

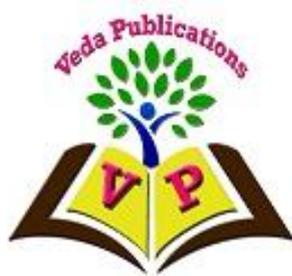


ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY: A WINDOW TO THE CORPORATE JOB WORLD

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ABSTRACT



In the current national and international corporate set up, English has become a language of survival at the workplace and plays a key role in the successful journey of young aspirants. English language communication is one of the important educational investments and promotes one's personality to meet the demands of global market. It enhances one's social mobility among employees through better communication skills in English. It raises the confidence among them in achieving desired goals in life by enriching the personality of individuals. In this context, the English classroom has to provide students the skills and strategies required to compete with their peers in the job market. At graduation level, English language learning should be done by blending established theoretical principles with the pragmatic findings of the present situation, which strengthens the academic spirit of an individual. Hence, the sustained efforts and innovative learning activities adopted by the learner in improving English language becomes the window to prosper in the corporate world.

Keywords: *Educational Investments, Global Market, Innovative Learning, Corporate World.*



Nowadays, students are quite aware of the fact that a sound knowledge of English is indispensable in order to keep themselves abreast of modern developments in science and technology. Students of the present day are living in the world of professional competition. Mere educational qualification does not help them come up with flying colours in the global world. There was a time when English was used mainly for wide communication, but now it is being used for one's successful survival. Even students with a good academic record fail to exhibit knowledge of their respective subjects, mainly because of their poor communication skills in English, both spoken and written forms. Globalization has made the domestic companies look beyond their borders in every country. Since India is emerging as a fast-growing global economy, companies are focusing on the English language skills of candidates who turn up for an interview.

English, throughout its long history, has always been remarkable and open to change. Being the world language, English communication, whether oral or written, needs to go beyond ordinary style, in spite of recognizing that the massive and ever-changing English lexicon brings with it many opportunities for confusion. Yet, we need to make a positive approach to integrate communication skills because good usage means using the right words at the right time for the right reasons.

English language communication has always been an important part of the business during the 21st century. In this context, many Universities have included English language communication Skills or Business Correspondence as a subject in the curriculum for many professional courses. But the fact is that most of the students do not acquire these skills rightly due to lack of interest and also because of their poor command over the English language. Hence, students of both professional and non-professional courses have to attain these skills not to depend on others for correspondence. Thus, knowledge in English language communication helps in selecting just the right words to convey specific thoughts, so that the right word in the right place adds clarity, strength and vitality to any kind of correspondence.

Both teachers and students generally neglect other language skills. Students refer to guidebooks and key books widely available in the market and notes given by teachers in order to clear the examination. Leslie E Sheldon in the article, "Evaluating ELT Text Books and Materials" asserts: This is especially true for the seemingly disconnected snippets of authentic texts or teacher-created worksheets that are a consequence of the 'communicative' approach. Quite simply, it would seem that course books exert a kind of 'backwash' effect. (Sheldon, 238). Furthermore, the teachers who handle the higher Secondary syllabus of BIE are not properly trained to teach Communicative English as most of them are postgraduates in English literature. Very few of them have the ELT background which is essential to teach the Communicative English syllabus that enhances oral skills and writing skills among students.

It is observed that the private sector is establishing its roots all over the world in the name of changed liberalization policies. In order to get success in the profession, one has to compete with one's colleagues having a special expertise to achieve professional growth. In today's world, the ability to use the English language fluently is very much essential to remain successful in employment. The growth of one's career depends on the ability to express English fluently in both written and oral forms. Dr. Meenu Pandey and Dr. Prabhat Pandey in the paper, "Better English for Better Employment Opportunities" asserts: "Learning English in a country where it is not a native language opens a number of opportunities for the individual. In today's corporate world, the need for effective communication has been recognized and accepted more than the technical knowledge" (Pandey, 94). As English is used in most of the countries, proficiency in it is considered to be one of the important employability skills. English language proficiency means the ability to make use of grammatically correct sentences while speaking and writing a draft. The corporate world demands among employees presentation skills, negotiation skills and technical writing skills.

The sort of communication that is used in the corporate job world is business communication. A person gets employment only when he has the



required qualification and attitude along with effective communication. One achieves this skill when one transmits and shares the information with clarity, and fruitful content. One is ready to update one's knowledge in one's field of work in accordance with the current demands and developments in one's surroundings. Indeed, companies consider English communication skills as one of the important criteria in any selection process because English connects people in the multi-cultural and multi-lingual set up. Business communication includes both verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Companies today concentrate more, however, on verbal communication i.e. oral and written forms of communication. T. Bhaskar David in his article, "The importance of speaking English to Rural students" states: "Despite continued pressure from nationalists, English remains at the heart of Indian society. It is widely used in the media, in Higher Education and in government proceedings and therefore remains a common means of communication, both among the ruling classes, and between speakers of mutually unintelligible languages" (David, 2). Hence, it is an urgency for the aspirants to enhance business communication to prosper at work place.

1. ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Oral Communication skills can be enhanced among students when they are given much opportunity to participate in many practice sessions for the task-based activities. In this context, the experts say that the teacher talk time (T3) should be minimized throughout the sessions in the English language communication skills laboratory. The teacher has to fill the gaps only when the student is unable to make use of apt expression following and in his/her presentation. Prachi Verma and Saumya Bhattacharya in the paper, "How English-speaking skills are keeping Indian engineers away from their dream jobs" states: "Poor spoken English may be keeping a large number of India's engineers from landing some of the best paid jobs in the country" (Verma, 1).

The activities that the student has to focus on to improve oral skills are Public Speaking, JAM, Debate, Situational dialogues, Group Discussion, and Mock interviews.

a) Public Speaking: It is observed that most employees and administrators try to learn their Public Speaking skills because they feel their success at work place depends on English language proficiency and body language. In order to grow in their job and get promotion, an employee has to communicate effectively.

b) JAM (Just A Minute): JAM sessions helps in time management, when an employee is in a rush to communicate effectively that the business needs. Jam sessions can be designed quickly. They also create an environment in which people learn from one other in a collaborative social learning experience through organizing ideas and language.

c) Debate: Debate helps aspirants to improve argumentative skills having emotional balance. It further assesses an individual's problem solving skills, and strong communication skills in any situation. It conveys whether a person has the ability to collaborate with their colleagues through persuasive techniques while executing a professional task.

d) Situational Dialogues: Situational Dialogues help aspirants know how to deal with clients in a convincing manner using the appropriate body language. They make job seekers learn how to introduce, apologize and invite others in formal and informal situations. Besides appearance and attitude, they exhibits a person's ability, whether he derives impression from others or not.

e) Group Discussion: Group Discussion is really helpful for people to improve their speaking skills, leadership skills, communication skills, initiation and team work capabilities which are necessary for the job seekers as well. It helps to test not only the knowledge but also the listening skills, critical thinking, analytical skills, logical thinking and group dynamics of individuals.

f) Mock Interviews: Mock Interviews help us understand corporate etiquette. They help aspirants in coping with stress and anxiety in the selection process, and in becoming familiar with the situation in the interview room. They make them get constructive feedback in the form of suggestions from the teacher before facing the interview.

2. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Writing skill has to be improved only at secondary level education. In this context, workbooks



enhance the necessary skills among the students for the writing part of English language. L.A. Hill in his essay, "Principles of Good Writing" states: "You learn to write by writing. It is no good waiting until you have an inspiration before you write" (Hill, 30). Through persistent diligence, one can develop writing skills when it becomes a habit. Most of the prominent companies complain that the employees are unable draft their communiqués well.

The activities that a student has to focus on to improve their writing skills are Letter-writing, Emails, Report writing, Essay writing, Proposals, etc.

a) Letter Writing: Letter writing helps job-seekers to communicate effectively. It helps them in communicating the official information at work place. While making business dealings, if a person exhibits good drafting skills, it represents the company's image and the person's proficiency in English. Though the aspirants may not write a letter for communication, at least they have to learn how to write a cover letter while applying for a job along with Resume.

b) Emails: In today's campus drives, some companies are testing the writing skills of a student by giving Email exercises while conducting online tests. As an employee, a person has to share much information with superiors and subordinates through emails in the information age. It is observed that software companies are struggling in this aspect as most of the employees are unable to communicate promptly and appropriately.

c) Report Writing: Report writing is also a means of internal communication within an organization among employees. It helps to report on existing problems that affect the operations of a business. It provides the employer information about the daily running of the business and helps them work out methods of solving current problems in the business. Thus, an aspirant has to focus on how to enhance reporting skills to prosper at work place.

d) Essay Writing: In essay writing, students are given a single topic related to current affairs and general topics etc. They test topic relevancy, English proficiency, grammar, and the creativity of an individual. Hence, a student has to update their knowledge about everyday happenings in the society.

It helps improve their writing skills with which they will flourish in his profession.

e) Proposals: Proposals are exclusively written as a call to action to get an individual or a group to do something. Real life examples include proposals to receive grants, do projects, purchase products, or consider specific improvements to an organization, product, methodology, or service. As a proposal must be highly persuasive, it must be written with its planned audience uppermost in mind. The writer must strive to identify the need at hand as well as to explain the future plan of action. It is one of the required skills for an aspirant in order to grow in their profession.

Lack of good oral and writing skills is a great barrier to a successful future. It becomes effective, when and if students are actively involved in the practice sessions so that many opportunities should be offered to them in the classroom. Jabbar Al Muzzamil Fareen in his article, "English for Placement Purposes: Developing a Needs Based Course for Meeting the Employment Demands of IT Industries" states:

Students generally prefer to have a full-fledged communicative course where they can improve their discursive skills through job related oral and written tasks. Though the present academic course aims at providing practice to develop relevant communication skills to seek placement, it is more concerned to develop listening and speaking skills. Students realize that they need to undertake an intensive interactive communicative course that helps them to acquire relevant employability skills and to sustain their career prospects in their domain industries" (Fareen, 53).

Further, a language is best learnt when the learners are actively involved in the four macro-skills, with more emphasis more on productive skills-speaking and writing. Challenging and task-based exercises help students achieve their competency in these areas. Remarkable changes are emerging in all disciplines of science, engineering and technology. Therefore, developing excellent oral and writing skills are absolutely essential for students of engineering and other technical disciplines so as to have a successful and prosperous career in the chosen field.

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