

English Communication Skills at Different Workplaces: Bangladesh Perspective

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Keywords:

English language,
Communication
skills,
Different
workplaces,
Importance

Abstract: With the progression of time, as a result of colonization in the sub-continent and the effect of globalization, English language has become an inseparable part of our Bengali-speaking environment. Because of its rising need and demand English is widely used almost every sector such as science, technology, business, commerce, finance, aviation, navigation, agriculture, education, health sector and so on in Bangladesh. The study was designed to highlight the importance of English language in different sectors specially in banking, garments, industry, higher education and health care sector. The paper also throws light on how these sectors are benefitted, attaining progress by adopting English as their means of communication. Data were collected from 58 respondents who are related with banking, trading, education and health care sectors as employers or employees through questionnaire and online interview with 10 of them. The findings indicate that the importance of English language abilities for communication in the workplace has increased, and participants have repeated the significance of English as an important component during interviews in the selection process. Furthermore, it has been discovered that inadequate English communication abilities might hinder one's efforts to increase the productivity of the organizations and also to get a better job. The data also show that in university education, the combination of language skills professionals require for optimum functioning in the workplace was underestimated.

Introduction

Despite the fact that English was initially thought to be the language of the British, but currently English is not only the language of the United Kingdom, it is also the language learned and used by the highest number of individuals worldwide, and it has been recognized as a second and/or foreign language across the world. It is used as a first language by around 375 million people and as a second language by more than 750 million people. Furthermore, English has got the official status in around 70 nations. By looking at these data, it's easy to see why English is such an essential worldwide language. Due to the globalization the world has become a compacted space where everyone need to share, communicate, interact, exchange information, idea as well as product with each other and expand their business to achieve financial growth stability. Language, as a means of communication, enables culturally diverse communities or individuals all over the world to communicate on a number of disciplines. Hence, a common language is required to meet the demand and here English language is considered the Lingua Franca. Standard English does not only refer to the capacity to construct grammatically accurate sentences, but also to other associated abilities for effective communication such as presenting skills, persuasion and negotiating skills, and interpersonal skills that covering listening, reading, speaking and writing in English. Because of the worldwide market, English

language needs are anticipated to rise year after year, and employees who lack appropriate English language abilities may find it difficult to advance professionally.

Bangladesh is a monolingual environment on the facts that the nation is not heterogeneous rather linguistically and culturally it is homogenous. Bengali is the constitutionally national--official language of Bangladesh, as well as the medium of instruction and education in all fields at all levels, with the exception of a few, such as medical, information technological, business and education at the undergraduate and post- graduate level. In such circumstances non-native speakers face difficulties while effectively communicating in English. In this interconnected globalized world, it has become very necessary for understanding and being able to share, collaborate, communicate, with others. In the context of Bangladesh though, people have knowledge of English language, understand meaning more or less but they can't effectively implement it in their real life's context thus, the development and productivity of the organizations is hampered. The English language opens the door for many opportunities in today's world. In the job sector office means team work and collaboration, employees have to interact with colleagues even during the interview and selection process, the fluent and confident speaker having high qualifications and experiences, grab the attention of the employers. Official documents, endorsements, presentations, prescriptions, mails, online banking all are presented in English language. Here, reading documents is important as well as writing official letters and mails. Thus, listening to the foreign clients and comprehending their messages is also very essential. Therefore, both employers and employees are in need of knowing and understanding English language to give and follow the instructions, to deal and negotiate with buyers and clients to enhance the productivity of the company. In the cultural setting of Bangladesh, it was thought that utilizing English in the workplace wasn't really that much relevant. We can do business and work in the garment industry, fashion sector, banks, and production houses, even teaching up to undergraduate level having basic knowledge of English. But with the passage of time where globalization is emerging and the boundaries are breaking between nations, the global market and business has expanded its arena for economic progress. Thus, people of this country have realized the importance of English along with local language for sustaining development.

Research Questions

- (a) How important is English language proficiency to find a good job?
- (b) Which English language skills are considered important by the employees to enhance their performance at workplace?
- (c) Which English language skills are considered important by the employers to enhance the productivity of their company?

Literature Review

Crystal (2003) states, "Since roughly one out of every four users of English in the world are a native speaker of the language, most of the interactions take place among non-native speakers of English."

According to Firth (1996: 240), "English may be a contact language between people that share neither a standard native tongue nor a standard culture, and for whom English is that the chosen foreign language of communication". Sneddon (2003) says, "As a worldwide language, it's obvious that English plays a crucial role in international interaction. International interaction includes economic relationship among countries, international business relationship, global trading and others". English is employed as interlanguage in these international interactions.

According to a British Council report (Elizabeth J. Erling) 2014, English skills are extremely rewarded within the market. It also emphasizes that skills in English have a constructive impact on economic growth. Another report by the Economist (2013: 3) presents those English skills will augment the efficiency of employees in sectors like business process outsourcing and hospitality.

Chew (2005) stated that the employees' interest in receiving language training is somewhat stronger for speaking skills than writing skills. For speaking skills, they're curious about receiving training in presentation skills, oral English for daily use and social interaction, negotiation skills and business conversations. For writing skills, the workers have an interest in learning to write down reports, business letters, minutes, and bank documents. She also found several reasons for the bank employees' stronger interest in speaking skills the primary reason is that new bank staff could also be curious about receiving supplementary oral English training. The second reason is that they need limited opportunities and wish to speak in English with their colleagues. Hence, think or improving their English, they have a tendency to consider getting longer and opportunity to speak in English, something that they rarely do outside the classroom setting. The third reason is duration. it's going to seem that faster results are often obtained in speaking than in writing, and learners may choose the immediate gratification of seeing more rapid leads to a shorter training period over working accordingly to form more moderate improvement in writing skills over a extended training period.

Considering the importance of English for business, Bathia and Bremner (2012) developed EBP (English for Business Purpose) Program. The syllabus of EBP program provide (1) intensive course that might be helpful to the scholars in their working lives, (2) a communicative course on which students could adapt their current general English knowledge to be used in business situations, (3) a course that took into consideration cultural issues when communicating with foreign businesspeople, and (4) realistic (authentic) samples of language. Dudley –Evans and St John (1998) argue that, "in the 1950 and 1960 development within the international economy like the expansion of science and technology, the increased use of English because the international language of science, technology and business, the increased economic power of certain oil-rich countries and therefore the number of scholars studying abroad led to the complete development of the ESP movement"

According to, (Mohammadzadeh, Barati, & Fatemi: 2015). Bank employees will get to know English if they need to enhance their products and compete with other banks. so as to stay their knowledge of banking profession up so far, bank employees should study the recent books and magazines about financial trading. Nowadays, banks are evolving toward a web banking and electronic environment, which necessitates understanding English. an identical study was conducted in Taiwan, and therefore the results suggest that, despite the very fact that English isn't the first mode of speech in their everyday workplace, employees within the financial business require English so as to enhance their performance.

English at Work: global analysis of language skills within the workplace (2016) survey results reveal that English skills are important for over 95% of employers in many non-native English-speaking countries. there's a plethora of English requirements in countries where English isn't a native or official language, with 7% of job tasks requiring native-level English, 49% requiring advanced English, 33% requiring intermediate English and eight requiring Basic English. The results found that in every industry, there's a niche between English language skills required and therefore the skills that are literally available. Amusingly, there's no difference between large, medium-sized and little employers. Across all company sizes there's a minimum of 40% skills gap. The findings are founded on data from 5,373 employers in 38 countries that completed the annual QS Global Employer Survey.

A study by Kankaanranta and Lu (2013) reveals that limited vocabulary may be a challenge for the Chinese to elucidate messages clearly in BELF (Business English as a Lingua Franca) settings. Raupach (1984) cited in Schmidt (1992, p. 378) argues that fluency heavily depends on stored chunks which may provide an enriching vocabulary which will be drawn on.

Another study by Roshid and Chowdhury about English proficiency and employment tried to reveal the impact of mastering English by Bangladeshi immigrants upon their employment within the Australian job market; during this study they showed participants of the interview insistence on the

important role of English proficiency on their chances at the Australian job market to an extent that six of them gave this importance (90%) from the entire importance of all criteria needed to possess jobs (Chowdhury, 2013, p.68).

Methodology

The data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected in the form of questionnaire with close-ended item which was sent to the respondents through Google form. According to Vaus (1992), survey is a prominent research approach for gathering data in the field of language education research, with the questionnaire being the most prevalent survey tool. Employees and proprietors having at least two to three years of experience at their work surface, were e-mailed the questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises 10 close-ended items built on a five-point Likert Scale (1932) having five options: agree, strongly agree, disagree, indecisive, strongly disagree. Overall, 38 employees responded to the questionnaire and ten of them were interviewed over WhatsApp video call. Then the data was entered in the computer for analysis which are shown here. Moreover, majority of the respondents were from garments industry and banking sectors. For secondary data, the researches have gone through a good number of journals, articles, web content, research report and many more.

A total of 58 respondents who are currently working as employee and employer in different garments industry, finance sector, education sector (teaching), health sector (medical practitioner) was chosen randomly, at least 3 respondents from each. The investigation's participants are all Bengali speakers working at different sector in Bangladesh.

Upon an explanation of the study's objective in their mother tongue Bangla, the 58 respondents were given a questionnaire to fill out in order to obtain their opinions on the relevance of English language abilities at their workplace in Bangladesh. The questionnaire had no time limit, although the subjects are expected to complete it within 15-20 minutes.

Data Analysis

Table-1. Participants' responses about their English use

Survey Question	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Indecisive %
I use English while speaking to my colleagues"	18	53	24	0	5
I need to use English at my workplace/office (for negotiation, dealing with customers, presentation, explanation)	19	77	4	0	0
I use English while communicating with foreigners? (clients, buyers, patients, customers)	59	35	0	0	6
I need to use English frequently in my daily life	12	71	17	0	0
University education system should focus on communication skills required for employability	71	29	0	0	0
Companies/institutions should arrange some training sessions for improving the language skills for specific purposes	33	55	5	2	5
It is important to learn Effective communication skills to perform well at workplace	49	47	2	0	2
English is necessary to increase the productivity of a company	52	41	5	2	0

Q.1: Which of the following skills are the most important in your workplace?

Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing	Reading & Writing
25	8	20	30	17

Q.2: What is your area of weakness?

Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
52	24	5	19

Q.3: Do you face difficulties sometimes for lack of language proficiency at your workplace?

Yes	No	Sometimes
29	18	53

Discussion

This study examines how English communication skills are utilized in the daily lives of persons working in different professional (graduate entry) occupations in a range of Bangladeshi garments industries, universities, banks and health care sections in a monolingual context.

Communication Skills

Competent communications, according to David Malon (2012), occur when the maximum quantity of a message is given and comprehended successfully at the lowest cost. Efficient business communications may be as basic as drafting a successful email to ensure that a company activity is appropriately assigned and completed, or as complicated as negotiating a billion-dollar transaction with personnel from various backgrounds. Communication is considered the key to proficient employee performance. Effective communication is at the center of any important procedures and practices as professionals need to successfully exchange and convey information that helps to operate a successful organization or institution. Efficient communication plays a crucial role in improving the performance and efficiency of employees in any given organization. Due to its' world-wide demand and acceptance English language is used as a lingua franca (a vehicle of communication) as it is used mostly almost in every sector such as navigation, aviation, education, garments industry, agriculture, health sector, business, banking, finance and so on

Verbal Communication: Sending or conveying information to another party, customer, or individual directly over a distance through words is referred to as verbal communication. Video conferences, online interviews, live Skype sessions, phone chats, and other forms of communication are all examples of this. As a result, employees' speaking and listening abilities must be improved.

Non-verbal communication: It includes one person's written information to be communicated with another party on a digital or non-digital media. This type of communication can take many different forms, extending from older written methods like a formal letter (on paper) to more modern ones like a written email, a cloud (shared) document, a messaging app transmission, and so on. It is one of the most important aspects of the digital era.

Non-verbal communication also includes facial expressions, tone of voice (pitch, stress, intonation), and body language. Such non-verbal communicating processes can serve to offer context inside any discussion, which must be understood in order to effectively deliver/get essential instructions.

In Person: While verbal communication usually entails conversing with a recipient through the use of an electronic medium, face-to-face interaction (One to one) is still an effective method of exchanging information and transmitting vital facts to the appropriate person, as well as providing feedback, instructions, and suggestions. As a result, speaking abilities are crucial in this aspect.

Ineffective communication at workplace can lead to bad decisions, missed deadlines, substantial drops in production, employee friction, and failure to meet organizational goals. Many companies

recognize the significance of good communication and make efforts to teach their employees to do so, to improve their performance in the workplace.

Garments Industries

Garments- Bangladesh's garment industry is the country's most important commercial sector, and Bangladesh is the world's second-largest exporter of garments (Islam, 2012). A competitive business market requires strong communication skills in the workplace in a rapidly changing global economy (Locker & Kaczmarek, 2009; Stevens, 2005). In an international corporate setting, communication skills are very important. Victor (1992) believes that having average technical capabilities but great international business communication skills is probably preferable to having good technical skills yet weak international business communication skills. Communication skills are required for a corporate organization to fulfill its objectives. Employees must continuously connect with overseas buyers in order to convince them to engage with their firm and invest in it. They must regularly negotiate with them through verbal and nonverbal communication in English. A lack of strong communication skills acts as a barrier to boosting company's productivity. This deficiency can harm long-term successful rapport in developing organizational connections amongst professionals.

Health Care Sector

Former care minister of England, Norman Lamb said "For people to get the care they want they need to be able to communicate with their care workers. Employers are responsible for recruiting staff that can competently speak and read English but communication will be a key part of the new Care Certificate." Health Care Workers who do not speak English as their first language and work in the medical services must improve their communication skills and expertise. Workers need to improve their functional knowledge of medical vocabulary, various drugs and equipment, words used by service users, and rules and procedures utilized in the care setting which all are described in English language. Furthermore, all medical students across the world study the same medical texts printed in English for their foundation or elementary. Fundamental English language courses are required at medical colleges all around the world as part of their medical curriculum. All-important medical publications, periodicals, papers, journals and research are written in English. When physicians and other health care providers go to other countries for further studies, degrees, or extra training, they are obliged to take an English test such as IELTS or TOFEL. As a result, it is apparent that English is also crucial in this area.

Higher Education

English is highly necessary for higher education since it allows us to learn the most information about any subject. Today, the majority of publishing houses solely publish books in English for students pursuing higher education. Aside from school, numerous competitive examinations emphasize the relevance of English. The linguistic competency of a candidate is tested by these examinations. They evaluate communications skills, vocabulary, and pronunciation. As a result, one may summarize why English is crucial for higher education in the following points. The United Nations Organization (UN) has designated English as an official language as it is the widely spoken language all over the world. We would not have witnessed development if English had not been present. English is very essential in Bangladesh's educational system as Bangladesh Government approved English as a compulsory subject from primary to tertiary level of education and taking all necessary steps to produce competent learner including introducing CLT approach in the national curriculum. Thus, it is critical for every student to understand this since without it, it would be impossible to study at a higher level.

Banking and Finance sector

In an increasingly interconnected world banking and financial industries, from various nations must communicate often enough and English has become the vehicle of communication. Networking, building professional relationship and working in the financial sectors demand professional and confident English communication skills. Employees in today's banks and financial institutions must compete fiercely and go through a rigorous interview procedure. Those who are comfortable using English language to convey themselves have a better chance of being chosen. Salameh and Olfat (2015) discovered a pressing demand for English in dealing with international clients, comprehending new electronic administration standards, dealing with documents and endorsements, and obtaining foreign experience in developing banks'

Monolingual countries, such as Bangladesh, have had tremendous difficulties in adopting English, which is in high demand and serves as a corporate lingua franca. In the fast paced, money-making globalized world of finance and banking it is important to have English skills for international banking, online banking, capital market, structured finance, operating computing, dealing with documents, endorsements, exchanging mails and so on. Here, reading documents is important as well as writing official letters and mails. Thus, listening to the foreign clients, comprehend their messages, convince them for investment in your bank is also very essential to enhance the productivity of the organizations.

The survey results show that all of the participants utilize English while chatting to their colleagues: 18% strongly agree, 53% agree, 24% disagree, and 5% indecisive. This result indicates that the participants utilize English with their coworkers to a greater or lesser extent, and that English is therefore employed in the workplace to communicate with one another. 77% respondents strongly agree, 19% agree that they need to use English in their workplace for giving presentation, dealing, negotiating with clients, explanation and conversation and only 4% disagree.

According to the survey, 59% of respondents strongly agree that they use English extensively to connect with foreigners, while 35% agree to use it somewhat. In other words, 94% of the subjects are identified to communicate with overseas individuals in English. This conclusion might be due to the fact that the respondents' jobs now require them to communicate with people from other countries.

The survey result presents the finding that 71% of respondents agree the need to use English in their everyday lives, 12% strongly agree, while 17% have no such need. To put it another way, 83% of subjects are required to utilize English in their daily lives.

According to the survey, 49% strongly agree and 47 % subjects agree that it is very important in the world of globalization to learn English to perform well in the workplace whereas 2% disagree and 2% subjects are indecisive. According to a report published by QS and Cambridge English, the great majority of companies in Ukraine 83 %, China, 80%, and Iraq, 79% provide additional advantages to employees with communicative competence.

33% of participants strongly agreed and 55% agree that English language training session should be arranged by the organizations to improve language skills of the employees. And only 5% respondents disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed on this point.

According to the study results, writing is the most essential skill among all of them at work in Bangladesh, and more than half of the respondents admit that speaking English is their shortcoming. They also bring up the fact that they lack vocabulary and have difficulty with grammatical rules, notably dealing with tenses. This finding demonstrates that both verbal and non-verbal communication is important in the job sector. Meetings, speeches, presentation, conversation and other forms of oral communication require to connect with people, provide and share information and ideas.

Conclusion

This research was carried out in order to comprehend the significance of English language abilities necessary for individuals working in various industries to undertake responsibilities at work for the development in the respective field. According to the study's findings, employees believe that English language abilities are needed for acquiring a good job and efficiently carrying out their obligations. They also admit that in the fear and anxiety of having accuracy they fail to practice their speaking skills at their workplace. Regardless of the high qualification and experience that employee possesses, he or she must have language skills in order to successfully interact with others via emails, during group discussions, presentations, giving treatment to foreign patients, dealing with international buyers, clients and so on. Furthermore, respondents stress the need of providing language training program, once they join at their workplace. As the general English course is inadequate to satisfy the specific needs of individuals. Each subject has its own vocabulary, terminology which should be taught and practiced on the priority basis.

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