

Context

Qualitative English Language Training – Need of the Hour

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Abstract

Training has broadened and increased in sophistication; trainers, researchers and practitioners have learned to discriminate different kinds of cultures, individuals, situations, behavior patterns, language patterns, etc. In the course of time, a number of training methods have been developed; still there is a scope to provide qualitative English language training to our qualified workforce to enable them to work effectively. The present job market has set some values and the corporate employers never compromise with their minimum expectations and the set of skills that they require. The proficiency of English language is one of the requisites and the qualitative training in the language is the need of the hour. Effective, result oriented, qualitative English language training to

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foster the development is necessary. The first decade of the new millennium presented a time of great transition and internationalization. It was a period of inevitable conflicts and contradictions, as organizational wage war, voice of non-dominant groups, and the concept of global village through commerce, education, electronic communication, etc have brought radical change in the world. To maintain this new order only one aspect functions a bridge i.e. English language.

Key words: Training, employability skills, corporate needs, job market.

Introduction

The change caused by globalization and technological development is multifaceted. Trade and commerce have been influencing so much that it entirely changed the scenario of the job market. The people from different nations and cultural background came together under one roof and opened avenues for a variety of jobs. In this new set up, the role of English language is strengthened from a bridge language to the language of survival. The demand of English language has forced everybody to adopt it as a tool, a weapon and along with it the skill sets which have brought a commonality among people of different background. The teaching and learning of English packaged with the skill sets has evolved

out of this necessity, but the teaching and learning cannot happen following the old methodology. A new means has to be identified for the new requirements which are time bound and have a specific and clear purpose. A goal oriented, time bound training is the requirement of the day for the fresh technically skilled manpower coming out of colleges and universities every year. Eventually, training became most essential. The need analysis of the industry indicates that they want candidates with an adequate quality of communication skills in English. The present paper looks into English language training requirements of the aspirants for corporate jobs. It also focuses on the theoretical concerns of English language and its global nature today in terms of the new work order and the employability skills.

English – the Queen of Languages

In the post-modern era, technology contributed greatly in the spread and escalation of English. The expansion of Internet by replacing traditional modes of communication not only in research and education, but also marketing, trade and entertainment has brought a radical change in the life of human being of this generation. For Choudhary, D. U. (ICEG

2008) the global competition, multinational organizations, multicultural communication, globalization and cultural diversity are labels which are generally used these days for business that goes beyond the range of national and cultural borders. Along with the Indian companies like Tata, Infosys, Wipro, etc., the foreign multinational companies are engaged in global operations. Considering all these global happenings, no one can reject the importance of English language in terms of communication because it plays instrumental role in establishing communication across the world. English language sustains the world that is going its way to a well connected and well wired. Rizvi, Ashraf M. (2005) discussed English language and its role in India which is a curiously transformed one. Politically, English has served for long as the link language, bridging our East and West divide... In India, the economic juggernaut cast away the shackles of rigid state control, and the service sector took off in a big way and information technology became the IT thing, bringing with it a wave of demand for English language competence from all sections of society.

Kanchana Mala, B. and Vadivu, N. (ICEG 2008) rightly stated the position of English. Today, English is enjoying the privileged position as the Queen of Languages and the medium of instruction at different levels. Globalization, the factor responsible for this influence of English language and the privilege that it has got in the course of time is beyond imagination. Millions of people use English for communication in all the continents in the world. English is the lingua franca of airports and hotel industry, of civil aviation and the shipping lines. It is the leading language of science, medicine, technology and academic publications. The barriers of caste, color and creed are no hindrance to the continuing spread of the use of English.

English has undoubtedly become the universal language of business and as a result many companies, and not only the large multinational corporations, are now fully aware of the need of their employees to have a good command over English. More prominently, at the personal level, possessing English language competence is a sure way of giving someone an edge at an interview, opening up more interesting career prospects, and increasing earning potential.

Global Community and Communication

Today, we are living in a ‘Global Community’. People correspond with others from around the globe on a regular basis, products are bought and sold, and services are provided globally. The English language has inarguably achieved a major role in this “globalization” and it has become the prime language of choice for communication by many different nationalities. Effective communication is the key to success. No matter how good your selling techniques are, or how good your marketing proposal is, poor language skills inevitably destroy all your efforts.

Cameron and Black (2002) pointed out that it would be wrong to suggest that the present preoccupation with communication skills is solely a reflex of recent and ongoing changes in the economic sphere or that instruction in oral communication is a purely vocational enterprise aimed at increasing the employability of entrants to the labor market. On the contrary, it may be argued that in its attitudes to communicators the new capitalism has followed rather than led, borrowing many of its ideas and techniques from what could loosely be called ‘self-improvement culture’. That culture is also the focus for a

good deal of informal instruction in oral communication skills, undertaken rather than professional reasons.

Prasad and Sharma (2007) comment, *“In this era of globalization, we communicate with the whole world: with the people of different nationalities, different backgrounds, and different experiences. The greatest need of the hour is that we must learn to work together as a team. To enter into these organizations, we require a high level of proficiency in spoken English”*. In the course of time, English has displaced the use of local and native languages at the regional, national and at the international levels. On account of its global currency the English language has a high level of acceptance and has the similar future perspectives. Ganga Lakshmi, C. (ICEG 2008) stated that globalization has made a tremendous impact on English language by making it increasingly competitive with the languages of the world. The importance of the ability to speak or write in English has increased significantly. English has become the de facto standard and it has been used as a medium for inter-state communication, broadcasting and telecasting all over the globe.

French (1972) in his book, *Teaching English as an International Language* says, “By accidents of history and by the rapid spread of industrial development, science and technology, international trade, and by something like and explosion in the speed and ease of travel and by all factors which broke down frontiers and forced nations into closer interdependence, English has become a world language. It is a means of international communication”. As a medium of international communication, English language proficiency is vital to professional development and career growth. The industry offers the much sought after New Age Career to candidates who are proficient in English language and possess positive attitude combined with motivation and ability to excel in high pressure work environment. The following points highlighted by www.tuition.com are apt and suggestive about its privileged position as an international language and its importance worldwide:

- Over 337 million people speak English as their first language.

- About 350 million people speak English as a second language.
- In the Top Ten of world languages, English occupies the 3rd place.
- English is also the favored language of science, commerce and airline companies

Training and Employability

English language proficiency is integral to inter and intra-organizational communication. Employers consider communication skills to be one of the important skills for effective performance at their workplace. In industrial and corporate sector the language used for communication needs to be clear, direct and simple as responses need to be quick and prompt. Professionals today need to express their ideas concisely and forcefully. Lack of language skills has a negative impact on the organization and an employee's accessibility to industry. It has been observed that a major cause of dissatisfaction felt by employers with regard to their employees' inadequacy is communication. This eventually led

them to focus on developing communication skills of the employees in the organization.

Role of English Language Training

Some necessary steps have to be taken in the view to make the qualified students employable. As mentioned earlier, English language training plays a crucial role in this direction to meet the objectives of the organization. The following points interpret the role of English language training in this context:

1. English language training enables employees to put forward their ideas, thoughts, notions, etc.
2. It imbibes relationship building and human resource management skills.
3. Training encourages creativity, innovativeness and trains the trainees for result oriented action.
4. Language training enables an organization to grow intellectually. The intellectual growth of an employee = the intellectual growth of the organization.

5. Language training enables the trainees to be flexible I his approach and it changes the attitude and approach towards work and the task assigned.
6. Language training makes a trainee open minded and ready to welcome any change positively.
7. Language training fosters a culture of symbolic growth between the employees and the organization.
8. Language training enables the candidates to handle the ever increasing expectations of the employees and the immediate superior.
9. Language training encourages trainees to adopt ethical ways for long term goal and creates vote of trust their minds for the organization.
10. Language training improves the level of involvement, dedication and commitment of the employees and encourage them deliver their best.

By improving employees' English language skills and business skills, organizations should see improved communication and teamwork, increased productivity and efficiency, better customer service, increased staff confidence and motivation, and overall greater job satisfaction for employees.

In-house Training

In-house training can offer many advantages over external training. It allows an organization to ensure that the relevance of the training meets its business objectives while strengthen its employees business and language skills and it also ensures a standard level of training within an organization. Unlike traditional learning, which offers a lot of theory , but no immediate practical application, employees can take in-house training right to work when they go back to their desk.

Training has become a major tool to retain employees. People working in corporate sector face the problem of shifts, job stress, difficult target which result in demotivation. Well designed training program with clear career path increases the job satisfaction among the young

professionals and help them in becoming efficient and effective at the workplace. Therefore, organizations have to handle such challenges of meeting training needs, although, the sector is taking a lot of initiatives in conducting training for new joiners. Companies are now aligning business goals with training costs but what is more important is the development of the skills of the staff. Various multinational companies have an elaborate training infrastructure that includes computer-aided training rooms, and specially trained and qualified in-house trainers.

Many companies are now busy in designing training programs for their employees. These companies try identifying the strengths and weaknesses and are emphasizing more on their personalities, problem-solving skills, and leadership skills. With constant change in processes, technologies, techniques, methods, etc. there is a constant need of updating, developing and training the employees to consistently deliver their best. The necessary skills need to be identified as modules of a training session and should be imparted in the most flexible format so that they suit the office work culture. For Lyton and Pareek (1990) Training has become increasingly rectified and thus invites the first throw. Training is presented more

and more as though it were an activity to be set well apart from the demands and activities of every day.

Moreover training has become inevitable as there is a gap between the academic knowledge and occupational functioning of the employees. This gap can be bridged by a content-intensive and rigorous training approach. Since it is goal oriented, and focuses on the specific skills to be acquired in a limited period of time, the information is given in a concise manner and the outcome of the training is (expected to be) immediately visible.

Gee, J. P. *et. al.* (1996) rightly remarked that during the 1980s and 1990s, there were important shifts in the conceptualization and the experience of work, reflecting the emergence of a deregulated, hyper-competitive, post-industrial global economy. The resulting 'New Work Order' makes new demands on workers who draw attention to the specifically linguistic aspects of those demands.

The multinational corporations today absorb so much of the smart, technically qualified and eminently employable talent that there is a serious shortage of skilled manpower for other not-so-paying and smaller businesses. Contrary to the bleeding-heart view of the later the high earning corporate

employees complain being stuck in stressful and monotonous jobs, but they are unwilling to consider less paying equally challenging employment that requires aptitude and learning.

It is India's vast pool of English-speaking workforce that has fuelled the rapid growth in IT and allied sectors. Corporate India realizes that the superior communication skills of its workforce had differentiated India's offer to the world and has helped it zoom ahead (NASSCOM).

Hunting Suitable Candidates

However, there is a large proportion of graduates who are unemployed or are stuck in job of low profile which does not match their qualification. The key reason, why a huge pool of graduates in India is unemployable, is the minimal command over English language. Unfortunately, there is no concerted effort as yet by the corporate sector, education system, even social organizations to help improve learners' English language skills and confidence levels to prepare for the upsurge in the industry. Consequently, there is a serious shortage of employable human resources in the service sector. Generally speaking, language education lacks rigor and is slow-paced. It is based on the premise that language is a

process of acquisition spread over a period of time. Education has a holistic perspective; its aims are very broad in nature. This does not suit on-the-job training which needs to be well planned and focused and must yield observable results. Hence, there is a need for training which will take into consideration the immediate requirements of the workplace and activate the passive knowledge of English for real time performance.

The present state of employment market has developed so much that it has become more essential that one should be able to express precisely and fluently through the written and spoken English. Training has become more important than before and with the specific purpose of developing accurate thinking, clarity of thought, and best way of expression.

The industry is looking for young and talented professionals to succeed in this competitive world. The expectations from a fresh graduate are to be quick and adept at understanding and preparing self for the requirement of the industry. They are expected to be prepared to meet the demands of multi-tasking, switching roles and working in different cultural set up. The areas they need to develop besides technical skills are

people's skills or soft skills. These words have become very much catchy with both hiring and to be hired parties. These words encompass not just effective communication skills but also traits like the positive attitude, problem solving, time management, team spirit, self-confidence, handling criticism, flexibility, negotiation, conflict management, etc. and these have become the career making factors.

The Role of a Mentor

The other area that needs to be attended seriously and urgently is the role of a teacher as it is very crucial in training and in the process of making a student employable. The role of the language teacher greatly changes from that of a teacher to a trainer. The teacher should have enough exposure of the methodology adopted and the requirements of the industry. It is not just the requirement of the industry that has to be understood but also the functioning of the industry in some cases where the language specificity is prominent. The teacher should be prepared to use the methodology successfully and provide necessary inputs to meet the demands of the industry. The teacher should be ready to don the role of a trainer and execute it successfully as the success of the training greatly

depends on the one who conducts it. To achieve this, the language teacher should stretch himself / herself beyond the domain of language and develop the awareness on functioning of the industry and this can be possible through teacher development methods such as short term training programs or refresher courses, etc. The discussion over the issue has a wide scope and can be treated exclusively but it can be concluded that the teaching fraternity should be prepared to handle the changing scenario.

Conclusion

The technological advancement and globalization has radically changed the roles played by the employers and employees and widened the international grounds in trade and commerce. Thereby, bringing into the picture the multinational, multicultural global employers and employees. This has escalated the role of English language and made it an essential element of survival. It is not just teaching of English that is in demand now but training of skill sets varying from communication to personality development and cross cultural understanding. Training thus has become essential for acquiring job of choice, sustaining in it and progressing. This

laid emphasis on educational system to be revamped especially at tertiary level and collaborate with the industry bringing education and training on a common platform. The soft skills training can be integrated within curriculum so that the students will be ready for industry. Such a changed curriculum can be supported by advanced technological means of imparting knowledge and use of most suitable methodology. The role of a teacher also changes to trainer giving new dimension to the profession. This effort will not only yield efficient, employable internationally adaptive citizens but also save time and money spent on in-house training. Unless we, the academicians, corporate trainers and the industry, focus on the following objectives, the success seems to be difficult:

- To identify the probable areas in which training is required
- To provide qualitative training
- To optimize professional and personal potential
- To adapt readily to changing business environment
- To discover business problems and opportunities proactively

- To adapt communication style for greater impact
- To evaluate the trainees' performance to meet the objectives

It is the need of the hour to provide qualitative English language training to the aspirants to make them industry ready. Such an attempt would solve the basic problem of unemployment and moreover the qualified stuff in the country can be brought down to the main stream.

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