

ENGLISH FOR EMPLOYABILITY: A STUDY OF ENGLISH AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper has explored the relationship between English language proficiency and employability in the context of tertiary education in Bangladesh. The study investigated the expectations and requirements of employers regarding English graduates and examined whether English courses at the tertiary level adequately prepare students for the job market. Incorporating a qualitative approach and utilizing Amartya Sen's Capability Approach 1980 as a theoretical framework, the study revealed that employers expect English graduates to possess strong communication skills and proficiency in English. This study has identified that English language skills, especially writing, speaking and to some extent, listening skills, are needed for the English graduates in the job sector based on the requirement of the job. The research aims to contribute to understanding the relationship between English proficiency and employability in a Bangladeshi context, benefiting stakeholders such as English graduates, educators, and policymakers in enhancing graduates' readiness for the job market in an increasingly competitive global economy.

Keywords: English proficiency, employability, tertiary education, Bangladesh, language skills

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Introduction

Since its independence in 1971, Bangladesh has been operating as a monolingual country, with English being used primarily as an international link language, and not for interpersonal or inter-institutional communication (Rahman, 2005). As a result, the educational policies favored the mother tongue, Bangla, and this had an effect on the population as the majority had poor English skills. Although English is not the *lingua franca* of Bangladesh, it is still used for different purposes, particularly international communications, so a lack of English proficiency was a cause for concern as it affected the socio-economic growth of the country.

To address this issue, greater emphasis was placed on tertiary-level English education and the University of Dhaka introduced compulsory English courses for a number of programs in the Arts and Humanities disciplines in the 80s. Later, when private universities were established in the country under the Private University Act of 1992, English was the medium of instruction at these institutions, with mandatory basic English Language courses for students of all disciplines. However, in a report created by the Public Service Commission (PSC) for the National Parliament in 1999, nearly a fifth of the candidates appearing for the examination scored a 'zero' in English, showing that the education system was unable to produce minimal proficiency in the English language in the students (Rahman, 2015). As the situation currently stands, Bangladesh has been gradually evolving from an agriculture-based economy to an industry-based one, with the aim of greater assimilation with the global market (World Bank, 2019). Thus, strong communication skills and English language proficiency are vital to this end. In other words, a lack of competence in English will mean that Bangladesh can not effectively participate in the booming global economy (Rahman, 2015).

With this context, this study investigated the expectations or requirements of employers and whether the English courses are sufficiently preparing students for the job sector. More specifically, the study aimed to identify any existing gaps in the required skills of English graduates that employers are looking for. The researchers also attempted to discover whether English courses at the tertiary level in Bangladesh improved competence and proficiency in English among learners and if this linguistic proficiency in English is playing a role in graduate employability. In addition, the researchers attempted to pinpoint and identify any challenges that English graduates face when finding or sustaining employment regarding their English skills. For addressing these concerns, this study was conducted using a qualitative approach for a more detailed picture of the situation. With this aim in mind, this study found the answers to two research questions:

1. What requirements do employers expect from English graduates?
2. To what extent are English graduates prepared for the job market?

Literature Review

Having the focus on graduate employability, the definition of employability comprises “skills, understandings and personal attributes” which benefit the graduates in their occupations, in addition to themselves, the community and the economy (Yorke, 2006). However, Tomlinson (2017) found a complex relationship between graduates having the skills and them being employable. (cited in Zainuddin et al., 2019).

Studies in different Asian contexts such as Malaysia (Manpower Inc. 2008; World Bank, 2014) show a lack of communication skills and a poor command of the English language as one of the major hindrances to the employability of university graduates. Rassool and

Mansoor (2007) identified English as a “prerequisite for employment and promotion” in Pakistani context. In the context of textile and clothing merchandisers in Hong Kong, the importance of written communication in English has been revealed (So-mui & Mead’s, 2000). Thompson (2001) found a lack of “critical skills of listening and speaking” among the entry-level employees in the Chippewa Valley area.

The emergence of English language proficiency in various socioeconomic and cultural aspects in present Bangladesh can be understood through the theory of Linguistic Capital conceptualized by Bourdieu (2000), which indicates towards individuals’ linguistic skills that predetermine their position in society as delegated by powerful institutions. Especially in the socioeconomic aspect, as study shows English language fluency has been considered as human capital (Dustmann, 1999; Dustmann & Fabbr, 2003, cited in Roshid & Chowdhury 2013). On one hand, considering the Bangladeshi job market, Khan & Chaudhury (2012), while studying the perspectives of employers regarding Bangladeshi graduates’ English proficiency, identified the “extensive use of English language”, especially in the private or corporate sector; on the other hand, Rahman (2015) identifies incompetency in English language as ineffective participation in the global economy.

Within the country, employment in any organization looks for proficiency in English. Entry into government jobs requires being selected through a competitive examination where English is a subject, while any non-government office that has dealings outside the national border looks particularly for people with English proficiency. Since the pay structure of such NGO’s is better than other jobs, people are interested to be employed there, and want to learn English. (Qader, 1999, cited in Khan & Chaudhury, 2012)

Therefore, this seems certain that English, nowadays, is not only considered “a gatekeeping mechanism” that ensures access to high-tech information and facilities (David & Govindasamy, 2005), but also “a screening mechanism” for Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) entrance examinations, corporate sectors and global youth opportunities (Khan & Chaudhury, 2012).

Thus, considering the local and global employability, the inclusion of compulsory English education has been implemented at different levels including primary, secondary, higher secondary and tertiary education in Bangladesh. However, studies revealed insufficient proficiency in English among students even after 12-14 years of compulsory English education. For instance, Khan & Chaudhury (2012) found the “dissatisfaction of the employees with the graduates’ English proficiency” due to the ‘below-required standards’. A study by The World Bank (2019) on Graduate Employability of Affiliated Colleges in the Bangladeshi context has shown English Language Skills as one of the major determinants for higher wages in jobs. This showed, “Those who completed their college degree in English receive wages that are on average 25 per cent higher than those who did not”.

Though the misalignment between the requirements of the employers and the linguistic competence of the graduates differ, this does not justify the scenario for putting efforts into ensuring the English language skills of the graduates. Because, besides making English mandatory in school education and tertiary education (in both Public universities and Private universities), several ELT initiatives by different donor agencies including “DfID, CIDA, World Bank, ADB and the Government of Bangladesh (GoB)” have been executed from 1990 till present to ensure English language proficiency of Bangladeshi students (Rahman, 2015). So, looking at the gap between the efforts to ensure required English proficiency and the graduates’

achieved English proficiency, it was thus deduced that “the present system of education has failed to equip today’s Bangladeshi youth with the English competency necessary for employment” (Khan & Chaudhury, 2012). Henceforth, studies like Zainuddin et al. (2019) suggest, “The mismatches between the perceptions of university students and the expectations of employers should be considered when planning both English language courses and degree programmes at universities”.

Despite having a number of studies focusing on the relationship between English and employability, the researchers identified that little attention has been given to the scope of English graduates for employability, especially in a Bangladeshi context. Therefore, considering the current English education and job market situation in Bangladesh, this concerned study focused on addressing the gap between the expected learning outcomes of English graduates and the requirements for employability in different sectors.

Research Methodology

This research project examined the relationship between proficiency in English language skills and employability in the Bangladeshi context. Adopting a qualitative methodology, this study utilized in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) to collect data and insights on participants' perceptions and experiences. Initially, the researchers conducted a secondary data analysis by reviewing the existing literature and identifying the potential research areas. They sourced the secondary literature from the stakeholders in tertiary education such as the English language teachers and academicians in this field and existing online documents. The detailed methodology is presented below:

Participants

The study recruited 13 participants in total, 7 of whom were fourth-year or Master’s students of English at a private university in

Dhaka. The tertiary level students were selected following the simple random sampling strategy to ensure a mixed group of participants; where they might include the variations in their socio-economic background, educational background, household structure, income structure, rural-urban linkage, migration and their stay in Dhaka and other places. To get an overall understanding, this study drew data from two employed alumni of the English Department of the concerned university, two tertiary-level English teachers and two hiring managers from two private organizations (including one corporate and one media house).

Data Collection

Data was collected through in-depth interviews and FGDs (Focus Group Discussions). All interviews and discussions will be conducted in a mix of English and Bengali and audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis, while FGD consisted of 7 participants. The interviews and FGDs were conducted by one or both of the researchers present.

Interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing for flexibility and adaptation to the individual responses of each participant. Open-ended questionnaires were used for collecting data to optimize the advantage of informal conversational interviews and standardized open-ended interview questions. Also, the interviews were conducted in a face-to-face manner to ensure more in-depth data collection and a comprehensive understanding of the collected data. The researchers conducted the FGD in a group format to encourage participants to discuss and share their experiences with each other. Participants were encouraged to share their experiences and opinions on the role of English language skills in employability and whether they feel like their education adequately prepared them for the job

market. The table below summarizes the data collection method, approach, and participants:

	Data Collection Method	Participants	Approach
1.	Focus Group Discussion (FGD) (Semi-structured, open-ended interviews) ≈ 1	4th-year & M.A students from a private university: Male: 3, Female: 4 Total: 7	Qualitative
2.	In-depth Interviews (Semi-structured, open-ended interviews) ≈ 6	Teachers: 2 Hiring personnel: 2 Alumni: 2	Qualitative

Table 1.1: Data Collection Method

Theoretical Framework

The researchers have used Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach (CA) as the lens through which they have analyzed their data findings and upon which they have based their conclusions and recommendations. Sen’s Capability Approach theory (1980) states that a capability approach emphasizing the importance of expanding individuals' freedom and opportunities to achieve well-being should be used instead of focusing on income and wealth to evaluate social and economic inequality. This idea was later expanded upon, and Sen added that development should instead be measured in terms of individuals' ability to achieve their goals (1984).

In this paper, the researchers applied this framework by first identifying the capabilities that English graduates need to possess in order to be employable. These capabilities have been identified through the data collected from interviewing hiring and recruitment personnel. Then, they have analyzed the impact of proficiency in English language skills on these capabilities by examining how English language competence affects the graduates’ ability to develop and implement these capabilities. Next, they have evaluated whether

any particular changes to the English curriculum, such as extra courses or updated syllabi, at the tertiary level can expand English skills and employability capabilities.

Using this framework, the researchers identified the capabilities needed for employability to be English language proficiency and practical skills, and in order to gain these capabilities, learners/graduates require constant exposure to and immersion in the English language. In addition, certain factors can determine how well the capabilities are achieved, including learner background, classroom teaching and learning practices, institutional policies, and the curriculum. Ultimately, these capabilities will provide English graduates with freedom and flexibility and give them more freedom to choose the employment options best suited for them and provide them with better employment opportunities as a whole.

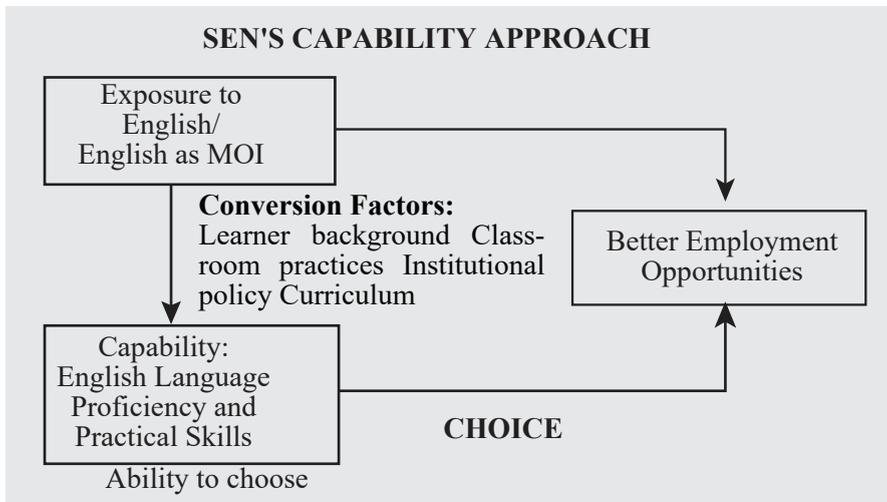


Figure 1.1: Sen’s Capability Approach (1980) Applied to the Relationship between English language skills and Employability

Data Analysis

The audio recordings of the interviews and FGD were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The responses and insights derived from them were organized into themes and subthemes based on Amartya Sen's Capability Approach theory (1980), with particular attention paid to the relationship between proficiency in English language skills and getting and/or sustaining employment.

Findings and Discussion

From the qualitative data collected from a wide range of sources, the researchers identified a number of emerging patterns. This particular section discusses a number of key findings under some themes relevant to the significance of English for the employability of the graduates.

Bangladeshi Universities' Role in Exposing Students to English Language Proficiency

This study found a good amount of exposure to the English language to the students inside the classroom. Because the medium of instruction (MOI) is most of the time English in most of the courses in the Department of English. The study identified several reasons behind the use of English on a large scale in the classroom. Firstly, some institutional expectations are responsible for this; for instance, the authorities of private universities prefer English as MOI in all the departments and in the Department of English, English as a medium of all sorts of communication including official and educational communication is considered requisite to achieve its goal. Secondly, to motivate the learners to use the target language in the classroom, the teachers use English as MOI, as identified from T1,

The main target of our department is to enrich our students with language skills.

Thirdly, because of some courses related to English language

teaching (ELT) or TESOL, it becomes inevitable to create the language-teaching context in the classroom using the materials and instructions prepared and to be delivered in the classroom. This leads to the use of English as MOI in the classroom. Lastly, the presence of heterogeneous learners who have regional and linguistic varieties, have often been found facing difficulties using standard Bangla. Therefore, for keeping each student from diversified backgrounds aligned with a single mode of communication, English plays a significant role in the classroom. As identified from T2,

English is a solution as we have a heterogeneous class with different backgrounds with mutually unintelligible dialects making it tough to communicate.

However, a mixed approach to the medium of instruction has been identified as well. The reasons that we found, include most of the learners' Bengali medium background and their better understanding of the content, As, from the in-depth interviews of Alumni, A2 stated that,

Most of the time, sir used to speak in English and Bangla sometimes for better understanding.

Additionally, from the teachers' point of view, we found a blend of English and Bengali as the medium of instruction, with 80% of the class being conducted in English, with some explanations and examples being given in Bengali for deeper understanding. In addition, while interacting with the students to engage them in the tasks, the teachers use mixed language following the students switching to Bangla for any sort of interaction, which is evident from T1,

.....the whole lecture is in English but to be specific, the question-answer session is often carried out in Bangla.

When asked if the English department provided the proficiency needed for employment, the teachers claimed that it did not. T2 stated that these issues were only starting to be addressed, and while some courses dealt with CV writing, how to face an interview, written communications and writing reports, there is still doubt about whether the curriculum reformation is effective. Similarly, T1 posits that from a practical perspective, the students are not gaining the capabilities required for the job market because many aspects of the curriculum can not be implemented as the students are unable to understand the material being taught as they lack the basic skills that they are expected to have when entering university. However, they also believe that with one-on-one mentoring, teaching language skills more creatively, and teaching soft skills, it will be possible to prepare students for the job market.

Factors Impacting the English Language Proficiency of Bangladeshi English Graduates

The concerned study has identified several factors responsible for the level of English language proficiency the English graduates possess and their career choices. Learners' backgrounds, classroom practices and several institutional factors play a significant role behind these which are detailed below:

Learners' background

Learners' background plays a part in the learners' English language proficiency and career choice. First of all, Most of the students having a Bengali medium education encounter several challenges regarding the comprehension of content and communication in the classroom. One of the reasons for this is the lack of listening skills as T1 opined,

In the study from classes 1 to 12, they do not practice listening to English. So, when they come to the university level and I start speaking English in the very first class, they face this cultural shock.

Additionally, the students remain hesitant about interacting because of a sense of shame, as A2 commented,

I hesitated to ask questions to the teacher wondering if I would be allowed to ask questions in Bangla; I felt my classmates would underestimate me if I asked questions in Bangla.

However, it has also been identified that after completing the four-year graduation, the students could improve their English language proficiency.

Their background has been found to impact their career choices as well. Looking at the usual career choices the students have, we have found most of the students are interested in the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) as an administrative officer, some in doing business, and some opting for jobs of furthering higher studies in foreign countries. While finding the reason for these career choices, we could identify the impact of the learners' background on their career choices to some extent. For instance, one participant was found interested in joining as an administrative officer in a reputed public university utilizing the parental quota; whereas another was interested in furthering the family business internationally. Again, another student opted for teaching owing to her background in Masters' in ELT where she was taught language teaching methods and relevant courses. In this way, their background determined their career choices and that led to their choice of studying English at the tertiary level.

Classroom Practices

Classroom teaching and learning practices are other significant factors in impacting students' English language proficiency. On the one hand, From the student's perspective, they do not appear to be fully prepared with the English language proficiency required for the job market. S4 stated that they 'are not able to communicate all the

information' they know. The participants admitted they face trouble when speaking in English, citing various reasons associated with classroom practices for this. S4 claimed that the speaking skills course, which lasts for a four-month semester was not enough to properly develop English speaking skills, while S5 stated that learners do not receive adequate feedback on their errors during presentations in class, and S3 believed that when assessing presentations, instructors focus more on content instead of the verbal skills. Overall, the students think that while their English skills have improved, they lack confidence in their speaking skills.

On the other hand, the teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the student's English proficiency. They also stated that while around 40% of the students have adequate proficiency in English, 60% of the students do not, and these students have poor speaking skills. Similarly, T2 also expressed frustration with students' lack of English proficiency, particularly while presenting and writing.

Curriculum

The curriculum of tertiary-level English students also has an important role to play in achieving a certain level of proficiency in the English language. Having a trimester system at the tertiary level in Private universities, each semester took four months. The participants believed that a four-month period is not sufficient for internalizing the content of even one course, because, as commented by A1, Getting deep into these topics in the course in 4 months was very tough.

Another impact of curriculum on English language proficiency can be noticed because the curriculum is prepared based on an assumption that the students might have achieved the expected learning outcomes by grade 12 according to the National Curriculum 2012. Therefore, the tertiary curriculum incorporates a more advanced level of content

and skills compared to the higher secondary level education. But there remains a gap between the existing curriculum and the expected proficiency level of the private university students, because, as T1 cited,

When we know that a student has got admitted here after passing 12th grade, we expect a certain level of skills from a 12th-grade student. but whoever we are getting as students here, usually lacks that level of skills for some reason.

In addition, the curriculum can play a role in merging 21st-century skills accompanied by English language skills which will create real-life conversational situations and involve students actively in learning the language. Despite these skills being missed in tertiary level curriculum, the teachers can incorporate these into their teaching, as suggested by T2,

Some powerful skills that are required in the job market are negotiation skills, communication skills, leadership and management skills. English teachers should include all these things in whatever course they teach.

Students' Capability in the English Language and Practical Skills

The data reveals a mixed nature in the findings on the English graduates' capabilities. On one hand, the exposure to the English language in the classroom and the courses taught in the Department of English including English language and literature, has been able to positively impact the students. Because the students not only improved their language skills through the courses but also additional skills that are believed to be required for job sectors or practical life.

The teachers' data reveals,

Teaching additional skills to English students will help them find better job opportunities.

Aligning with the previous comment, the students' data informed that the English department focuses on acquiring different levels of skills, as we come to know from A2,

Talking about language skills, I could practice reading, writing and speaking skills and about additional skills, I have learnt communication skills, and teaching skills including methods and techniques.

From the FGD conducted with the students, it was learned that the language and literature courses conducted in English helped the students develop their communication skills, as well as develop their character as a whole. Moreover, understanding literature has not only helped with the understanding of language usage in literary contexts and informed them about the background of the contexts, but also helped them develop critical thinking and analytical skills. The alumni of the concerned department who are placed in different sectors such as teaching or print media house, justified the acquired knowledge and skills by utilizing them in their respective job sectors, as identified from A1,

I can take the pressure of covering local news, and any international incident happening at the same time, and this has professional advantages.

On the other hand, a contrasting scenario has been identified, for instance, from the FGD, the current students acknowledging their lack of English language skill said

.....because of nervousness, I am not able to communicate all the information I know. (S4)

Asking whether the students feel confident about the job market, this study identified a mixed reaction from the students. On one hand, some students feel that they are less confident than required and some feel less confident about only English speaking skills, as S5 opined

I think I am confident about freewriting but less confident about speaking.

On the other hand, some feel that although their current proficiency does not seem sufficient for the job market, they have achieved better proficiency than in previous years, according to S1 & S2.

The study overall shows a growth in the graduates' achieving the required language and job-specific skills after the completion of the four-year bachelor's degree, despite a sense of lack of confidence before completing the degree.

The Necessity of English in Bangladeshi Graduates' Employability

The study identified the necessity of English in the employability of Bangladeshi graduates incorporating different standpoints. While considering employability, English is not regarded as the only skill required, rather a wide range of skills has been found worth considering. This study justifies the necessity of English skills along with other skills for job sectors by analyzing the findings from the perception of the graduates, their teachers and the employers.

Perception from Graduates

Being an English graduate is considered an advantage by graduates or aspiring graduates in terms of being prepared for the job market; because, first, the skills acquired in the English department seem helpful at work, justified by A1,

Because I come from the English dept., I can cover news from across the country, and support the international news at the same time.

In addition, since some preferred job examinations are held in English, basic comprehension skill of English is required, which lets the English graduate in a more favorable position, as stated by S4,the NSI question paper is completely in English.

Again, most of the job circulars nowadays ‘specifically mention English Speaking skills and communication skills are required’, mentioned by S6. Moreover, the participants believe that strong English language skills help them in the job sector, particularly in marketing positions, corporate jobs and work relating to foreign clients, with S6 specifying that in such cases ‘English becomes important for speaking and presenting oneself’.

However, some participants consider English important for international businesses, but it is not as crucial for domestic jobs, as identified by S5. Also, being an English graduate with other skills like presentation and communication is believed to be the key factor for getting a job, justified by the statement of S6, confidence is just as important, if not more important than language skills when it comes to presenting one’s self.

Perception from Teachers

The data retrieved from the teachers’ interviews reveal the necessity of English for better employability. T2 stated that in many job places where you don’t need English, they [employers] still look for a certain level of proficiency

They also mentioned many common jobs that English graduates enter into where English proficiency is necessary such as government jobs like BCS, teaching, journalism, public relations, and translation. Several reasons behind the importance of English for job sectors have been identified in this study. To begin with, workplace communication, especially written communication skills are mostly in English. Because depending on the kind of job, workplaces require writing reports and proposals in English, as well as the need to give presentations in English. However, different skills of English can be essential too based on the requirement of the job, as T1 mentioned specifically,

if you are working in a multinational company, you may need spoken communication the most; however, if you are working in a content writing or research-related job, maybe you need the written communication the most.

Next, a strong grasp of English is often associated with the intelligence of the graduates which leads the graduates to find better employment as well as better opportunities while they are working. However, in addition to English communication skills, additional interpersonal, technical and soft skills are necessary. T1 stressed analytical skills and T2 mentioned negotiation, leadership, and management skills as additional preferences in the job sectors.

Perception from Corporate Employers

From the points of view of employers from different corporate sectors, English contributes to a great deal of communication, although not mandatory in each sector of jobs, depending on the requirement of the job position along with the culture of the workplace. However, for both technical and non-technical job sectors, communication in English is considered crucial because the “updated ideas, concepts, and rules” are communicated in English, according to the opinion of E1.

English is also significantly used for different forms of communication in varied corporate sectors. For instance, in the healthcare sector, depending on the position of the employees, verbal and written communication is more required, as it can be identified from E1,

.....generally speaking for management kind of positions or general office kind of roles, someone who can express their ideas in English both in verbal and written form, I think that is something which is needed with some level of spoken fluency.

Whereas, in the print media sector, reading skill is more important for

translating international news into Bangla because correct comprehension of news leads to the correct translation. The necessity of correct translation has been stated by E2,

Use of English language, especially in translating, is one of our concerns because the media is responsible for spreading any news which leads people to think, decide and react.

Also, while working in marketing or social media marketing sectors, advertisement agency and corporate sectors, English language proficiency is required, to be specific, for understanding different guidelines for printing any news or posting any news on social media sites, as identified by E2,

To understand the community guidelines for posting in different media groups on Facebook or Twitter, we need language proficiency.

Next, English is necessary for official or formal communication. E1 commented,

For social communication like chatting with colleagues, English is not mandatory but for functional communication like email for communicating with your management, with peers, with customers and with suppliers.

Having this necessity of English in mind, these job sectors prefer English language proficiency among the new recruits. However, it has been found that while recruiting, technical skills are the primary concern followed by English language skills, which leads to candidates from diversified backgrounds, not limited to English graduates. As opined by E2,

Regardless of which department or background the candidate has, he is employed on the basis of his technical skills.

Understanding the importance of English communication, for coping

with the diversified graduates' English language proficiency, the job sectors usually arrange a minimum number of training programs. The training arrangement basically consists of the content and skill required for the concerned jobs, but English language skill is a part of the training module.

Triangulating among the three perceptions received from the graduates, their teachers and employers, the idea of English language skills is considered a basic skill required for any job. However, it has been significantly found that English language skills complemented with interpersonal skills such as communication, analytical, negotiation and management skills, job-specific skills such as translating or content writing skills, and soft skills such as technical skills and technology skills can help graduate more in the job sector.

Discussion

This study applied Amartya Sen's capability approach to analyze the findings to identify the employers' expectations from English graduates and their preparedness for the job market.

Answering RQ 1 (expected requirements of the employers), from the findings of the study it is evident that English language proficiency to some extent, at least, to meet the purpose of professional verbal communication, is necessary. However, employers do not particularly demand the English graduates, rather they prioritize the technical background of the candidate where English language skills might play a complementary role. Job prospects get higher for the graduates when they compile a varied range of skills among themselves. Such skills include technical skills based on the technicality of the job sectors, technological skills and interpersonal skills along with the English language skills. Having these combined skills has been found to help them achieve various professional benefits. Therefore, this study finds out that English skills definitely

play an important role in getting a job, but without the combination of other required skills, English graduates do not get preference in employment opportunities.

Answering RQ 2, (looking at the preparedness of the English graduates), this study identified a number of factors impacting the students' capabilities of English language skills and job-related practical skills. We found that the students completing four-year bachelor's degree and one-year Master's degree were able to understand the overall effectiveness of the program and they seemed prepared for the job market with the skills relevant to their job sectors. Being English graduates, the students have been found achieving English language proficiency along with other job-related skills like content writing, translating and teaching. Additionally, they have learned some interpersonal skills prioritized in 21st century jobs and these skills include critical thinking and creativity (T1 and T2). These acquired proficiency of the employed alumni in English language has been seen drawing a positive feedback to their professional life as well. On the other hand, most of the current students who are mostly planning for jobs or performing internships, did not seem very confident about their preparedness for the job opportunities. The reason for their feeling less prepared was mostly related to their lack of English language skills, especially speaking and presentation skills, precisely lack of confidence in presenting him/herself. Having confidence along with the skills has been identified as one of the key qualities for the preparedness of the English graduates in this paper. Based on the finding and discussion, the following table portrays a summary of the paper, incorporating Amartya Sen's Capability Approach:

Resources	Capabilities	Achieved functioning/outcome
Exposure to English as an MOI: Mostly English; sometimes Bangla to explain further or clarify.	English Language skills:	
	Listening	comprehending any conversation in English
	Speaking	talking to the students (in the classroom) and colleagues (in the office)
	Reading	comprehending any national/international news written in English
	Writing	writing English articles (in media house) preparing official documents and correspondences (in corporate office/ school)
	Content Writing	Prepare both Bangla and English articles
	Translating	translating international news into Bangla
	Teaching skills	following updated methods and techniques in classroom

Table 1.2: English Graduates' Capability and Achieved Outcome

To sum up the discussion, this research has revealed that the skills the graduates are acquiring from the English department are eventually helping them meet the requirements of different job sectors. Still, since the majority of the students lack sufficient skills which makes them feel unprepared for employment opportunities, the English departments can potentially create eligible candidates for job markets by focusing on more skill practice and confidence-building activities during graduation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Using the findings and analysis of the collected data, the researchers were able to surmise that employers expect strong written skills in English, as well as a certain degree of proficiency in spoken English for presentations. For positions that involve dealing with foreign clients, listening comprehension skills are also needed. Moreover, a majority of English graduates are unable to meet these requirements, making them underprepared for the job market.

From the data collected, a number of recommendations emerged: firstly, a focus on teaching writing skills, particularly writing business reports, proposals, and other forms of written communication used in the real world. Moreover, universities also need to pay special attention to developing speaking and presentation skills. Classroom teaching is not enough to develop spoken English skills, as expressed by existing students and alumni. Thus starting extra and co-curricular activities like clubs and regularly organizing events like debates, speech competitions, and impromptu speaking will help students practice speaking skills and gain the confidence to speak in English at length.

In addition, English skills are no longer sufficient for the job market. Therefore, institutions need to implement teaching other skills as well, such as critical thinking, creative and analytical skills, leadership and management skills and so on. It is equally important to make sure that changes in the curriculum geared towards improving employability are actually being implemented in the classroom.

Limitations

A limitation of the study is the small sample size led by a limited timeframe, which may have limited the generalizability of the findings. To address this issue, the researchers included participants with a range of backgrounds and experiences. Moreover, another

limitation is the dependence on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias. To address this, the study used the triangulation of data sources.

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