



THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ON EMPLOYABILITY IN INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

The passing of the Charter Act in 1813 was crucial in the Indian Education history. Indians began receiving rudimentary education in English language. English did not supersede the oriental studies but was taught alongside it. Yet it was clear that it enjoyed a different status for there was scrupulous attempt to establish separate colleges for its study. Even when it was taught within the same college, the study of English language was kept separate and students of English department were seen not to attach to any other language. The early British Indian curriculum was primarily devoted to language studies. Thus learning English language became an integral part of Indian curriculum. In a country like India multilingual culture rules English made its way easily into all spheres of life.

From then on Indians have cherished English language and in the post independence period English gained momentum in all aspects namely social, political, economics to name a few. Globalization has increased the demand for English manifolds. English is considered as a tool which interconnects the various aspects of the society and the world at large. It is referred as the gateway to global opportunities.

Today the world economy is experiencing an unprecedented change, new developments in Science and Technology, Media and Internationalizing of education and the ever expanding competitive environment are the factor that prioritized English over other languages. English is acclaimed as the global language or the 'lingua franca' of the world. It is the force that unites a variety of domains.

Many graduates in India remain unemployed due to lack of communicative skills. Research conducted on this issue reveals that there is a need to improve the graduate's employability skills. However, the problem of communication remains unaddressed.

The paper tries to examine the effectiveness of English language courses offered in the degree colleges in India.

Globalization has opened new avenues with more focus on the students overall ability apart from academic competence. English acclaimed as the Global language has gained the status of a very powerful influential factor causing transformation in the Indian context. It is the language of better education, offering better opportunities and more advantageous in the Global context. English language is associated with ideas of modernity and progress. English is acknowledged and appreciated as the language of the elite and a command on the language elevates one's status in the society. English speaking work force is much sought after. It is considered the primary criteria for employability in today's society. With the rise the Global Information technology industry, particularly the BPO and KPO English is prioritized. Hence acquiring English language communication skill is emphasized upon. It becomes the core and the most demanded employability skill; a life skill or a survival skill in the Indian context. Without the knowledge of the English language we fear to be excluded, marginalized and disqualified. English is a powerful vehicle, a primary element in the progress of the country.

The development of the country depends of education, education that provides employability. The number of degree colleges has been increased exponentially in the last few decades. English is taught as a language in almost all the colleges. Communication skills remain poor among students especially in government colleges as most of the students are first generation learners, and find English difficult to get through.

A number of competent graduates have been unsuccessful in job interviews simply because they lack good communication skills. Lack of proficiency in English or failure to secure the required score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) shatters the dream of studying abroad even in case of students with excellent academic background. This is evident to address the need to improve the communication skills of fresh graduates from all disciplines.

EMPLOYABILITY-ORIENTED EDUCATION; THE NEED OF THE HOUR

Now, with the widening gap between classroom education and skills crucial for employment threatening to intimidate India's growth, the government has recognized the importance of employability-oriented education. Many universities now offer co-curricular courses in English communication and soft skills to make sure that their graduates are employable. The established employers from the industries are working closely with the universities and colleges which supply their new recruits. But not all colleges offer such courses as English is language is taught as a subject at the graduate level. This inevitably pushes students to learn communication skills through private centers which offer courses in communicative skills.

EMPLOYABILITY

Employability skills are relatively new and often talked about term these days being emphasized by everyone be it academicians, industry or government sectors. It is a multifaceted characteristic of a person, a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to secure and be successful in their chosen occupation to the benefit of one's own, the workforce, the community and economy. Employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping and doing well on a job (Robinson, 2000). Employability skills are the key skills and personal attributes that one needs to enter, use and thrive in the world of work.

Employability skills are categorized as Soft skills and Soft skills for Job or discipline specific skills knowledge, related qualifications and competencies and career management skills for a particular job. Employability skills or soft skills include communication skills and other generic, attitudinal and transferable, self management skills and personal attributes such as self-confidence, self-control inter and intra personal skills, honesty, integrity, reliability, adaptability, flexibility, willingness to learn, stress tolerance, managing time, efficiency, interpersonal skills and many other skills like team building, leadership, management, problem solving skills, initiative and enterprise etc. Communication skills cover basic communication skills include the verbal nonverbal communication skills like reading, listening writing, speaking effectively and body language. Higher order Communication skills include oral Skills for public presentations, conversations, negotiations, conflict resolutions, knowledge-sharing, discussions, debates etc. In addition to special training in soft skills and employability skills, integration of these skills within subject modules will certainly offer plenty of opportunities to the graduates to improve their skills.

The responsibility of teachers of English has increased manifold. It is high time to recognize the challenges in rapidly changing global scenario and brace up to contribute to enhance employability of young graduates by enhancing teaching through research activities. There is a paradigm shift in the role of a English teacher who has to cater to the Global job market. The education has moved from “teacher centric” to “learner centric.” These changes make new demands and pose fresh challenges to the established English teaching modules as Indian Higher Education has a new role and challenge to provide to the nation and the world at large skilled human power at all levels having breadth of knowledge and confidence and good communicative skills to confront the situation.

It is important for a teacher of English to recognize this responsibility, not just as a language teacher, teacher of grammar and structure; but of a trainer or a facilitator who can build real competencies to bridge the gap between the needs and the demands. They need to follow a holistic, integrated, inclusive and skill based approach for the all round development of the learners. The teachers need to be trained in language teaching. This calls for an exposure of the teachers for the finer nuances of English language and English language teaching. The English faculty needs to use the right blend of latest trends in both teaching and training techniques in different proportions depending on the need.

NEED FOR LEARNER-CENTRIC INNOVATIVE TEACHING

The key for success lies in using the learner-centric innovative mix of various relevant, interesting techniques making classrooms more interactive with activities like games, puzzles, cues, pictures , visual aids etc. English songs, poems, newspapers, stories can lbe explored to develop interest among students and in turn to improve their communicative skills. Students should be encouraged to regularly present and face through various activities like power point presentations, news broadcasting, television shows, cricket commentaries etc. They must be motivated and guided to take responsibilities as anchors, quiz master, team leaders, organizers etc. This helps them to enhance their inter-personal and other soft skills.

Recently a unique ‘employability test’ to gauge the preparedness of young graduates for industry is adopted for the first time by Delhi University. Students have shown keen interest for the test. The test helps them to assess ability to use English in real-life, academic or workplace situations.

Today's job market demands graduates to possess employable qualities. They are expected to voice their ideas in English without any ambiguity or fear. The academic competence is replaced by overall ability in this global context.

The universities and institutions should develop a holistic and integrated approach for the inclusiveness in English language teaching. The colleges need to facilitate and link together different aspects of competencies of employability along with improving the English language skills and incorporate employability enhancement in curriculum.

As teachers of English language, we should fill confidence in students through positive attitude and human approach. Teaching an alien language calls for patience and humility. The onus lies on the teachers to transform the students into English language proficient, confident, skilled and competent professionals. As teachers we need to understand the demands of the job market and focus on the same. Multi-skill development of the students should be stressed upon in the wake of threatening employability crisis. ELT community needs to constantly update and upgrade their skills through updating their knowledge and acquiring new knowledge and training themselves with the latest trends in teaching techniques. One should understand the constant change and upgrade accordingly, as "learning is a lifelong process."

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