

English Language Teaching and Job-Ready Workforce

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Abstract: *There is no balance between the courses offered by higher education institutions and what an institution or organisation demands in job seekers. The imbalance between theoretical knowledge and required skills in a profession is one of the reasons of unemployment. Such imbalance prevents the job seekers to get the jobs of their choice. This paper aims to examine the present status of English language in India in relation to job-ready workforce. It explores the effects of the Covid-19 on job markets and future prospect for the English language learners in India. It also highlights attitudes of the learners towards English, skills-based programmes for the learners, in-service training and professional development programmes offered by educational institutions, and an overall assessment of teaching-learning process in order to prepare job-ready workforce for national and international job markets. The paper also explores the status of the learners and the need of linguistic competency in them and how to prepare them in changing scenario to reduce unemployment in India. Besides the traditional and popular jobs for the graduates in English, some unexplored jobs have been explored in order to enthuse the job seekers to experience new jobs because the youth of today want to work in new environments different from the traditional ones. Mixed method has been used in presentation of the data.*

Keywords: English, Workforce, Employment, Linguistic competency, Exploring jobs, Skills, Covid-19

1. Introduction

English is a widely used language in the world in almost all sectors. It attracts students due to possibility of job that they feel after having command over it. It also boosts their confidence. Effective communication skills develop overall personality of an individual that every organization expects in an employee. Most of the important books are available in English – originally written in it or translated into it. From classroom to job markets, everywhere English language proves to be an essential asset of an individual. Today it has become a language of employment. In society, already it has become a status symbol. There are various factors responsible for all these advancements that need our attention.

Above mentioned advantages of English language are well known in Indian society and in academia, still no substantial work has been done in education sector for effective teaching and quality research in English. Education budget is decreasing. Teaching-learning system is not uniform in the whole country and all the educational institutions are not able to produce employable youths. In this situation New Education Policy 2020 has come with focus on regional languages and Indian Knowledge System.

There was a time when there were no more institutions for higher education and there were no high number of undergraduate and post-graduate students seeking jobs like today. It was not easy for everybody to have access to higher education. So getting a job was also not a problem. Maximum people of the country depended on agriculture. But the population explosion brought a sea change in every sector. Human desires increased. Industrialization boomed. Educational institutions increased. There came a new world of hope. New technologies were introduced in many fields. Computers made their presence everywhere. Globalization spread its wings in every walk of life. People got connected to every nook and cranny of the world for business. Migration from village to city, city to metropolitan city, and to foreign countries in search of lucrative jobs became a trend. Study abroad became a first sign of successful future. All these changes brought competition that kept on rising resulting in demand of ready workforce in every sector.

Theoretical knowledge of English language and literature is good but how to present it on different occasions that is more important, and it comes from practice under supervision of skilled teachers. Therefore, Functional English is important. Students should be able to know how to write different kinds of letters, emails, CVs/resumes, reports, case studies, long essays, surveys, and research papers following the latest international standard.

2. COVID-19 and Job Markets

COVID-19 has badly affected the global scenario of employment in which India was worst hit particularly in April and May 2021. Most of the private sector industries and business units recorded great loss that caused massive lay-offs. Many small businesses and industries got shut. Education sector experienced the same woes. Those employees who continued, they bore the work load of all other staff. Many private colleges and universities reduced the salaries of their remaining staff up to 40 per cent. Many private schools got shut, and many teachers committed suicides due to losing their jobs (Chatterjee, 2021; Singh, 2021). According to the “Economic Outlook” of the *Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy* (CMIE), “15 million jobs lost in May 2021” (Vyas). *The Times of India* (June 2, 2021) reported that “urban jobless rate hits 18%.” In March 2021 the *Statista Research Department* reported about India that “Unemployment went up to nearly 24 per cent in April 2020.” On May 4, 2021, *The Wire* reported that “With 73.5 lakh job losses, the number of employees, both salaried and non-salaried, fell from 39.81 crore in March to 39.08

crore in April, for the third straight month.” (The Wire Staff) M. Saraswathy (January 12, 2021) reported that,

Among the 10.9 million jobs that were lost, 5 million were in the travel and tourism sector alone... Apart from travel, the restaurant and hotel industry was also badly hit. The COVID-19 fears and migration of workers led to eateries shutting down. Hotels were also forced to retrench staff in the wake of almost ‘zero bookings’ (except quarantine facilities) in April and May 2020 (*Moneycontrol*).

India Today, *Mint*, *Business Standard*, and all of the leading newspapers and web portals of India reported the similar figures using the data from different surveys. These figures were terrible for a developing country. The second wave (2021) of this pandemic was so horrible that the number of infected people kept on surging every day and death rate also did the same. It took form of a national medical emergency. Everything lacked suddenly. No beds were available in hospitals; no required medicines were available in pharmacies; no required oxygen cylinders were supplied. The news of death was coming from all corners. That situation worried the whole world. A number of friendly nations supported India on time with medical equipment and medicines.

The same troubled situation gave rise to new trends of online teaching and learning, webinars, meetings, work from home, etc. E-learning companies boosted jobs during lockdown periods and played important roles in education sector. In urban pockets they were successful but rural areas remained losers due to digital-divide. Everybody in villages does not have smart phones and laptops due to economic reasons. Most of the India’s rural areas do not have facilities of broadband. People depend on mobile-data for using social media platforms. For any IT related service they wholly depend on the cybercafés. In this regard there was a joint study carried out by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Nielsen. On the basis of this study, Sohini Mitter writes:

India continues to be the world’s second-largest internet market after China. But what makes it more irresistible to Silicon Valley companies is that it also happens to be the largest untapped internet market in the globe. With close to 900 million people without internet connectivity still, there’s little doubt that the Next Billion Users are going to come from India (<https://yourstory.com>).

The same article states the statement of IMAI and Nielsen that “Close to 70 per cent of the rural population does not access the internet” (Mitter 2021).

As the second wave of the pandemic subsided, the job losers developed some hopes to get new jobs in the concerned sectors. Those who were at middle level and high level of their career, somewhere they got benefits of their experience and contacts but many a times it was observed that both education sector and other private sector companies preferred a fresher to recruit to save their financial burden; also in many cases a fresher struggled to get good job due to lack of similar pre-experience. This was the stage of choice and availability of jobs matching the profiles of the job seekers. Those who fulfilled the required educational qualifications for the

concerned jobs along with desired skills, they needed to be positive and boosted their confidence at that time of struggle and showed their strength, and minimised their weaknesses by online learning and training. In most of the fields fluency in English was on high demand.

3. Role of the English Language in Increasing Possibility of Employment

English is taught as a second language in India. It is a surprise that the number of second language speakers of it is more than its native speakers. Due to its huge variety, democratic nature, and wide scope, it attracts huge number of students in undergraduate and post-graduate studies in almost all universities. Also there are numerous training institutes offering short term skills-development courses of English meant for employment. It is because every employer expects the applicants to be well versed in English. Most of the employers write about English as a prerequisite for all the posts advertised. However, ‘a good degree’ in the English language and literature earned from a popular university can provide more opportunities in the job market. The employers generally believe that good English graduates have decent communication and analytical skills and they are able to work independently.

4. Linguistic Competency

“Linguistic imperfections and inadequacies” are the “weak points” (Imam iii). They need to be improved in students. Existing courses in English language, literature and linguistics need a focus on effective skills development so that after earning degrees, students should feel competent and proud.

The personality of a person is assessed on the basis of linguistic competency but from school level to university level every teacher does not pay attention to it. Generally, they use traditional lecture method in teaching English. Somewhere they also use translation method of teaching. They prefer local language while talking to students. In classroom also usually they do not use student-centred approach, making students the passive listeners. Students do not get an environment either at their institutions or at homes to develop language skills. All these problems need to be identified and effective measures should be used for the sake of improvement.

Listening skill is neglected in classroom. No ear-training is provided to the learners regularly. They are not given opportunities to listen to the native speakers in audio and video. At home also there are no such opportunities available for all. Thus they face difficulties in understanding the conversation of native speakers. There is absence of opportunities for speaking in classroom. Reading skill is also underestimated by both teachers and students. As slow reading spoils time, regular reading of authentic texts is required. Lectures and seminars will not help the students if they do not develop prompt-reading skill like skimming and scanning.

5. Exploring the unexplored

Skills-Based Courses

In India, government job has its own attraction, particularly in rural and semi-urban pockets. Education sector is still a good choice for those who have earned the required degree, but many of them lack skills, and exposure to the English language. They fear to apply for the job out of their own states so many of them remain unemployed. For them the British Council and the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad could be boons. Both institutions offer a number of practical skills-based trainings/courses to prepare the participants for jobs at both national and international levels.

(i) Cambridge CELTA

CELTA is a “Cambridge English Level 5 Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages” popularly known as “Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults.” Being a prestigious formal teaching qualification for teaching English, it is internationally recognised and respected by the institutions in English Language Teaching. It provides ‘essential skills and knowledge’ to the participants through different tasks, assignments and ‘teaching practice’. Each participant’s teaching practice in a classroom situation is seriously observed, noted and discussed by the Cambridge certified trainer and co-participants in a very small group. Detailed feedback on each assignment and teaching practice is provided by the trainer for further improvement. It continues till the end of the course to prepare each participant as a successful Cambridge certified teacher. CELTA is truly a very intensive course of four weeks duration. It requires 120 contact hours at the study centre and the same number of hours for self-study. Full attendance at the study centre is required and all the tasks, assignments and teaching practice need to be completed compulsorily. The participants are assessed throughout the course based on their assignments and teaching practice. There is no examination. After successful completion of all components of this demanding course, the certificate is issued by Cambridge English Language Assessment, part of the University of Cambridge, on the recommendations of the trainers. (<https://www.britishcouncil.in>)

(ii) Employability Skills Courses

The global market needs ready workforce and all graduates do not possess the required skills to benefit them in their desired jobs. At this stage employability skills become of paramount importance. The British Council offers three levels of Employability Courses to prepare the participants for jobs. These courses are available online and onsite both: (1) Pre-intermediate, (2) Intermediate, and (3) Upper Intermediate. At each level employability skills are developed in the participants as its components like Presentation Skills, Group Discussions, Interview Skills, and Writing. (<https://www.britishcouncil.in>)

(iii) Masterclass for IELTS Trainers

The British Council offers Masterclass for IELTS Trainer for those who want to start their career as IELTS trainers. It is an 18 hour training workshop (3 to 4 days duration) that prepares the trainers to train those who want to sit for IELTS examination. The participants should have “Advanced level of English (IELTS band 6.0 and above) with excellent written and oral communication skills.” It is an ideal course for those who have earned CELTA. (<https://www.britishcouncil.in>)

(iv) PGCTE and PGDTE

The English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) is one of the prestigious universities in India. Its main campus is located in Hyderabad and two more campuses are located in Shillong and Lucknow. It was established in 1958 as Central Institute of English (CIE) then renamed as Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) with the main aim “to impart quality training in English for teachers”. The university offers various programmes from certificate to doctoral level in English Language, Literature, Linguistics, and in a number of foreign languages. There are many skills-based and tailored training programmes run by the university in India, and also in foreign countries through its approved centres meant for teachers and employees of both government and private sectors. All programmes are based on development of specific language skills and achieving proficiency. The courses are best for those who want to brighten their career in teaching profession. Its School of Distance Education (SDE) offers two popular programmes for the teachers of English: (1) Post-Graduate Certificate in the Teaching of English (PGCTE) and (2) Post-Graduate Diploma in the Teaching of English (PGDTE). The eligibility for admission to PGCTE is an MA in English or in allied subjects (Linguistics, Education, Mass Communication, Psychology or Critical Humanities/Liberal Arts). Following are the compulsory courses taught in PGCTE:

- (i) Phonetics and Spoken English
- (ii) Methods of Teaching English
- (iii) Introduction to Linguistics
- (iv) Modern English grammar and Usage
- (v) Interpretation of Literature
- (vi) Materials for the Teaching of English
- (vii) Practice Teaching

This training programme prepares the participants to teach at higher education as well as senior secondary level. PGDTE is the extended level of PGCTE meant for the same purpose. Besides above courses, EnglishPro is a free mobile App of EFLU to help the students improve their pronunciation.

6. Jobs for English Language Learners

Besides teaching jobs, there are various other jobs open in private sector for the graduates in English language and literature.

(i) English Language/Soft Skills/Personality Development/Employability Skills Trainer

English language trainers, now best known as Soft Skills Trainers and Personality Development Trainers, are required by many organisations, companies, and training centres. There are many multi-national companies in different cities that recruit them and pay them handsome salary. The trainers have to impart both pre-service and in-service training to the participants. They have to plan, prepare and deliver lessons in an effective way and help the participants in making progress in all language skills (LSRW). They have also to prepare teaching materials, check the assignments and organize a variety of interesting language activities to achieve their goals. Besides developing linguistic competence in the participants, a trainer is also responsible to train them in all other skills that come on the way as leadership, time management, team work, problem solving, emotional intelligence, adaptability, critical thinking, positive attitude, work ethics, etc.

(ii) IELTS/TOEFL Trainer

IELTS/TOEFL Trainers are required by every training centre available throughout the country. IELTS has become more popular than TOEFL and a better choice for the candidates. The British Council and some other authorized centres recruit the trainers from time to time. British Council's Masterclass for IELTS Trainers help one enhance the required skills to become a successful trainer.

(iii) Life Skills Trainer

Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines life skill as "a skill that is necessary or extremely useful to manage well in daily life." Life skills comprise all those skills that help one deal with challenges of life effectively. Today Life Skills Trainers are on demand in schools and private colleges and universities and they are well paid. This job is more suitable for English graduates with a certificate or diploma in the concerned field from reputed institution.

(iv) Writer

Those who have passion for and artistic flair with writing, they can make it their career by writing novels, plays, poems, script for movies, and many more. There are many examples of the writers who left their previous jobs and devoted full time in writing and earned huge income from royalty. They impact people and get media attention easily. They are respected by every society. Some organisations hold workshops for the aspirants to hone skills in creative writing. IGNOU and Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning offer Diploma in Creative Writing in English; Ashoka University offers BA in English and Creative Writing; the University of East Anglia, UK offers BA Drama and Creative Writing; the University of Hull, UK offers MA in English (Creative Writing and English Literature). There are also some other foreign universities that offer these courses.

(v) Lexicographer

Those who are interested in meanings and usages of words and phrases and identifying new words and phrases for their possible entries into dictionaries, they can choose their career as lexicographers. Though there is competition in this field due to less number of publishers publishing dictionaries however in this world everything is online that has increased the scope of this profession. Lexicographers research on new words and write their correct and concise definitions to place them in dictionary. They need to assess the widely understood meaning of a word and very less understood meaning of the same word. They should be able to edit current definitions of words and proofread the entries made in the dictionary following the agreed procedures. In case of compiling a bilingual dictionary, they should be professional bilinguals. In this process they should be interested in reading different kinds of materials available in print and online versions, particularly magazines, journals, newspapers, blogs, and other resources available on social media in order to update the entries in dictionary. They should be aware of different kinds of dictionaries as English to English, English to Hindi, English to Nepali, etc. besides specialist dictionaries, like legal dictionary, medical dictionary, etc. in order to broaden their area of research. For both lexicography and editing work, the aspirants are imparted training by the employers about how to use software and databases and styles, methods and procedures. (<https://www.prospects.ac.uk>)

(vi) Digital Copywriter

In the digital age, copywriters play an important role in attracting the readers through their creative, clear, concise and commanding writings about the products to buy them or for other services. They have to know their target audience for whom they have to write and motivate them for their positive reactions. They write for the advertisements, web pages, blogs, social media campaign, email campaign, e-books, slogans, video scripts, etc. Working with a team, they need to review their writings for having good impact on the readers. Besides the University of Saskatchewan, Emily E. Steck has well illustrated this sector in her blog, “Copywriting Vs. Content Writing: What’s The Difference Between the Two?” (<https://blog.quiet.ly/>)

(vii) Electronic and Print Media: TV Anchor/Editor/Correspondent/News Reporter

In the world of news and entertainment, there is a flood of television channels in almost all languages. The information technology has revolutionized the mass media. This field has become a centre of attraction for the youth. A television channel has many positions in which anchors and news reporters have got place in the minds of the people. They know that TV anchors earn very lucrative salary. Even the employers of all major TV channels either of Hindi or of other Indian languages prefer those who have command over the English language to perform the roles of editors, translators and interpreters at many occasions. A degree in English language

and literature and post-graduate degree or diploma course in journalism and mass communication from a respected institution pave the way for these glamorous jobs.

(viii) Talent Agent

A talent agent represents actors, musicians, singers, lyricists, screen writers, directors, broadcast journalists, models, athletes, comedians, bands and other associated artists to the producers. He plays key roles in providing them opportunities to make their dreams come true. He helps and supports the artists by defending their talents and promoting their interests. Their growing demands in entertainment and fashion industries and tough competition have resulted in specializing the agents in different areas. There are some necessary things that a talent agent needs to do at the initial stage. He has to learn the basics of the job. He has to know the industry and try to increase knowledge about it. After experiencing the process of requirements and supply of the people in the industry, he has to decide about his specialization in any one area. Building a big and strong network helps him establish in this field. (*The Art Career Project*) Besides these requirements there are some important characteristics in a talent agent:

Talent agents have distinct personalities. They tend to be enterprising individuals, which means they're adventurous, ambitious, assertive, extroverted, energetic, enthusiastic, confident, and optimistic. They are dominant, persuasive, and motivational. Some of them are also artistic, meaning they're creative, intuitive, sensitive, articulate, and expressive. (Career Explorer)

(ix) Translator

A translator translates the written text from one language to another "retaining the meaning of the original text as closely as possible." Translation is done for various purposes. The government departments and embassies do not accept the documents in all languages. Such a situation necessitates translation of the documents in the required language. Thousands of books and other writings are translated from a regional and national language to the global language or vice versa to get wider readership. The types of translation include commercial, educational, legal, literary, scientific, and technical documents. (*Prospects*)

In India, "Central Translation Bureau functioning under the Department of Official Language is entrusted with the responsibilities of translating work of non-statutory procedural literature of the ministries, departments, offices, undertakings, etc. of the Central Government." (*Central Translation Bureau*) Besides the *Central Translation Bureau*, most of the ministries and departments of the Central Government, the PSUs and banks recruit translators time to time through all India competitive examinations. MNCs also need translators on various occasions. There are some private translation service providers/companies in India that too appoint translators. After receiving a postgraduate degree in English and having command over one more language, one

can join this field. An additional degree, diploma or training course in translation increases the job prospect.

(x) Interpreter

An interpreter converts the content of the source language into the target language. The content might be spoken or sign language. The most important thing for an interpreter is to listen, understand and remember the content to convert it into another language efficiently and clearly. He works between two people so besides having fluency in minimum two languages, he needs interpersonal skills, social skills and cultural sensitivity in verbal and written communication. In this technologically advanced age, interpreting also takes place “by telephone and by video conferencing” depending on the situation and business needs. So an interpreter also needs to be aware of latest technology in this field.

Besides the Parliament and embassies, interpreters are recruited in other government offices. The shortage of interpreters came to light, particularly in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a meeting.

Two years after a parliamentary standing committee rued “gross understaffing” in the Ministry of External Affairs’ interpreter cadre even as India’s global engagements and visits by foreign dignitaries increased significantly, the government has begun to feel the shortage of officials for the job across both foreign and Indian languages.

Cabinet Secretariat last week called a meeting with officials of the ministries of external affairs and human resource development to review the shortage of foreign and Indian language interpreters. (Vishnoi, *The Economic Times*, September 3, 2018)

There are some private companies that recruit interpreters to get their services in “conferences, business meetings, immigration tribunals, media houses, tourist centres, sports clubs, international firms, export houses, etc.” The qualification for an interpreter is a postgraduate in English and good command over minimum one Indian or a foreign language. If a person has received a bachelor degree in English and a master’s degree in a foreign language, he is well suited for this profession because he knows minimum three languages.

(xi) YouTuber

Today YouTuber has become very popular in society. This new field can be made a career if new and important videos are created for the viewers for lasting and positive effect. There are various areas in which YouTubers are doing well: providing cultural knowledge of foreign countries directly from there, showing educational, interesting, and amazing videos in different areas, fun, food and so on.

(xii) Some Other Jobs

Besides the above mentioned professions, there are many other jobs where a degree in English language and literature along with an additional relevant training can provide good opportunities in the global markets. Some of them are: Rajbhasha

Officer, Hindi Officer, Public Relations Officer, Information Officer, Education Consultant, Recruitment Consultant, Paralegal, Advertising Manager, Public Relations Manager, Records Manager, Customer Care Specialist, Social Media Manager, Voice Artist, etc.

7. Conclusion

This article has analysed the effect of Covid-19 on job markets and how to make the individuals prepare for jobs of their choice in this condition. It has also discussed different skills based training programmes that change the youth from unemployable to employable in both government and private sectors at national and international levels. But the most important thing for an individual is to search for jobs regularly in newspapers, different job related web portals and the websites of the organisations where he wants to work. For different posts, organizations and locations CV should be prepared accordingly with all required information highlighting their skills and experience. Uploading the updated CV on the job related websites works well. Recruitment consultants, agents or recruiters interested in such potential candidates shortlist their CVs and call them for interview and further process of employment in India and abroad.

Conflicts of Interest: “The author declares no conflict of interest.” It was not funded by any agency.

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