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Challenges in the Acquisition of Employable Skills in English Language

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Abstract:

This paper examines the attitude of college students towards Learning English Language. Learning English Language is concerned with the process of discovery which makes the young generation to get remedies for many of the challenges faced in their daily life. By giving the awareness of the learning English Language, one can change the negative attitude of students towards English Language and helps to build the new career opportunities.

Keywords: Employability, skills, strategy.

Introduction

English has become a synonym of progress. It has been playing an important role in our educational system as well as in our national life. The colonizers have introduced English in our educational system in order to produce cheap clerks for their colonial administration and to produce what Lord Macaulay called “a class of people, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect”. It helped the growth of nationalism which ultimately liberated the country from the British yoke. After Independence, the role of English in our education as well as in our national life came to be seriously questioned. There was a lot of controversy over the status of English in the changed context and that controversy has not settled down yet. It is unfortunate that many of our leaders equated English with an instrument of colonial exploitation and saw it as a shameful badge of our slavery.

English language, as the window of the world, is widely used for communication in today’s globalized back drop. The role of the English teacher, the nature and context of learning, as well as the function and relative importance of course content have all been challenged and redefined. New methods and approaches have emerged battering and assaulting the conventional modes of teaching-learning process. Yet, it seems to be evasive to the grasp of the learners. In the digitalized era, the dire need of the learners is not on ‘form’ but on the function of the language. University students in India, with their highly meritorious scholastic achievement, do not perform very effectively as they are expected to be. They stand nowhere in the job market with their inadequate employable skills. As English is the language of the work force, it plays a vital role in deciding the employability quotient. To have an edge over the others in every sector,

be it academic, technical, or administration, an excellent standard of communication skills is to be complemented with other specific skills.

Area profile : Udumalpet is a Taluk in Tiruppur District of Tamil Nadu State, India. Udumalpet Taluk Head Quarters is Udumalpet town. It is located 71 KM towards South from District head quarters Tirupur. 499 KM from State capital Chennai towards East It is situated on the National Highway between pollachi and palani cities. Being situated in the near foot hill of western Ghats the town is blessed with copious water resources from two dams. The total population of Udumalpet as per 2011 censuses is 1, 67, 781, out of this male population constitute 83,739 and the female population is 84,042.

Scope of the Study

Foreign and local companies are equally considering opportunities to expand their business in this niche market. However, the rate of employment still does not lie on par with the amount of graduates the country produces each year. Of India's 1 billion population more than half is below the age of 25. Over the next 10 years, one million people a month are expected to seek jobs. The studies and surveys conducted by various agencies and employability solutions companies highlight that the Indian graduates lack basic English grammar skills, communication skills, the use of relevant information and communication technologies, interpersonal skills which are the prerequisites for working in the corporate environment, particularly in client-facing roles like consulting, banking and marketing and sales. Above all, **the rural women graduates** of Tiruppur District are mostly **First generation learners**. In the existing scenario, while considering the prospects of the employability of the **First Generation learners**, the following issues surface:

- Are the students actually ready for their new assignments, different set of challenges and expectations of the industry?
- How are they going to manage the critical moment of transition from 'on campus life' to 'corporate life'?
- Can the task of getting a job be accomplished with a realistic vision, maintaining equilibrium between one's expectation and the viable job offers?
- What are the barriers to the acquisition of employable skills?
- What are the strategies and methods to be utilized to overcome the barriers of an employability?
- How to make the students focused in learning micro and macro skills of using English language? How to make English contextualized?
- This research attempt focuses on exploring effective methods for modifying language teaching strategy (LSRW skills) and how to make it more accessible to the slow learners.



OBJECTIVES:

This paper seeks to

1. To identify the learning needs and skills.
2. To enhance individual's employability and productivity

METHODOLOGY

Primary information about the rural women undergraduates is to be obtained from the select colleges in Udumalpet Taluk, Tirupur District, Tamil Nadu and from discussions held with various stakeholders related to the unemployment. The study uses both primary and secondary data. A structured interview schedule is used to collect the data.

DATA ANALYSIS

Appropriate statistical tools have been used. The information collected through the schedule are carefully reviewed and consolidated in a master table. It is tabulated and analyzed with references to objective of the study. **SAMPLING TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED.** The data collected are compiled and analyzed keeping in view the main objectives of "English for Employability of Rural Women Undergraduates in Udumalpet Taluk, Tirupur district, Tamil Nadu". The data collected are classified, tabulated and analysed in order to fulfill the following objectives. The results presented in all the tables in this chapter were estimated from the primary data collected from the respondents.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS: 'Demographic profile is a study of population based on factors such as age, race, sex, economic status, level of education, income level and employment, of the respondents.

Table – 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

| Characteristics | Number of Respondents | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Age group | | |
| 20-25 years | 98 | 87.5 |
| 25-30 years | 14 | 12.5 |
| Educational Qualification | | |
| Undergraduate | 35 | 31.2 |
| Post graduate | 77 | 68.8 |
| Marital Status | | |
| Married | 14 | 12.5 |
| Unmarried | 98 | 87.5 |
| Family Size of the Respondents | | |

| | | |
|----------------------------|----|------|
| | | |
| 1-3 members | 7 | 6.2 |
| 4-5 members | 91 | 81.3 |
| 7-8 members | 14 | 12.5 |
| Monthly income | | |
| Below Rs. 20000 | 77 | 68.8 |
| Rs. 20001- Rs. 40000 | 35 | 31.3 |
| Monthly expenditure | | |
| 10,000-15000 | 55 | 49.1 |
| 15000-20000 | 57 | 50.9 |
| First Graduate | | |
| | 60 | 53.5 |
| | 52 | 46.5 |

- Age is an important variable because it has direct relation with one's mental maturity and the consequent awareness about what is going on in the society. In this background, an attempt has been made to know the age-wise distribution of the women undergraduates
- It is inferred from the table that majority of the respondents (87.5%) belong to 20-25 years. At this age most of them would have completed their UG degree. Some may be pursuing their higher studies. The data also reflects 12.5% of the respondents belong to 25-30 years.
- It is evident from the data that 31.2% are undergraduates and 68.8% are post graduates. More over it is inferred that majority of the respondents have continued their higher studies and they preferred to study. It may also be assumed that they would have lacked employable skills.
- The above table illustrates that 87.5% of the respondents are unmarried and 12.5% of them are married. It may be due to their unemployed status.
- Among social variables, size of a family occupies a place of significance. A family may have earning and non-earning members. In this background, an attempt has been made in the study to know the family size of the workers. The family size of the workers has been broadly classified into three categories such as 1-3 members, 4-5 members and 7-8 members. The table reveals that 81.3% of the respondents belong to nuclear family. 12.5% belong to a big family.
- The table reveals that out of the total respondents 112, 68.8 percentage draw a monthly income of Rs. 20000. It is evident that only one third of the respondents is drawing more than Rs.20000.
- The table shows that 49.1 per cent of respondents' monthly expenditure ranges between Rs 10000-15000, 50.9 per cent of them are spending Rs 15000-20000 per month .
- Education is considered to be the chief means of social awareness and development. Education makes man a rational thinker. In this background, an attempt has been made in the study to know the educational background of the workers. While examining the



education received by the total respondents (112), 53.5 percent of them are first graduates and the remaining 46.5 percent are not the first graduates. It is evident that awareness has come to women and their family members that education plays a vital role in determining the self-reliance of women.

.Encouragement given by male members of the family

In the patriarchal social set up, women should also be given priority to have education.

Table 2
Encouragement given by male members of the family

| Encouragement of Male members for Job going | Respondents | Percent |
|--|--------------------|----------------|
| Yes Always | 77 | 68.8 |
| Yes, at times | 35 | 31.2 |
| Total | 112 | 100.0 |

While analyzing the attitude, the outlook of men towards women in taking up a career, the table reveals that 68.8 percent of respondents agree that they get encouraged by the male members of their family. A change in outlook has come in the men. Men too have become aware of the fact that in the nuclear family set up it becomes essential to have double earning for the family so that they can provide the good facilities and education to their children. In a family, especially when a woman earns the economic status gets uplifted.

Is job beneficial?

Table 3
Is job beneficial?

| Is job beneficial | Respondents | percent |
|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| yes | 112 | 100 |

The data reveals that the total respondents (112) support that job is essential for the individuals. Thus it is inferred that education is compulsory to earn a job and the financial support will no doubt bring numerous benefits to the employed. It is really heartening to see the data. Once people are aware that jobs bring forth so many benefits, naturally they will be inclined to equip themselves with the skills in order to get an employment with a high salary. Independence naturally boosts up the status of a woman in her family and in her surrounding

Table 4
Job Benefits

| Job benefits | Respondents | Percent |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Self reliant | 35 | 31.3 |

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----|-------|
| Economically Independent | 56 | 50.0 |
| Happy | 14 | 12.5 |
| Less Dependent | 7 | 6.2 |
| Total | 112 | 100.0 |

It is found that 50 percent of the respondents agree that a career provides them economic independence and they become self-reliant when they are employed. Now a days, women do not want to depend on men for their day to day needs.

Problem of Learning English

The goals of teaching the second language are different from that of mother tongue. The first language is caught. The second language is taught. The goal of learning English is more integrative.

Table 5
Problem of Learning English

| Problem of learning English | Respondents | Percent |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---------|
| Tamil Medium | 49 | 43.8 |
| Lack of Facilities | 25 | 22.3 |
| Lack of Individual attention | 18 | 16.1 |
| Unsuitable learning environment | 21 | 18.8 |
| Total | 112 | 100.0 |

Mother tongue interference is a big barrier in learning a second language. The mother tongue as a cognitive and pedagogical resource has taken firm root, and it will be more in evidence in the conventional classroom, where exposure to the foreign language is inevitably restricted. The influence of mother tongue is great 1) when a learner acquires new vocabulary, 2) when he or she tries to recall and use previously-learnt vocabulary, and 3) when he or she tries to construct a complex word or expression that has not already been learnt as a unit. The knowledge and structure of the First Language ought to foster the learning of the second language. The table records that 43.8 percent has Tamil as their medium of instruction and 16.1 percent respondents feel that there is lack of individual attention in the class room.

Obstacles in acquiring the LSRW skills

The following table presents an analysis of the various problems in acquiring the four major skills of learning the English language.

Table 6
Obstacles in acquiring the LSRW skills

| | Respondents | Percent |
|------------------------|-------------|---------|
| Psychological Problems | 21 | 18.8 |



| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|------|
| Heavy Syllabus | 7 | 6.3 |
| Scarcity of Technological Aids | 35 | 31.3 |
| Lack of Exposure | 49 | 43.8 |
| Total | 112 | 100 |

43.8 percent of the respondents suffer from lack of exposure to the varieties of acquiring these skills. 31.3 have shortage of technological support to assist them in learning. 18.8 percent suffer from psychological inhibitions like fear, anxiety.

Drawbacks in college curriculum

Table 7
Drawbacks in college curriculum

| | Respondents | Percent |
|--|--------------------|----------------|
| Grammar oriented tasks | 35 | 31.3 |
| Practical Command of English Knowledge | 21 | 18.8 |
| Training of a special skill | 21 | 18.8 |
| All the above | 35 | 31.3 |
| Total | 112 | 100.0 |

31.3 percent has consented that the current college curriculum lacks grammar oriented tasks, practical command of English knowledge and training for a special skill. To cope up with the present day context, English for every day purpose a command over the global language English is needed.

FINDINGS

- ❖ 43.8 percent of the respondents suffer from lack of exposure to the varieties of acquiring these skills. 31.3 have shortage of technological support to assist them in learning. 18.8 percent suffer from psychological inhibitions like fear, anxiety.
- ❖ 31.3 percent has consented that the current college curriculum lacks grammar oriented tasks, practical command of English knowledge and training for a special skill.
- ❖ 62.5 percent of the respondents is satisfied with the standard of text books. 50 percent of the respondents view that they are dissatisfied with the competency of the teachers.
- ❖ 62.5 percent do not have confidence, proficiency in communicative skills and less exposure to job avenues.
- ❖ 43.8 do have lack of exposure to acquire the skills. 18.8 percent is affected by psychological problems such as anxiety, fear, nervousness which hamper their learning spirit.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Educational curriculum needs to be examined from time to time in order to ensure that the education received by students is relevant and up to date.
- An Employability Strategy Fund should be created; The employability skills in all university curriculum are to be explicitly identified.
- Universities are required to work in developing employability skills in their students by providing academic staff with relevant support and resources, integrating these skills into curriculum and course design, providing students with work placements and exposure to professional settings and providing advice and guidance through career services.
- Group of experts should guide educational organizations in practice, blending sound theoretical base with practical applications.
- Motivators and counsellors have to cooperate with institutions in the process of giving guidance and inspirations to students regarding the ways to increase employability skill from time to time.
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CONCLUSION: The current focus of skill development has shifted to the learner and his/her needs and expectations. To empower the working population, it is essential to start from the source, i.e., the learner. The “voice” of the learner is the focal point of the mission, without which an effective conclusion and attainment of the final goal would be incomplete Exposure to the real language helps the learners to the accurate informal atmosphere facilities learning in classroom.

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