

Mastering English and Soft Skills: A Journey from Campus to Corporate

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Abstract

English helps people communicate with the world. An ability to communicate in English is extremely essential in the professional career. Soft skills are the skills which directly help job aspirants to get desired jobs. They are acquired and developed. Employers value soft skills more than technical skills while recruiting the freshers. Soft skills are the desirable traits of a person's personality. There are many soft skills but to name just a few important ones are like: interpersonal skills, ability to work in a team and team management, problem solving skills, analytical thinking, positive body language, creativity, capacity to think logically, strong professional or work ethics and communication skills. Though English is a second language for many people, it can be acquired and mastered through consistent practice and dedication. Speaking English in acceptable pronunciation, possessing vocabulary, clarity of thought, speech and expression are key requirements to master English and to become effective communicator as well. Acquiring soft skills is difficult but one can acquire them through conscious efforts and consistent practice. They help graduates get jobs and feel comfortable and confident in the professional scenario. They are essential qualities for students, teachers, professionals and everyone who wishes to succeed in his or her professional career. For freshers, soft skills help to start a smooth journey from campus to corporate. Nowadays, recruiting firms emphasize more on soft skills than core skills. As the modern workplace is interpersonal, customers also demand soft skills from professionals. It can be said that the future workplace will fully rely on effective communication skills and soft skills. The research paper is an attempt to prepare the list of need-based communication skills and soft skills and provide guidelines on how to acquire them. This can help graduates to take a smooth journey from campus to corporate and succeed in their career. The paper is an attempt to highlight the essential aspects of English and soft skills. It is also an attempt to formulate and provide various useful strategies and ways through which freshers can learn and master English and soft skills.

Keywords: English, communication skills, soft skills, campus to corporate

Introduction:

All of us know the significance of English as it is a target language for many of us to learn and master. The paper does not intend to discuss the politics about English language. People have differences of opinions about English, and it cannot be discussed as it leads to debate and criticism. Since English is considered the language of the globe and corporate as well, it becomes necessary to understand that it helps the youth to communicate with the world and get respect and value in the corporate workplace. In the similar context, it should also be understood that only knowing and interacting in English is not sufficient as it should be accompanied with positive personality and appropriate mindset and attitude and that is why freshers have to master both English and Soft Skills to be employed and feel confident in the contemporary challenging as well as competitive workplace.

The professional or the corporate sector demands its employees to communicate and work professionally. It requires employees to manage people, stakeholders, and customers and service-related relations in a successful manner. Therefore, effective communication plays a significant role. In the same context, professional and corporate sector also demands that its employees must be a good at people or life skills. Soft skills or life skills are also considered the power skills in the present scenario.

The study at a glance

It has been observed that employers are keen during recruiting freshers and graduates for new positions. Multinational companies and even government sectors recruit freshers on the basis of their performance in written as well as spoken examinations. Companies like TCS, Infosys, Accenture and Cognizant expect their employees to be good at English and soft skills. They should possess basic skills and be able to communicate in English effectively. They not only expect their employees to be comfortable in English and communication skills but they should also possess soft skills. Nowadays, soft skills are given more significance than technical skills and that is why mastering

English and soft skills has become an essential part of life. While discussing these basic requirements, it becomes necessary to prepare a list of major aspects to master these areas and they have been discussed in detail.

Language skills

It is true that everyone desires to learn and master English. To become fluent in English, it is necessary to master language skills. Language skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing. Thinking skill can also be added as one of the language skills as all the four language skills are fully dependent on the way a person thinks. Thinking process needs a language and this process becomes a directional force to master our language skills. Thinking skill can be developed and mastered through logical development and directional and sequential pondering about one issue or idea at a time.

Listening

Nature has gifted human beings with one tongue and two ears and it is the obvious reason that human beings should listen more. Listening is a skill of comprehension. A listener understands the world through listening to people. It is considered a passive skill but it is certainly not a passive process. Listening involves a lot of attention and care. A listener has to hear the message carefully, understand the content, interpret it and analyse it. The entire process needs active involvement on the part of the listener. Therefore, if the real nature of the listening process is understood, it helps a listener to learn different things, gain information and knowledge, learn different items of vocabulary and different aspects of knowledge and the universe. Listening is a significant activity which helps a listener in the process of becoming an effective communicator. It is necessary to desire to become not only a communicator but our target should be to become an effective communicator. Therefore, listening plays a significant role in the life of fresher and graduate to become an effective communicator and succeed in life and career.

Speaking

Speaking is a natural gift available to human beings. Speaking is not only a skill but also an art. It can be developed, improved and mastered. It requires a human being to be fully involved in the process of communication. It is the skill of expression and requires active involvement of both the speaker and the listener to complete the communication process. Many speakers take this skill for granted and as a result they fail to become successful and effective communicators.

Reading

Reading is considered a passive activity. Recent literary theories have also proved that reading is an extremely significant activity and it is the readers who actually provide meaning and value to a literary text or any pieces of writing. Reading process involves many aspects and it is surely an active process as it requires a reader to be fully involved and engaged. A reader has to understand the content, make meaning out of words, think about various aspects involved in the meaning making process and then finally interpret and analyse the reading content. Reading helps a person to become complete in many ways. Not only literature but any kind of reading material is compilation of many ideas, thoughts, innovations and experiences and therefore, it helps a person learn through other people's experiences. It can be said that a single person's own experiences in life are not sufficient for the person to live life smoothly and successfully. Therefore, reading has a tremendous significance in a person's life and career. Freshers and graduates should make reading an integral part of their day-to-day life and career as it helps them succeed in their life and career.

Writing

Human beings are the only living animals having developed and mastered the skill of writing. They can express themselves through writing as it is a skill of expression. Modern day living of freshers and graduates demands that they should express more in day-to-day communication. They should not only express through speaking to people but they should also express themselves through writing. Writing

has received a strong prominence in many competitive examinations as well. It is unfortunate that learners and graduates of today do not tend to write unless it is made mandatory for them. They tend to neglect writing as writing involves a complete engagement and attention.

It is necessary to understand the fact that writing skill can be developed. Mastering writing skill is possible but we need to first develop our liking and interest for writing. The activities like writing short passages, essays, short stories and writing blogs can be extremely useful in the process of developing our interest in writing process. It needs logical thinking, rigorous process of editing and reading and writing again and then finally, it provides the writer a lot satisfaction as he or she has become a good and productive writer.

Drill on pronunciation in English

Pronunciation is a key factor in any language. Speaking English in an acceptable manner is necessary in the corporate sector. Knowing the essentials of pronunciation in English is primary as it is the basic requirement. It is also necessary to know how to speak in the public. Clarity of thought is required for clarity of speech and expression. For this, freshers and graduates have to practice speaking in correct and acceptable English. Teachers of English need to provide basic information to freshers and graduates so that they can learn, practice and become confident to speak English fluently.

English for various recruiting firms

Everyone is aware about the qualifying examinations conducted by various Information Technology and other production companies. Multinational companies like Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Cognizant, Accenture and others recruit freshers on the basis of their performance in qualifying examinations. Candidates are expected to possess knowledge about various topics like tenses, parts of speech, phrasal verbs, synonyms, antonyms, confusing words, paragraph writing and reading comprehension. That is why freshers and graduates should focus on mastering English and soft skills to lead a smooth and successful life and career

Soft skills or power skills

Soft skills should be taught from the 8th standard and they should be market-driven skills. It is necessary that a student must have at least three employability skills once he or she receives higher secondary education. Knowing and mastering English is obviously essential for career development but it needs to be combined with soft skills. Soft skills are desirable personality traits. Employers expect that their employees should possess soft skills as they help them to communicate effectively and achieve more in their professional career. Essential soft skills for job and professional career are like effective communication skills, creativity, teamwork, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, flexibility or adaptability and time management.

Communication skills

Communication skills are considered to be the most significant skills as they directly help freshers and graduates to communicate with the universe. Verbal communication is an ability to speak concisely and clearly. It is the ability to make use of words. It is essential to speak English fluently. Many people take fluency to mean speaking fast. Fluency means using the right word at the right time and in the right place. Non-verbal communication consists of body language, facial expressions, hand movements and eye contact. These aspects of non-verbal communication carry signs which are extremely meaningful and therefore, non-verbal communication is considered highly significant in the field of effective communication.

Teamwork

Today's working style has changed tremendously and it requires people to work together as a team. Working in a team is essential as it helps to achieve a bigger target not only for the firm but it is also helpful for the growth of an individual. It is proved that individuals can achieve more in group than working individually. Freshers and graduates need to understand that being introvert is harmful to their career development and therefore, it becomes necessary to change our mindset and mix with people and learn from one another.

Leadership skills

It is a well-known fact that leader is not born but made. Obviously, any person can become a leader. It requires a person to take initiative to work and manage people in the right direction. It is the willingness to help and lead people from the front. It is the ability to work in a team and still lead a group. Major and most essential skill to become a leader is an ability to communicate effectively. Effective speakers can convince the team members easily and they also possess the ability to manage groups and group behaviour. A leader needs to be dynamic and powerful. Corporate and professional sectors need people who can lead teams and therefore, leadership skills can be developed during college days. Freshers and graduates can focus on participating in various co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and programs and manage events at their college level. Their active involvement in such programs helps them become good and effective leaders.

Interpersonal skills

This is one of the major soft skills. It requires people to interact with different kinds of people and groups. It is necessary to create professional relationships at the workplace and therefore, the ability to communicate and develop rapport with people becomes an integral part in day-to-day communication, life and career.

Nowadays, the corporate world demands that freshers should be social and possess certain social skills. They prefer to recruit the candidates who possess positive and constructive attitude toward society. There are different types of people at the workplace and it is highly challenging to work with people from various backgrounds. Therefore, our ability to handle and manage people plays a crucial role. In the workplace, it is required to be open to people's appreciation as well as criticism. We need to accept criticism in a positive sense and therefore, an ability to manage various types of people also plays a significant role in the corporate world.

Flexibility or adaptability

It is necessary for freshers and graduates to be open-minded and ready to accept the change in the workplace. Rigidity and arrogance do not help employees in the long run and they cannot survive. It also becomes necessary to create a healthy environment at the workplace. This is the world of information technology, artificial intelligence and machine learning. Because of the changes in the fields of information and technology, there have been many changes not only in private sector workplaces but in government sectors as well. Multinational sectors expect their employees to be flexible, adaptive and ready to accept the changes. Therefore, freshers and graduates need to develop their flexible mindset and prepare themselves for such an open and healthy environment.

Practice sessions

Human beings are social beings and they communicate with one another. They need a language to interact and express themselves with one another. Talking with learned people helps people sharpen their memory. It also helps us to develop insights about research and general awareness about the universe around us. Information sharing has become a significant aspect and therefore, we need to communicate more with people. We need to discuss more and write more to become an expert and effective communicator.

It is extremely essential to provide practice sessions and practice activities like group discussion, role play, short talk, making a short presentation, extempore and impromptu speech. These activities help learners to improve their logical understanding of various topics of discussion and gradually they become presentable. It is necessary to discuss these activities in detail as they are essential to learn and improve English of learners and help them in their journey from campus to corporate or professional career.

Conclusion

Mastering English and soft skills is a necessary step to be successful at the workplace. The contemporary workplace requires its employees to be efficient, smart, dynamic and an effective communicator as well. Multinational sectors expect people to be competitive as well as sensible toward the society. Therefore, knowing English and using soft skills helps freshers and graduates to face the contemporary competitive workplace in a successful manner. This paper discusses the significance of English and soft skills in the life of freshers and graduates and how improving these skills can help them to get good jobs and face the challenges in the outside world more effectively. The basics of English and using soft skills like creativity, communication skills, effective interpersonal communication, leadership skills, team management, flexibility and negotiation skills are highly in demand in the corporate as well as government sectors.

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