

The Role of English Language Skills in Career Growth: A Study of Perceptions and Strategies Used to Improve English Language Skills by Graduate and Undergraduate Students of Karachi, Pakistan

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Abstract

The English language has a major impact on our companies and workplaces. Regardless of geographical, social, political, or religious divisions, English has become the lingua franca of the international corporate world. The purpose of this research study was to explore the role of English language skills in the career growth of a person and understand the perceptions of graduate and undergraduate students about learning and improving this language. For this purpose, relevant literature was scouted, and based on scholars' points of view; a questionnaire was developed to get the opinions of the students. The data was collected using Google Form, employing a stratified convenience sampling procedure. The analysis shows a positive relationship between English language skills and career growth.

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Introduction

English is an Indo-European language belonging to the West Germanic language group; it is also conventionally spoken, manually written. Using this language, humans express themselves as members of a social group and participate in their society. Modern English is often considered the world's *lingua franca* because of its applications in computer programming, international business, and higher education. Furthermore, English is the international language of communication in all disciplines, including politics, sciences, the media, and art, and it is widely used for entertainment and social interaction.

The third world countries, particularly our country, are undergoing a third revolution, known as the communication revolution. This language has a major impact on our companies and workplaces. Regardless of geographical, social, political, or religious divisions, English has become the *lingua franca* of the

international corporate world. It has been declared as one of the six official languages of the United Nations. People cannot get jobs if they are industry specialists, but weak in communication abilities using English. In today's world English is the most complement-specific skill. It is impossible not to focus on the development of English communication skills.

Our primary means of communication is language. It is the means by which we communicate our ideas, feelings, opinions, and thoughts to others. Language distinguishes us from animals and gives us human characteristics. There are dozens of languages spoken around the globe. Each country has its own national language, as well as a variety of regional languages spoken and understood by its citizens. Some languages have millions of speakers, while others have only a few thousand. The importance of English in today's

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global world cannot be rejected or disregarded because it is the most widely spoken language on the planet. With the help of increasing technology, English has been playing the main role.

English was originally the language of England, but thanks to the British Empire's historical efforts, it has become the principal or secondary language of a number of former British colonies, including the United States, Canada, Australia, Sri Lanka, and India, among others. English is now the primary language of numerous countries actively influenced by the British empire, as well as many business and cultural areas governed by those nations. To put it another way, many individuals can speak and comprehend English even outside of countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. It's Hollywood's language as well as the language of international banking and business. As a result, knowing it is a helpful and even vital skill. English is spoken by around 1 billion people globally, with 67 nations having English as their official language and 27 countries having English as their second official language.

According to a study by (Alfitri 2012), more than 80% of websites on the internet use English as the primary language, while 20% use other languages such as Indonesian, Chinese, and other languages. It means that if people do not learn English as a second language, they will only absorb about 20% of new knowledge because new knowledge is now largely transmitted via the internet. According to Mujiyanto et al. (2010), culture is the product of human attempts to sustain life, lineage, and wealth; thus, culture may be described as the realization of human endeavour against difficulties in the course of their adaptation to the surroundings. It means that environmental changes can have an impact on human culture; as cultural atmospheres change, so will human culture. According to Mujiyanto et al. (2010), culture as civilization is split into two categories: high culture and low culture. When individuals read a lot, write a lot, devote themselves to knowledge development, recognize their health value, and so on, society is deemed highly cultured. Sneddon (2003) writes English, as a global language, is

unquestionably crucial in worldwide communication. The economic relationship between countries, international commercial relationships, and global exchanges are all examples of international interactions. English is mostly used as a worldwide lingua franca in this type of international connection. Lingua franca is a common language used to communicate among individuals from many countries.

English is the most commonly used language in the corporate world. All corporate organizations communicate in English on a regular basis. The majority of their worldwide business correspondence is written in English, including emails, corporate documents, faxes, phone calls, video, well-read and popular business resources in print and electronic media, and other social media. Good English ability and fluency, both in spoken and written forms, are essential in many facets of corporate life, from obtaining work in these businesses to engaging with clients and establishing long-term business relationships around the world. English is widely used as a medium of communication in most government offices and organizations, technical firms, and even research facilities. According to Graddol (1997), "about 80% of people utilize English when in Europe." It is employed not only in Europe but also in a global industry that is governed by the World Trade Organization (WTO)." Most corporate firms nowadays recruit personnel who are fluent in English and have outstanding communication skills since these talents will be extremely beneficial to the organization's future success. They feel that professionals with strong communication skills can effectively represent their firms at international conferences, seminars, workshops, and other business gatherings. Furthermore, they hire people with excellent presenting skills, as these qualities are extremely beneficial to the success of their organizations. Furthermore, firms can expand their company internationally by using a common language, English, which is spoken by people all over the world, and English proficiency is critical to an individual's success in today's highly competitive corporate world. It is true that

much of the English conversation in business circles throughout the world take place amongst non-native speakers. Even corporate companies are selecting candidates based on their performance in both spoken and written skills, and it has become mandatory to have more proficiency in these skills because they believe that both oral and written communication skills aid them in business communication such as sales and marketing, emails, presentations, and even these days corporate legal documentation. The primary purpose of English in business is to communicate and establish an agreement. As a result, a variety of skills, such as delivering presentations, writing letters in English, giving small talk, or negotiating, are required in business-oriented English vocabulary, and these skills have become not only a prerequisite of modern-day international cooperation but also an important key to international business. For executives and teams meeting online and in-person all around the world, English has practically become the de facto language. For example, if a Chinese representative wants to meet with a Japanese General Manager for Sales, they can use their common lan. It is quite difficult for them to keep up with meetings unless they have solid English communication skills, and it is even more difficult for them to get decent career chances.

Because English is spoken in practically every country on the planet, it has become the language of opportunities. There is no way to get a job in the current international job market without having English language speaking skills. Learning a commonly used foreign language in addition to the job seeker's local language will help them obtain employment with multinational or multinational commercial organizations or corporations. The ability to communicate successfully in English is essential for success in today's job market. The majority of employers prefer to hire staff based on their spoken communication skills. Furthermore, those who have excellent communication skills with multinational corporations will have an advantage in landing decent jobs all around the world. Because these multinational

corporations want to do business with all foreign corporations, they need staff who can effectively communicate their message orally and in writing. Because the basic concept of selling a product is inspiring or persuading other organizations or people, any company organization's management seeks out individuals who can provide or sell their goods while also demonstrating their aptitude or skill in persuading customers, consumers, and clients. Almost all students nowadays succeed in achieving excellent results in university tests, yet the majority of them lag behind in their English communication skills. Candidates who improve their communication and presentation abilities will be more successful in their job searches. Interviewers are also more confident in hiring candidates with strong communication abilities. They believe that employees who excel at oral and written communication will advance their companies and play a crucial role in their long-term success. Because English is the international language for maintaining relationships with all companies throughout the world, it is imperative that all job seekers improve their English communication abilities. Despite the fact that Mandarin is the world's most widely spoken language, Chinese citizens are now learning English in order to expand their businesses. Even in the medical area, there is a need to learn English communication skills because doctors may need to seek guidance from experts from other countries or regions when performing a major procedure. Alternatively, medical reps may require these abilities in order to promote their company's business. Researchers in the fields of science, education, engineering and technology, research laboratories, information technology, and other fields should have excellent oral and written communication abilities, as well as outstanding listening and reading skills. It is also necessary to study English in order to obtain work prospects in the tourism industry. As a result, learning English has become a must for finding work anywhere on the planet.

Objective

The main objective of this research study was

to explore the perceptions of undergraduate students about English language skills, i.e., listening, speaking/oral communication, reading, and writing, on the professional life of an individual.

Research Questions

Following were the research questions which provided a guideline for the present research study:

- What are the general perceptions of undergraduate students about English language skills?
- Do they consider it important for future professional growth?
- What do they do to improve their English language skills?

Hypothesis

The following alternative hypothesis was developed in the present research study to check the relation of English language and career growth:

- There is a significant relationship between English language skills and career growth.

Literature Review

Currently, the world is a technological sphere full of challenges, new demands, improved working styles, and high productivity demands. To overcome the rapidly increasing demands of industries, the need for competent professionals is growing day by day. Academic qualification is indeed important for having a job. A college education is, indeed, important; it doesn't guarantee good employment opportunities while the job is the need and passion of an individual. Now employers demand educated and trained professionals to be the part of their organization who can play their dynamic roles in meeting its targets. Only professionally groomed candidates with skills are welcomed in the job industry, while job seekers with less professional aptitude face problems getting jobs and pursuing their successful careers. Of various requirements, one of the most demanding eligibility for prospective

employees is good communication skills. Effective communication has a significant role in grasping good opportunities for employees. According to the findings of Rahman (2012), career success in the current era of globalization is dependent on communication abilities in English, as well as other essential professional skills at work, and it is required by every firm. As English is a *lingua franca*, prospective employees are supposed to demonstrate sound knowledge, understanding, and speaking skills in this language. Over the world nowadays, job seekers are going through disappointments because they cannot demonstrate the best communication power to fulfil the growing demands of industries. Moreover, they are unable to claim good salary packages and other incentives due to these English language skills are lacking (Bleakley & Chin, 2004). High productivity is one of the dire needs of industries; therefore, to achieve organizational goals and objectives, employees need to prepare themselves well (Tainer, 1988). As communication skills are a prerequisite for handsome paying work, only those who are well-versed in English are preferred to contribute to firms, while those who are not good at comprehension and cannot communicate in English are suffering badly. They are left with no option except to take up less paying work that is not enough to satisfy them (Carliner, 2000; Leslie & Lindley, 2001). It is how incompetency in using the English language fluently deprives people of opportunities that could help them earn attractive remuneration. (Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003; Leslie & Lindley, 2001). Previously, it was held that language competency is a must for those who want to be the part of some multinational firms but recently, even local companies open their doors for those who can communicate well in English as technical issues can't be resolved unless a practitioner knows the use of these skills. The language is needed to learn the latest research and knowledge to sort out intelligently. Understanding an issue needs critical thinking, and for this, an individual must have deep knowledge and knowledge that can be enhanced only using English.

It lays the foundation for "process skills," or the problem-solving and critical thinking abilities needed to cope with the rapidly changing global workplace environment, in which English plays an increasingly important role. Because skilled employees can travel from one area to another, from one country to another, and from one region of the world to another because globalization has a significant impact on the labor market. International migration from underdeveloped to developed countries is a common manifestation of "human capital globalization" ([Khadria, 2001](#)). Furthermore, the English language is intrinsically related to globalization.

It's not wrong to say that the English language has a deep impact on working conditions in the current technologically transformed world scenario (Debrah & Smith, 2002). The target language and its impacts are associated with an improved labor market (Orbeta, 2002). Together, there are these two variables that connect people with global networks ([Sassen, 2004](#)). People who came from different linguistic backgrounds, especially immigrants, face problems in communication that not only embarrass them; rather, they can't become part of the global networking system.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Language abilities have been found to increase networking chances, which can improve career mobility by increasing the number of options available. For example, [Rossander et al. \(2005\)](#) discovered that Swedish-speaking Finns keep tight contact socially as well as professionally, implying that a career opportunity is not always about what you know but about the right people understanding what you can do. As a result, language networks can be a great way to get your name out there. Furthermore, [Muukari \(2008\)](#) and [Borenus \(2009\)](#) observed that language abilities could open doors at work that are not typically available to employees, altering one's perception of job success and giving new opportunities for promotion and recognition. Lack of language skills, on the other hand, can put some positions within the company out of reach of the employee's

capabilities or provide another candidate for the position a competitive advantage.

Methodology

A quantitative research approach was adopted in this research study. For data collection, an online google form was generated having close-ended questions to get the point of view of the undergraduate students about English language skills and their impact on their expected future professional life.

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive research design. It's a study that tries to collect measurable data in order to conduct statistical analysis on a population sample. It is a frequently used market research tool that allows us to collect and define demographic category information.

Population

The population of the present research study was undergraduate and graduate students of public and private sector universities in Karachi.

Sampling Technique and Data Collection

A stratified convenience sampling technique was used to collect data from the target groups. For the was divided into graduate and undergraduate of public and private sector universities of Karachi, and the connection to the google form was shared with the students based on their relationship/contact with one another, in the such that the link to the google form was shared with 175 students. One hundred and three (103) responses were received within the allotted period (one month). Males made up 63 percent of the responders, while females made up 37 percent.

Results and Discussion

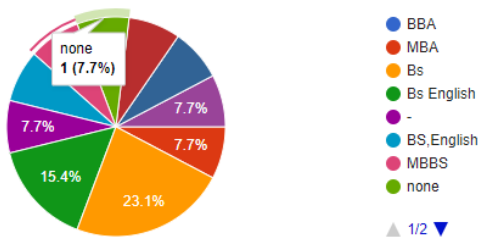
Age of the Respondents

They were of age from 16 years to 23 years

Academic Qualification

The respondents' academic qualification was 36.7% inter while 63.3% undergraduates.

Enrolled for Professional Education



Graph 1

The above pie chart reflects their future academic qualification which they intend to get.

Liking Feeling for the English Language

In response to a question related to the liking feeling of the respondents towards English language learning due to one or the other reasons, only 3.3% showed disliking towards learning of English language while 96.7% showed liking in learning this language. This also indicates that English is a language liked by the majority in Pakistan.

medium of instruction. Again, indicating that majority like to learning.

Importance of English

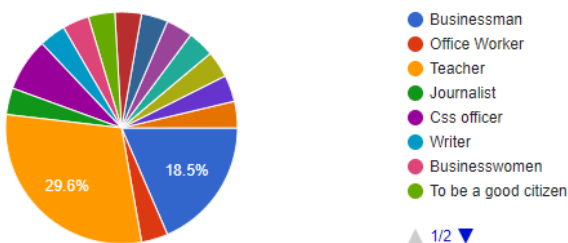
Keeping in view the importance of this language, 89.7% of respondents suggested English should be taught as a compulsory subject.

Past Medium of Study

73.3% of respondents declared that they used to study in English medium schools means used to get education through English as a

Future Profession

In response to the choice of future profession, the respondents' point of view is shown in the chart below:

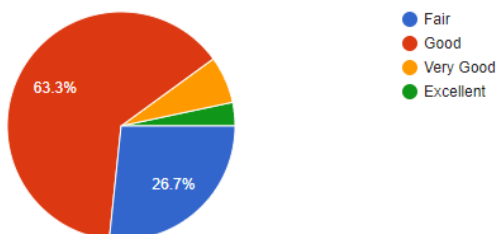


Graph 2

English Language Proficiency

In response to a question related to their level of proficiency in the language, 63.3% feeling themselves at the level good, while 26.7%

were at fair. The responses of the remaining are shown in the chart below:



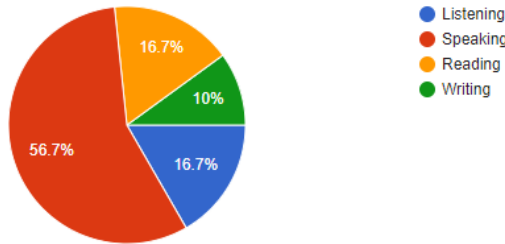
Graph 3

Importance of English Language Skills in Career Growth

83.3% used the option 'Yes', indicating that the language is very important in professional life, while only 13.3% of respondents showed their confusion by selecting the option 'May be'.

Most Important Language Skill

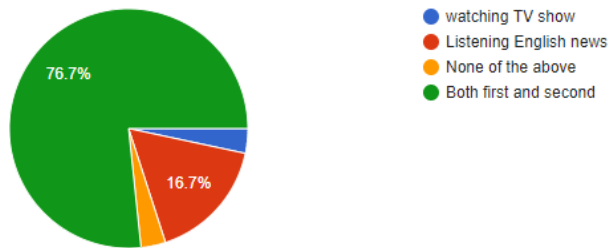
A question related to the most skill required to learning was asked, and the responses show that 56.7% of participants declared speaking skill the most important skill, while the responses about other skills are as under:



Graph 4

Suggestion for Improving the English Language Skills

Listening

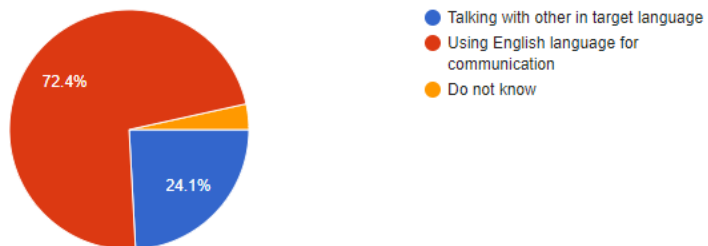


Graph 5

The above chart reflects that the majority (76.7%) of respondents feel that watching English TV shows and listening to English

news support improving their listening skills which are considered the basic skills for learning in the language of the world.

Speaking

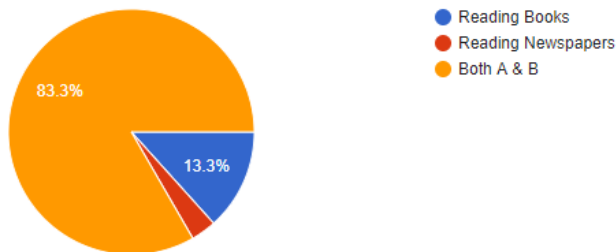


Graph 6

In response to the question related to improving speaking skills, 72% of the respondents were of the opinion that spoken

skills could be improved by using the target language for all types of communication.

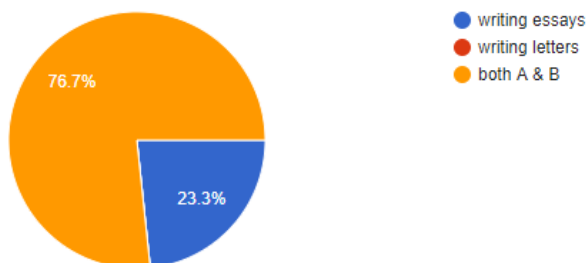
Reading



Graph 7

The respondents were of the opinion that for improving reading skills we need to read the text written in the target language may books or newspaper or text on the internet.

Writing



Graph 8

For improving writing skills, the participants suggested the using of writing letters or essay are supportive.

while 23.3% showed their confusion by choosing the option 'May be'.

English and Personality

In response to a question related to the effects of English on personality, 76.3% of respondents admitted that the English language grooms the personality of a person,

Hypothesis Testing

The responses to a question about the relationship between English language skills and career growth were analyzed using Chi-Square one-tailed test in SPSS. The results are shown in tables 1 & 2 below:

Table 1. English Language Skills and Career Growth

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Strongly Disagree	5	25.8	-20.8
Unsure	19	25.8	-6.8
Agree	20	25.8	-5.8
Strongly Disagree	59	25.8	33.3
Total	103		

Table 2. Test Statistics

English Language Skills and Career Growth	
Chi-Square	62.709 ^a
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Table-2 the significant value, which is less than 0.05, therefore, helping us to accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between English language skills and career growth. Reflect that educational institutes administration, teachers teaching English language and the students need to give due consideration for teaching and learning this language if want to see Pakistanis at the top especially in the international job market.

Conclusions

According to the responses, 97.7% of graduate and undergraduate students in Karachi, Pakistan, like and learn English because they believe it is important for their professional and career growth. The British Council projects (2020), two (2) billion people study English because they believe it will enable

them to communicate globally. 73.3% of participants disclosed that they got their early education in schools imparting education using English as a medium of instruction. This reflects the importance of the English language in Pakistan as even poor people love to send their children to English medium schools, as 89.7% of participants chose that the English language is important for professional growth. While 63.3% of students consider that they are good at the English language and admit that it groom the personality of a person.

In this regard, the administration and teachers teaching English should work wholeheartedly to support the students who wish to improve their English language. The way Pakistani students will be in a position to compete and excel in the national job market in general and international in particular.

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