keep the employee employable in the long term. An article from Limerick Institute of Technology [3] claims that sustainable employability helps the employees in developing- self awareness, ability to develop, adaptability, self reliance or self management, job search skills, ability to market themselves to an employer etc. Kraan and Wevers [4] modify this claim and characterize sustainable employability as "the capability of employees to participate in a healthy, vital and productive way in paid work until they are eligible for a pension."

English language plays a decisive role in building sustainable employability. Jyothi [5] supports this argument and puts in in her article, "English being the most commonly used language in the corporate world; the knowledge of English is one of the most important employability skills." Later in her

article, she gives credit to English in sustainability and writes, "The knowledge of English is an important employability skill with in India and outside to be employed as well as to move higher in one's professional life."

With reference to the employability in the food and beverage industry, Banerjee [6] includes in her article, "A majority of food and beverage outlets, a sector that employ large numbers of young people, insist that employees speak to customers in fluent and correct English." Her article accentuates the vital role of English language in honing employability skills.

ENGLISH AND SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYABILITY

In a world of around 7 billion people, English language competency has become non-negotiable. The employees' competency in English language is now directly proportional to their employment, employability as well as sustainable employability. In almost every sector, it is the next primary requirement to the content knowledge. As included by Coleman [7], "English language skills are associated with significant earnings gains on the...labour market." It acts as an amplifier in sustainable employability. It increases the potentiality of the employees in the long run.

Globalisation has resulted in the eradication of all the geographical limits of the international firms. English being a global language has no confinements. In a sector, it acts as a connector to connect different employees, employer and the employees, employee and the customer etc. If the employees are confident in their English communication skills and are self aware about what they can offer employers, then they will feel less at the mercy of external factors, such as economic recession and high unemployment rates.

The first half of this paper tries to bring forward the strong association of English language with sustainable employability as well as sustainable development. The remaining portion attempts to corroborate this association by providing evidences from the employees of food and beverage outlets.

METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the amplifying ability of English language in sustainable employability, the



employees of some popular food chains in Aligarh like KFC, Pizza Hut, Dominoes, Fast Trax, VIP Pizza and Cafe Coffee Day were interviewed. The interviewed employees were either team members or the outlet managers. The age of team members ranged from 18-25 years and that of managers from 25-30 years. The minimum educational qualification required for the employment as team member was either high school or intermediate. During the interview, the conversation was done majorly in the English language.

The interview intended to explore the following-

- Which approach of communication is used by the employees- product oriented or process oriented?
- What forms the basis of the English language training given to the employees?
- Which of the skills of language is primarily used during the job?
- Is the English used by the employees for communication general or ESP?
- Which form of the language is used most often by these employees?

RESULTS

Aligarh is said to be a hub of education where students from several countries come to study. As a result, it becomes imperative on the part of the employees working in these food chains to be well-versed in English language.

The interview survey provided some interesting findings. All the employees surveyed confirmed the fact that the English communication done at the time of their job-interview played a decisive role in their selection. They acknowledged that it was their English competency that provided them with preference over other competitors with same work experience. In one of the food chains, it was found that the selection of 20 employees from 300 aspirants was done on the basis of intensive testing which included aptitude test and interview, conducted only in English.

All of these food chains empower the English communication skills of the employees by providing a follow-up training after the selection. The time period allotted to this training is from one week to one month. The training emphasises in

internalising the common structures of the language into the employees. The employees are given lessons on greetings and thanking.

However, Dominoes keep updating their employees' competency by training them every week on Friday Training Day (FTD). In Dominoes as well as Pizza Hut, it was found that the employees are handed over with a script of structures to be practiced in various situations like order taking, responding to complain, apologizing, requesting etc.

The employees are trained in using English for Specific Purpose (ESP). The most common structures taught in the training in these food chains are that of interrogative sentences. The employees are asked to ask from the customer their well-being and their choice.

In Fast Trax, the employees are told to take the order by asking, "What would you like to order today?" The same function is performed in Pizza Hut by, "Thank you for coming to Pizza Hut. May I help you? Did you try our new 'menu item'? It comes in three flavours..." The practice of using interrogative sentences to perform the function of suggestions is also found in these food chains. For instance, FX suggests by structures like "Would you like to try our delicious Tikka Wrap today?" In KFC, the employees greet the customer by saying, "Hello sir, welcome to KFC." For all other transactions, they are given freedom to use their own structure.

Moreover, the employees are expected by their employers to attend the telephonic calls in English language unless the customer is willing to talk in the mother tongue. From the interview, it was discovered that the team members were required to be competent only in the oral skills of the language. With difficult-to-pronounce menu items like *Birizza*, *Sizzle-Dazzle Brownie*, *Tuscani Pastas*, *Mediterranean Con Pollo* etc., it becomes necessary for these employees to be competent in the pronunciation skill as well. On the other hand, all the paper work and written communication through emails is a part of the job of the manager. Thus, it can be inferred that the chances of employability increases with the increase in the English competency.

To reinforce the hospitality of the employees, in one of the chains the concept of



'Magic Words' i.e. the words that touch the heart of the customers was observed. This trick of attracting the customers through the use of language helps them in competing with other food chains; hence, increasing the chances of sustainable employability.

CONCLUSION

Grant[8] points out, "Sustainable development and ESD are not the easiest of issues for people to engage with and there are a number of potentially conflicting and confusing agendas." In order to overcome this barrier, it is essential that efforts are made at every level and in every department. Encouraging sustainable employability will automatically nurture sustainable development. To attain the ascending career trajectory, English is undoubtedly one of the key tools. Thus, English should be identified as an important ingredient in education for sustainable development.

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