

# English Language Empowering Skill Development

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Language skills certainly help elevate a person's confidence. English being the global link language, spoken widely throughout the world and for many reasons being the most accepted language, has a vital role in shaping the future of our students. We have an immense talent pool to be explored but due to the lack of proper communication we are unable to tap the numerous opportunities the world has to offer us. This is where the role of skill development comes in. The thorough development of the four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – will not only enhance employability but also help our students stand at par with the world audience. English language labs with ultra-modern audio-visual aids can transform an ordinary classroom into an excellent English language learning hub.

As a skill development executive for the past seven years, I have seen a drastic transformation in my students' approach towards English language. The meticulously planned activities in the curriculum allow them to adopt English language so seamlessly that they are able to use it overcoming all their fears they listed before in using English. Continuous exposure to English language via spoken and written, fun-filled, stress-free learning can work miracles. I have seen students improve their grades exponentially after they gained English LSRW skills through the skill

modules. Even though many job interviews and examinations are conducted in English, we still have a dearth of confident English speakers. In my opinion, there should be a felt necessity or desperate passion to address this issue of English speaking in our country. Possible simulations of situations where English speaking can be made compulsory should serve this purpose.

Competent faculty with excellent linguistic proficiency can surely convert the students' 'incompetence' in English into enhanced competence to step confidently into the land of opportunities. We need to come up with innovative, engaging, effective ways of teaching and mastering the art of English speaking among our students. There is also a necessity to keep updating and testing their competence periodically so that the standard is maintained and there is upskilling or updating.

The government needs to identify, train and employ qualified professionals to impart English language skills in all the schools and colleges and make it a mandatory policy decision, be it in private or public institutions across the country. We need to work at the grassroots level to increase the chances of our young population to enhance their employability.

The most interesting thing I have noticed as a skill development executive is the way

students perceive the importance of English and its role in their lives. I was very apprehensive about changing this attitude in the beginning but it all turned out to be an excellent experience. The first question I pose to my audience every year is why they are scared to attempt speaking in English, and the obvious answers are: stage fright, lack of vocabulary, fear of criticism and grammar, to name a few. So, this is when half the battle is won. The first step towards achieving our goal is to identify the problem. After the identification comes the hunt for possible solutions, then filter down to most practical solutions and then start acting on those finally to solve the problem. All this looks clinically very apt but putting it into practice is a bit of a task.

Being a non-Malayali helped me transact in English, thereby making it compulsory for my students to use the language on a daily basis. This was a humble beginning and then there was no looking back. This is one of the strategies I have mentioned earlier, *viz.* simulation or situations to use the language. I had to improve their LSRW skills via the meticulously laid out curriculum text we were provided. It struck me that for the two productive or active skills to be brought out, I needed to work on the two receptive or passive skills.

So, newspaper reading became a daily routine where students, as soon as they

enter the class picked up a page of an English daily and read aloud to paraphrase the content. Over a period of time this strategy started producing results. An old newspaper also would serve the purpose because the idea was to read and speak. Slowly, the idea of speaking in the presence of a known audience and from a structured text helped students gain confidence. The next step was not just paraphrasing but to voice their opinions on the particular article of the day. This transformation was a huge victory because the students were not only expressing their feelings but also unconsciously using the language. Then the various fun-filled activities like designing advertisements, role plays, skits and the project work, to name a few, brought out the best of their talents.

Skill development in our country is in a nascent stage but, having said that, it is not impossible to achieve the desired outcome of producing an excellent skilled workforce with the present efforts by various stakeholders. More exposure to various forums, qualified educators, adequately equipped classrooms, technology and most importantly our attitude can hopefully change the future of employment in our country. Certainly, the linguistic competence along with academic performance can be achieved through communicative approach to teaching English language.