**TEACHING ENGLISH FOR EMPLOYABILITY: ACQUIRING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FOR THE YOUTH**

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**ABSTRACT**

The English language is considered indispensable for flourishing in versatile careers. But the irony is most of the students even after completing graduation write incomplete and grammatically incorrect sentences. College graduates mostly lack written and oral communication skills. In this present paper, the focus is on developing communication skills as a weapon in transforming the personality as they transition from education to employment. Through this paper, I have tried to analyze the problem that how can we inculcate employability skills in our youth by improving their communication skills. By focusing on developing these employability skills, young individuals can enhance their career prospects and increase their chances of success in the job market.

**Keywords:** Effective communication skills, employability skills, functionally illiterate, globalization, career prospects.

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**Introduction**

English is one of the officially recognized languages and is widely spoken and taught as a second language. However, with patience, practice, and effective teaching methods, these challenges can be overcome. English education in India dates back to colonial period when the British ruled the country. Since then, English has gained importance in the Indian education system due to its global significance. English language learning is an integral part of the school curriculum in India. Students start learning English from primary school and it continues to be taught throughout their academic journey. In addition to school education, there are numerous private institutes and language centers in India that offer English language courses. This is because English proficiency is highly valued in the job market in India. Thus, English proficiency is seen as a gateway to better job prospects and career growth. The teaching of English in India is integrated into the education system to equip students with the necessary language skills for academic, professional and personal growth. English fluency is considered essential for socio-economic mobility and access to global opportunities.

Today, English language is more an operating system like Windows, speaking and writing good English ensure higher employment outcomes. But there is no magical stick or wonder drug that can stimulate the process of language learning inside us, but the only mantra to achieve proficiency in L2 is through continuous practice. e.g. most of us write with our right hand, however, with practice, we can learn to write with our left hand. But the tragedy is that most of the graduates in our country are not competent enough to spell the words correctly and construct grammatically correct sentences. So, English or L2 is much required as it is the universal language of the working world now and a gateway to the internet and globalization. That's why, the demand for candidates especially those who are proficient in the English language are on the rise throughout the World.

**English Language Teaching: The Current Scenario**

The current scenario of learning of English language is based on short –cuts and more oriented towards attaining degree or diploma .Moreover, the motive of students is not to learn the language or to acquire the foreign language efficiently and effectively but to get marks in what way they get it. The concept of quality education has become endangered and soon it is going to be extinct. There is a change in perspective from language as "knowledge" to language as "skills". Language cannot be learned by merely mugging up the content rather it is learned by exposing the learner to L2. Have you ever pondered if a small baby of 3 or 4 years could acquire mother tongue effortlessly without any formal teaching or cramming the rules of grammar then why it becomes so arduous to learn L2 or English language? India is a linguistically diverse country with numerous regional languages. In some states, the medium of instruction in schools is primarily the regional language while English is taught as a subject. This is one of the major reasons behind the students being tongue-tied. Michael West in his book ‘On Learning to Speak a Foreign Language’ said-

"A language is not a subject which can be taught; it is a subject which must be learned."

A child acquires their native tongue, also known as their first language, through a process called language acquisition. This process occurs naturally and effortlessly during the early years of a child's life. There is a sensitive period for language acquisition, during which children are particularly receptive to learning language. This period typically starts at birth and continues until around the age of seven. The human brain is wired to acquire language during early childhood. As children interact with language, the brain forms neural connections that support language development. The amount and quality of language exposure play a significant role in language acquisition. Children exposed to rich and diverse language experiences tend to develop more advanced language skills. The child is surrounded by the language from birth, as they interact with their caregivers, family members, and others in their immediate environment. They are exposed to the language through listening to conversations, songs, and stories. Thus, it is important to note that the acquisition of a native tongue is a gradual and continuous process that takes place over several years. The age at which a child achieves fluency may vary, but most children demonstrate a basic command of their native tongue by the age of three or four.

Therefore, it is very important to motivate the learners to put in the effort to speak in English. If a child communicates one’s ideas in a scattered way not in a proper way, the child should not be scolded or humiliated in front of all as the main purpose of language is to be able to communicate one’s thoughts effectively. When a child meets a new language that is not his mother tongue, his mind automatically tries to apply the first language experience to it. (Harold: 1990)

**Importance of communication and soft skills**

The word soft skill (SS) has become a buzz word in big industries and the corporate world because it is associated with success. The term 'Soft skills' which is also termed as ‘People skills’ have been defined by different scholars and psychologists in different ways. Murthy (2008) states that soft skills are visible skills and constitute the professional competency of an individual. This is the reason why big companies immediately make their new employees undergo soft skills programs to increase their efficiency in the organization. According to Katz (1974), soft skills play a crucial role not only to get employment opportunities for students but also ensure professional survival and success in an organization. Soft skills play a critical role in employability as they complement technical skills and enhance a candidate's ability to work effectively in any job or industry. Improving and honing these skills can lead to better opportunities, enhanced relationships, and overall success in today's interconnected world. The importance of effective communication skills is evident from the mushrooming growth of various private coaching centers that gives you special training for soft skills and personality development .There is no fun dancing around with your high-class certificates and boasting to be a topper or a merit holder if you cannot communicate your knowledge to others. Charles Darwin's theory of 'survival of the fittest' can be applied to today's tough times where only the persons equipped with good soft skills are fit to survive in any type of workplace. One must have noticed that the single most repeated phrase in the qualification requirement on Monster, an internet site for job seekers was "candidates with good communication and soft skills". Rather it won’t be an exaggeration to say these skills act as umbilical in imparting new life to one’s career. Thus, one needs to blend both soft and hard skills to excel as a successful professional. Soft skills play a critical role in employability as they complement technical skills and enhance a candidate's ability to work effectively in any job or industry. By combining hard skills with soft skills, you create a powerful synergy that enables you to excel in your profession. This well-rounded approach to skill development increases your chances of becoming a successful and respected professional in your chosen field.

**English for Employability: A challenge**

The English language is highly valued and plays a significant role in employability around the world. English language proficiency significantly enhances employability by broadening job opportunities, facilitating global communication, and demonstrating a willingness to adapt and excel in an interconnected world. It is a skill that can set individuals apart in the job market and contribute to their career success and growth. English for employability is not just about the language itself but also about the doors it opens in the professional world. It enhances job prospects, facilitates effective communication, and allows individuals to thrive in diverse and globalized work environments. Therefore, investing in improving English language skills can significantly boost one's employability and career prospects. The English language is the key to unlocking the soft skills and communication skills that are the core competencies required by industry and employers to employ young people. Employers expect mainly communication and interpersonal skills from their employees. Communication skills help the person to become a valued asset to family, friends, colleagues, and society. In the present scenario, developing the ability to communicate effectively in English is imperative and indispensable for better relations either at home or at any business establishment.

In today’s era of globalization and competitiveness, communication and soft skills are not only a requirement but rather a necessity to survive. "Communication skills are ranked at the top of the most important employability skills. Now need of hour is that subject competence should be coupled with communicative competence. That's why most of the Universities in India have introduced communication skills as a compulsory subject for all professional courses. Nowadays, many Colleges & Universities have fully equipped language labs. The students need to participate in Language Lab to learn L2 without cramming the rules of grammar. Lab Lectures should be made mandatory at least twice a week.

Creating employable graduates have market value for the 21st century is a challenge. Swami Vivekananda has rightly said:

"Real education is that which enables one to stand on its legs". India's former President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam also rightly stated that "India does not have a problem of unemployment but of unemployability". It can be a difficult transition from the security of the campus to the uncertainty of the professional world. Are young people prepared for this big step on their career path? Do they have the skills needed to be "employable"?

Unfortunately, a lot of talented engineering graduates are unemployed due to a dearth of soft skills. Azim Premji, Chairman of Wipro Ltd. rightly said:

"The challenge before the industry does not lie in the supply of talent but rather that of employability".

Industry wants educational institutions to impart employability skills to their students. Therefore, the government should take the initiatives to impart more practical rather than theoretical orientation as the bottom line of any education is to make the students stand on their feet. Speaking a language effectively requires practical knowledge, which involves actively using the language in real-life situations. Practical knowledge helps in improving pronunciation, intonation, and fluency through regular practice and interactions with other speakers. Practical knowledge, however, takes precedence because it allows individuals to apply what they have learned in real-world situations, leading to more effective and impactful communication and interpersonal interactions .While theoretical knowledge of grammar and syntax is essential for a deeper understanding of a language, it doesn't necessarily guarantee fluent and confident communication. Practical knowledge, gained through constant practice, exposure, and real-life interactions, helps individuals become proficient in speaking and listening to the language as it is used in real-world situations. Soft skills are best learned through hands-on experiences, active communication with others, and exposure to various social and professional scenarios. In both spoken language and soft skills, the emphasis should be on practical learning and application. For instance, in language learning, immersing oneself in conversations and engaging with native speakers accelerates the learning process.

Harvard University stated that an individual's achievement in a career is 80% determined by soft skills and 20% determined by hard skills. (Rao: 2010). Renowned author Chetan Bhagat, in his book, *What Young India Wants* comments:

“As a developing nation, English is one of the few tools available to make Indians take their rightful place in the world”.

**Conclusion**

As an English teacher, one should be sensitive and alert to the need of the learners. The more one is exposed to the use of language, the better one learns. Teachers encourage students to practice their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills regularly. They create opportunities for students to engage in conversations, discussions, debates, and presentations in English. Recognizing that each student learns differently, an effective English teacher tailors their teaching methods to address individual strengths and weaknesses. They provide extra support and resources to students who may be struggling with specific language aspects. Regular assessments and evaluations allow English teachers to gauge students' language proficiency and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. An English teacher serves as a guide, mentor, and facilitator in helping students develop fluency in the English language. By providing instruction, practice, correction, and encouragement, they create an environment where students can build their language skills with confidence and proficiency.

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

The teachers must provide a congenial and ideal learning environment so that learners can attain their goal of effective communication. Only then learners will be able to develop communication or soft skills which are an important weapon to become successful in the professional world.

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