

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LSRW SKILLS IN EMPLOYABILITY

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Abstract: Good language and communication skills in English improve social life and provide better job opportunities for the individuals. Starting from job interviews to the actual professional world, communication skills play a vital role. Being proficient in the English Language means being able to communicate clearly and effectively without any misunderstanding. The job interviews are conducted in English, where the interviewer asks the questions in English and expects the candidate to give a proper reply in English only. Being proficient in the language leads to a good impression which increases the chances of getting placed in the job. Thereby, making it essential to master the language and language skills effectively to be successful. This paper aims at seeing the importance and need of mastering the language and language skills namely – LSRW SKILLS for employability.

Keywords: *communication skills, language skills, LSRW skills, employability, L1, L2*

Employers see English as a key Employability skill, with job promotion and higher earnings as the main reasons for learning English. The learners learn English to seek jobs in their countries and seek overseas job. English becomes essential for this purpose. Employability skills are the skills and attitudes that enable employers to get along with their colleagues, in decision making, solving problems and thus develop the organization they work for. This is where the role of language plays a major part. With proper English language skills the communication process becomes easy and effective making all the work go smoothly.

Employability skills are general skills employers look for during recruitment and English skills have become a critical employability skill in today's global market. Education and experience may make you eligible to apply for a job, and to be successful in the job position one needs to exhibit a mix of skills known as employability skills.

IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE:

Employers want graduates with a variety of well-honed life skills, communication and language skills being a major part of the life skills. You'll need to be able to communicate effectively in different situations like face-to-face, over the phone, online, via email, in reports, with a wide variety of different people in different settings and situation.

English until the Return of Babel, states: The current status of English is unprecedented. Simultaneously, it has a preeminent global role in science, commerce, politics, finance, tourism, sport, and screen entertainment and popular music with no challenger comparable to it, it seems almost untouchable; even in China, the only country with a language that has more native speakers, every school child now studies English and India, set to overtake China in population by 2050, is already trading on an expertise in English inherited from the British Empire and studiously preserved and fostered ever since. (Ostler 2010: 267)

Henry Hitchings in his well known work titled "The Language Wars: A History of the Proper English" quotes:

Using LSIA data, Ho and Alcorso (2004) showed the employment outcome of English speaking and non-English speaking migrants in relation with their birthplace. The spread of English has posed a "serious challenge" to non-English-speaking countries (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). Dustmann and Fabbri (2003) and Tainer (1988) argue that proficiency in English plays an influential role in career opportunities with higher earnings.

The world is gradually becoming a small place. Globalisation has inspired and stimulated the domestic companies to think and step beyond their nations. People are always enthusiastic about taking exigent and fruitful overseas assignments. As English is the official language in many countries, language never pops up as a barrier for those who intend to settle down in other countries. The value of English language in the job market cannot be undermined. With a good command over English language skills, one can enjoy the immense opportunities of self employment. In any chosen field, the mastery over English will help a person attain faster career growth.

THE FOUR LANGUAGE SKILLS:

Languages are generally taught and assessed in terms of the 'four skills': listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and reading are known as 'receptive' skills while speaking and writing are known as 'productive' skills. Speaking and writing are skills that involve production on the part of the language user. Listening and reading are receptive skills in the sense that the language user receives information from the written or spoken form of the language. Very often the language user is involved in using a combination of skills. A participant in a conversation for example, has not only to listen but also needs to speak. Effective communication skills include oral Skills for public speaking, presentations,

negotiating, conflict resolutions, knowledge-sharing; Writing Skills for preparing reports, proposals, instruction manuals, writing memos, notices, official correspondence etc. It also includes a combination of verbal and non-verbal skills marked with proper and distinct articulation, appropriate pause, and voice modulation. If the medium of communication is English, certain amount of proficiency is needed in it. So, learning the Language skills become inevitable. The need to learn Language skills are as follows.

Listening:

One needs to hone active listening skills and have a proper understanding of what is said to them and what they listen to attain proper results. According to Watkins “When listening there is often a pressure to respond almost immediately , and also a pressure brought about by having only ‘one go’ at understanding.”

Michael Rost opines that “Listening refers to a complex cognitive process that allows a person to understand spoken language. Listening encompasses receptive, constructive, and interpretive aspects of cognition , which are utilized in both first language(L1) and second language(L2).” So it is essential to master the listening skills.

Speaking:

One needs to speak in different settings and situations with different people Like face-to-face interactions, meetings, conferences, presentations to convince, persuade and get positive responses for a successful negotiation where proper words, pronunciation, clarity and other such speaking aspects play a key role. Peter Watkins observes that in both social and work contexts language may also be used to discuss options and solve problems. In addition we use language to manage the interaction itself.” He further observes that “We can also use language to invite others to speak, and so language is used to ensure that the interaction proceeds smoothly.” Making the speaking skills inevitable.

Reading:

One needs to be able to understand properly various kinds of written communication like reading a letter, e-mail, a notice, a memoranda, and other written communication for the smooth process of the work. Muriel Saville-Troille opines that “in the case of a language that is used for wider communication, reading also provides significant input related to technological developments, world news, and scientific discoveries. Reading ability in general is needed not only for access to printed resources such as books and journals but may also be needed for access to computers and internet. Non-academic situations which require reading range from those which involve receiving news from friends in letters or e-mails.”

Writing:

One must be proficient enough to write the message clearly with proper continuity and coherence. Where one can understand the written message clearly and follow the instructions to achieve the required results. According to Watkins “One characteristic of an effective writer is that they will have a command of a range of styles and be able to adopt an

appropriate tone. Being able to do this depends on a knowledge of the audience. In other words, people know who they are writing to, and therefore can judge the appropriate tone to adopt.”

Good verbal and written communication means you can get across your message with less chances of misunderstanding. The ability to speak and write with clarity is essential.

Listening: Active listening skills involve not only hearing but gaining and understanding information. Listening is basic requirement leading to fewer mistakes and a greater understanding of the needs of the employer and client. According to Michael Rost, “Listening consists of three basic processing phases that are simultaneous and parallel; decoding, comprehension and interpretation. A fourth phase, listener response, is often included as well in descriptions of listening competence and performance.

Speaking: The ability to speak both in social and working situations are inevitable. Speaking directly face to face, over the phone, making presentations, marketing and many more activities need to speak and give instructions with clarity to attain the expected outcome and results. Peter Watkins also opines that “People speak to pool and exchange information and also to ease the performance of transactions.”

Reading: One needs to master the reading skills particularly when he or she is professional. One needs to go through the written communication, understand it and work accordingly to achieve the expected results. According to David E. Eskey “Procedures for teaching reading have often been divided into procedures for teaching intensive reading(working with small amounts of texts in class to make various points about the nature of texts and the reading process) and procedures for teaching extensive reading(assigning whole texts to be read outside of class or in a reading lab setting).”

Writing: Good written communication means to get across your message without misunderstanding. According to Muriel Saville-Troike : “ Writing is the most important productive activity for learners to develop if they will use the language for academic purposes, or in certain types of service functions eg- providing reports to supervisors or clients.”

You need to demonstrate that you can communicate well in a variety of situations, depending on the job role given to you. You’ll need to be able to communicate effectively in face-to-face situations, over the phone, online, via email, in reports with a wide variety of different people in different settings and situations which needs to hone and practice all the four skills of the language to make your communication good and effective.

According to Muriel Saville-Troike “In considering the purposes for which people learn second languages, we must make a distinction between at two fundamental types of communicative competence-Academic Competence and Interpersonal Competence. Interpersonal Competence encompasses knowledge required of learner’s who plan to use the L2 primarily in face to face contact with other speakers.

METHODS TO MASTER THE LANGUAGE SKILLS:

Firstly, it is essential to identify the reason of learning the language. Once you know why you need to learn, the learning process will be much easier and effective.

Second, identify what kind of a learner you are: auditory, visual, kinesthetic, this will enable you to learn the things in much better way by doing the things according to your taste.

Thirdly, keep practicing the skills:

Reading: keep reading things like newspaper, journals, books. Start reading the thing without stopping in your first reading, don't worry even if you don't understand the things. In the second reading, identify the new words, learn their meanings and usage. Now once again read the entire thing and you'll get everything. Do reading comprehension work for better understanding of what you read.

Listening: Practice to listen the things in English, listen for the pronunciation, accent, stress, voice modulation, sentence structures and other language related aspects. First listen the entire thing without stopping for the first time, second time go slow to listen and understand each and everything that is said. Now, once again listen to the entire thing to have a better understanding. Do, listening comprehension work to have a better understanding.

Speaking: Keep speaking whenever and wherever you get the opportunity. Take part in speaking activities like role-play, debate, elocution etc. Learn to speak with clarity and accuracy in pronunciation. Learn proper accent and modulation to make your speech clearly understood to the listener.

Writing: Practice writing activities like essay writing, letter writing, report writing and other such activities needed in the day-to-day life.

A regular practice of the language skills will surely enhance your language abilities and thereby develop your confidence level too.

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE LEARNERS:

Learners while learning English face a lot of problems which makes the learning process difficult and ineffective. Some of the problems are discussed herewith:

1. LACK OF INTEREST:

We see that the learners don't show proper interest in learning the language. Their lack of interest results in poor performance which in turn results in their demotivation.

2 LACK OF MOTIVATION:

IN The learners lack a proper motivation to learn the language which makes them lose the interest and make the learning process dull.

3. INHIBITIONS:

We find the learners to be shy and afraid to take part in the activities like role-play, they are afraid of their mistakes and feel shy that they may be made fun of which makes them shrink and inactive, making the entire learning process dull.

4. SLOW AND FAST LEARNERS:

The class is generally a mix of slow and fast learners. The fast learners dominate the class and make the slow learners shrink.

5. MOTHER-TONGUE INFLUENCE:

The learners are greatly influenced by their mother tongue. They feel comfortable to communicate in their mother tongue and when they are asked to speak in English they form the sentences in their native language and then translate it into English which makes all the difference. Instead of making simple small sentences directly in English, they form the statement in their native language and then translate it into English.

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE TEACHERS IN TEACHING LANGUAGE:

Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language is a challenging yet rewarding task. Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), one must learn to adapt to the learners needs and tailor the content accordingly which becomes very challenging. Some of the problems faced by the teachers are :

1. Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language:

Teaching English as a foreign or Second Language is a challenging task, as one needs to understand the learners interest, needs and the reasons for learning the language and accordingly tailor the lessons to keep the learners motivated.

2. Learners depend on teacher:

It is often found that the learners always look and expect the teacher to give the correct answers. Instead of trying to answer the questions the learners always expect the teacher to give the answer. Thereby making them depend on the teacher.

3. Persistent use of first – language:

As an ESL Teacher, while teaching English as a foreign language, it is important to encourage the learners to use only English language. It is often found that the learners tend to use their first language, which must be tackled in a proper way to see that the learners make use of English.

4. Learners not clear about what to do or do the wrong thing:

It is often found that the learners get confused and don't understand the instructions given by the teacher making them do the wrong things which results in not getting the expected things. It becomes essential to give the instructions once again in simple and clear and easy terms.

5. Lack of motivation and inattentive learners:

It is often found that the learners are found to be inattentive in the class and they do not participate actively in the tasks because of lack of interest and motivation. It is essential to know the learners, their interests and needs and the tailor your lesson accordingly to catch the learners interest and keep them motivated.

6. Strong student dominance:

Some students excel in the class and often seem to be dominating the class making the weak and slow learners shrink. It becomes essential to identify the weak and slow learners and encourage them to respond and give answers.

7. Learners are unprepared:

It is often found that the learners drop out simply because they are not prepared. It is necessary to encourage them and make them prepared to take up the things and do them in time.

8. A phonetic feature of the Language:

English Language feature adds to the difficulty in the teaching and learning process. English is A phonetic i.e, there are 24 alphabet in writing in contrast to 44 sounds produced in speech. This add to the confusion and difficulty in the teaching and learning process.

SOME OF THE SOLUTIONS:

Some of the solutions to the problems are as follows:

1. Motivation:

As a Language Teacher, one must be prepared not just to teach language and lessons but be able to inspire, empower and motivate the learners. The goal is to keep them inspired and excite the learners about learning.

2. Building Rapport:

As a teacher when you go into the class for the first time, it is important to see that you build a proper rapport with the students. This create and develops a bond which helps in building a good rapport, making the teaching and learning ambience good.

3. Place of Language should be well defined:

English offers vast opportunities. It's position and place in the education system must be well defined. They must learn to give proper importance to Language right from the beginning.

4. Applying different teaching methods:

The Language Teacher should use different teaching methods to teach in the classes. They should keep in mind the needs of the learners and be able to cater to the needs of the learners. They can use different methods like using

1. Audio lessons to suit the auditory learners.
2. Videos to suit the visual learners.
3. Design various activities to suit the kinesthetic learners.

Peter Watkins lists the typical stages that may be used in a reading or listening lesson as follows:

1. Build interest.
2. Pre-teach vocabulary (if necessary)
3. Set a gist or scanning task
4. Learners read (or listen)
5. Learners compare answers
6. Check answers with the teacher
7. Set an intensive reading (or listening) task
8. Learners read (or listen)
9. Compare answers
10. Check answers with the teacher
11. Set an extensive activity.

CONCLUSION:

English Language plays a key role in shaping one's personality and career. Starting from education to industry work place, the necessity of English is inevitable. The need of the hour is to see that suitable measures are taken to provide mandatory training in Communicative English enabling the youngsters to be gainfully employed. Which in turn will benefit all the stakeholders, industry, government resulting in higher income for the individual and the nation resulting in the development of the nation?

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