

Quality English Education for Sustainable Development in Bangladesh: A Critical Survey from the Perspective of Unemployment

Dr. Md. Sazzad Hossain¹, Dr. Md. Abul Kalam Azad*

¹Professor, Department of English, Dhaka International University, Dhaka

*Associate Professor, Department of English, Dhaka International University, Dhaka
(Corresponding Author)

Abstract

The goal of education is to provide people with the competencies, knowledge, and abilities that need to succeed in the professional life. Any nation that wants to grow sustainably must prioritize high-quality education as it is the only way to address the issue of unemployment. The goals of quality English education should not be an exception. This study aims to investigate how important quality English education is for Bangladesh's sustainable development through solving unemployment problem. The study has used a Mixed Method (MM) Approach combining combined quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. Twenty-five unemployed graduates and twenty-five employed individuals from various governmental and non-governmental organizations participated in a questionnaire survey as part of the quantitative method of data collection. In addition, six employers from the government and non-government sectors, as well as two Human Resource Management (HRM) specialists and two English language instructors were interviewed to make an effective qualitative data. According to the study, having good English skills might improve job prospects as English is widely used by multinational companies as their working language, particularly in the fields of technology, finance, and international commerce. Strong English language proficiency hence frequently opens doors to greater employment and professional advancement. Based on the study's findings, the researcher has made some recommendations on the parameters and methods of English language skills development in order to achieve sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Quality English education, sustainable development, unemployment, macroeconomic development, disaster management, and employment opportunities.

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I. Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations provide a global, comprehensive, and revolutionary outlook for a sustainable global society (Bali Swain & Yang-Wallentin, 2019). Macroeconomic development, eliminating poverty, employment, education, health, water and sanitation, power, energy and mineral resources, transportation and communication, gender inequality, environment, climate change and disaster management, ICT, urban development, governance, and international cooperation and partnership are the main areas of focus for the SDGs (UN, 2021). Everyone must contribute in order to achieve these goals. To tackle development difficulties and acknowledge the necessity of promoting sustainability, governments, the corporate sector, and civil society in every nation should use creativity and innovation (Griffiths, 2018). Academic and research communities provide knowledge, technologies, and innovation for implementation; the government establishes an environment that facilitates and oversees implementation; civil society advocates for and raises awareness of the issues (Wysokińska, 2017). It is implied by these various roles and duties that achieving the development goals in isolation is not possible (Rahman, 2021). Integration and collaboration amongst various role actors are required.

The solution of unemployment problem can be a key to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Sari et al., 2020). Quality education is stated to be a vital foundation for sustainable development through creating immense employment opportunities (Guriro et al., 2019). Quality education equips people with knowledge and skills in sustainable development, making them more competent and confident (Vladimirova & Le Blanc, 2016). Education alone cannot achieve a more sustainable future; however, without education and learning for sustainable development, we will not be able to reach that goal (Alam&Sharmin, 2023). Since

English is the language of global communication, this discipline of English language education should inevitably play a significant role in solving unemployment problem (Sari et al., 2020).

An ability to communicate effectively in the business and professional spheres and exhibit a high degree of confidence in using the language of the employer are prerequisites for having a good command of English (Ting et al., 2017). These skills are necessary to complete collaborative sustainable development tasks (Thomas et al., 2016). Therefore, being fluent in English can improve job opportunities (Al-Mahrooqi, R. & Tuzlukova, V., 2014). English is the working language of many global organizations, particularly in the fields of technology, finance, and international trade (Mousawa & Elyas, 2015). Because of this, people who speak English well are frequently able to progress their careers and find better employment (Chea & Lo, 2022).

Since English is the language used in the business world the most, it appears that mastering the language is one of the most crucial employability skills (Dash & Satpathy, 2020). Nonetheless, proficiency in English encompasses more than just the capacity to construct grammatically sound sentences (Ting et al., 2017). It refers to other skills necessary for successful communication, such as interpersonal languageskills, persuasion and negotiating skills, and presenting skills (Mousawa & Elyas, 2015). To ensure that job seekers may find decent jobs, it is therefore imperative that focus be placed on providing high-quality English language education in the context of Bangladesh(Rahman, 2021). The purpose of this study is to highlight how crucial high-quality English language education is for the sustainable development of Bangladesh by addressing its unemployment issue.

II. Literature Review

To communicate with multinational groups and clients, many worldwide job advertisements demand individuals to speak English fluently (Mousawa & Elyas, 2015). While mastering English can greatly improve one's chances of securing a job, it is vital to keep in mind that the kind and level of proficiency can vary based on the sector, region, and work function (Ting et al., 2017). For example, various other languages may be more relevant in certain local markets or industries. Nonetheless, English continues to be a very useful skill for professional advancement considering the state of the world economy today (Sari et al., 2020). Studies demonstrate the transformative effect that fluency in English is having on people's professional and personal lives across the globe, since it is essential for obtaining higher wages, having more diverse career options, and leading more satisfying personal lives (Pradhan et al., 2017).The most proficient English speakers are happier with their current salaries and employment (Ref). According to (Chea & Lo, 2022) compared to less than half (47%) of elementary English speakers, three quarters (75%) of proficient English speakers are content with their income in the developing countries. He added that less than two thirds (64%) of beginners are not happy with their jobs, compared to nearly nine out of ten (88%) proficient speakers. Another study found more than half (51%) of English language learners in middle east countries believe that learning the language will lead to a wider range of job roles, and two fifths (40%) believe that learning the language will help them advance to higher positions in their field of work (Al-Mahrooqi, R. & Tuzlukova, V., 2014). These percentages rise to 56% in Saudi Arabia and 50% in Brazil (Thomas et al., 2016). These findings are supported by additional research (Chea& Lo, 2022, Pradhan et al., 2017).

According to a study, learning English can make a person's life more satisfying both within and outside of the workplace (Mahboob, 2018). English is frequently used in the workplace for effective communication, especially in multicultural settings, and this involves writing emails, reports, and presentations (MEF, 2016). Therefore, being able to communicate in English can improve cooperation and teamwork, especially in multicultural and global environments (Mustapha & Yahaya, 2013). Nevertheless, a lot of people still have a lack of confidence regarding their command of the English language, which makes it difficult for them to communicate with others, do everyday tasks at work, or even just to interact on social media or with the world(Bury & Oka, 2017).The value of English as a differentiator will continue to grow in the face of an AI-dominated future that creates instability in employment ((Latha, 2014). For this reason, we're encouraging anyone who wish to learn the language to take action right away and improve their proficiency quickly with appropriate for the level education (Fareen, 2018).

One study shows that in-service training in English is deemed valuable enough by the vast majority of workers (88%) and they believe businesses ought to provide it with their workers (Jambor, 2011).It was found in another study that only 27% of respondents thought they could completely express themselves in English when using it for work-related purposes, and nearly three quarters (72%) went as far as to claim that their tasks would be easier if they knew the language better (Noor et al., 2017). However, English proficiency is becoming increasingly important for more than just career and financial opportunities. Study shows that in personal life, more than three quarters (79%) of respondents cited English proficiencyas crucial skills, and 81% predicted that it will become more and more important in the future (MEF, 2016). Besides, almost half of them claimed that improving their English had increased their confidence in all spheres of their lives.

A study was conducted among the people, the majority of whom (8 in 10) learned English in school, and two thirds of them held an English qualification (Fareen, 2018). However, 54% of participants of that study thought that their formal education did not provide them with sufficient English language skills for communicating effectively (Latha, 2014) and more than half (56%) claimed that this was because they learned English primarily through its grammar and vocabulary, not through its application in everyday contexts. Additionally, half of them claimed that they havenot had enough chances to utilize English outside of the classroom. Therefore, if we want to be successful in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, we must assure employability through high-quality English education (Mustapha & Yahaya, 2013).The study investigated the relationship between employability and quality English education. Based on the findings, the researcher suggested many essential measures to guarantee high-quality English education. The study’s conclusion will help the relevant parties to take the right actions to help Bangladesh achieving the SDGs.

III. Objective of the Research

The study aims to explore the significance of quality English education for employability in the light of sustainable development goals. It is a collaborative research work done by two university teachers of the Department of English based on the necessity and demands of the current job market at home and abroad. The research has tried to find out the crucial issues of quality English education for the sustainable development goals in the third world countries like Bangladesh as well as other countries of the world, and at the same time, tried to give some solutions to address and focus on the need analysis.

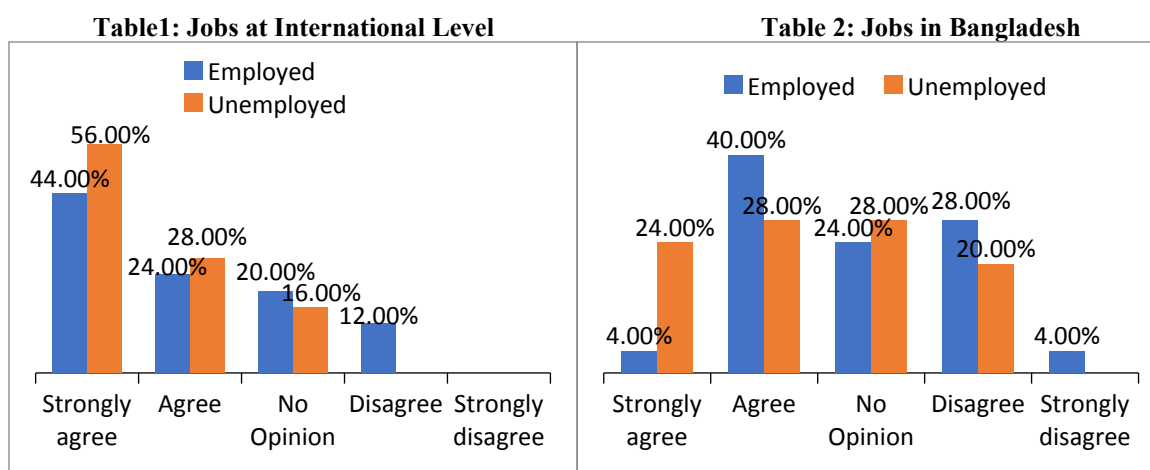
IV. Methodology of the Research

The study has used a Mixed Method (MM) Approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. Twenty-five unemployed graduates and twenty-five employed individuals from various governmental and non-governmental organizations participated in a questionnaire survey as part of the quantitative method of data collection. The questionnaire included thirteen statements of which seven statements were developed to explore the relation between English skills and employability and other six statements have explored the importance of English for sustaining in the job. The questionnaire was a five point Likert Scale and the response options included “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neutral,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” However, while interpreting the findings, the researcher has merged the results of “strongly agree,” “agree,” into agree and “disagree” and “strongly disagree” into disagree. In addition, 6 employers from the governmental and non-governmental sectors, as well as two Human Resource Management (HRM) specialists and two English language instructors were interviewed for qualitative data. The interviews were conducted to have an in-depth knowledge regarding the statements of the questionnaire. The analysis of the questionnaire data was conducted using the computer software package SPSS 26.0 and Microsoft Excel 10. The qualitative data analysis method “content analysis” was used for analyzing interview data.

V. Findings

5.1 Findings from the Questionnaire Survey

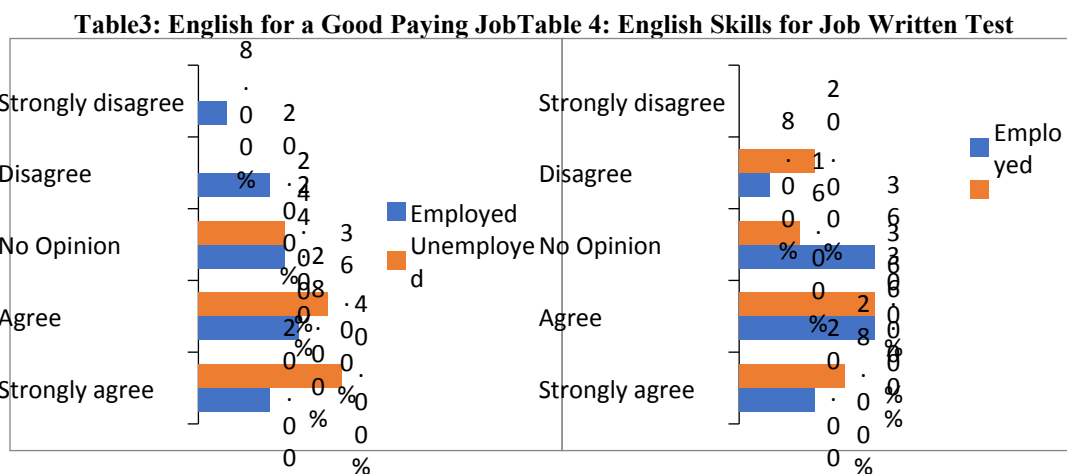
5.1.1 English for Suitable Job at National and International Level



In the first statement, it was asked whether or not having good communication skills in English was necessary to land a good job abroad. In response to this question, 68% of respondents who were employed gave a favorable rating, and 84% of respondents who were jobless also agreed with the statement. It is noteworthy

that a significant number of respondents (16% of the unemployed and 20% of the employed) chose to react to this statement by selecting the option "no opinion." The purpose of the second statement was to ascertain whether English communication skills were required in order to be employed by Bangladeshi government and non-government organizations. In response, 52% of respondents who were jobless and 44% of respondents who were employed agreed with the statement. It is noteworthy that an important percentage of respondents (32% of working respondents and 20% of jobless respondents) disagreed with the claim. It is remarkable that a substantial number of respondents from both groups (employed respondents, at 24%, and jobless respondents, at 28%) selected the "no opinion" option to express no view in response to this statement.

5.1.2 English skills for Good Paying Job and Successful Written Test



The third statement sought whether proficiency in English language was required to find a good paying job or not. In response to this question 48% of the employed respondents expressed positive opinion and similarly 76% of the unemployed respondents agreed with the statement. It is notable that a significant number of respondents from the both groups (employed-24% and unemployed-24%) chose "no opinion" option as a response to this statement. It is noteworthy that an important percentage of employed respondents (28%) disagreed with the claim. The fourth statement was designed to find out the necessity of English language skills to do better in job written tests. In response, 56% of the employed respondents and 64% of the unemployed respondents agreed with the statement. It is significant here that a notable number of the respondents (employed-36% and unemployed-16%) disagreed with the statement. It is mention worthy that an important percentage of unemployed respondents (20%) disagreed with the claim.

5.1.3 English for Successful Interview and Securing Top Position

Table 5: English Skills for Successful Interview

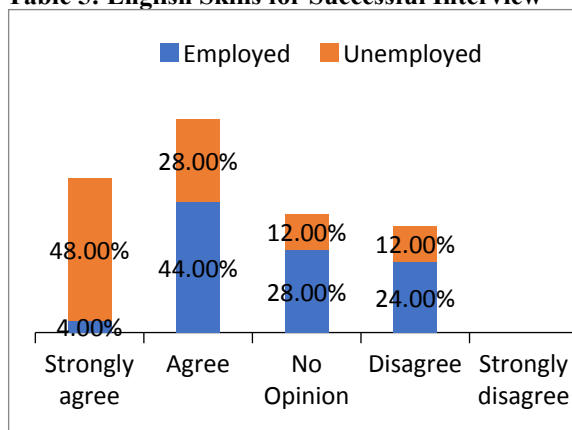
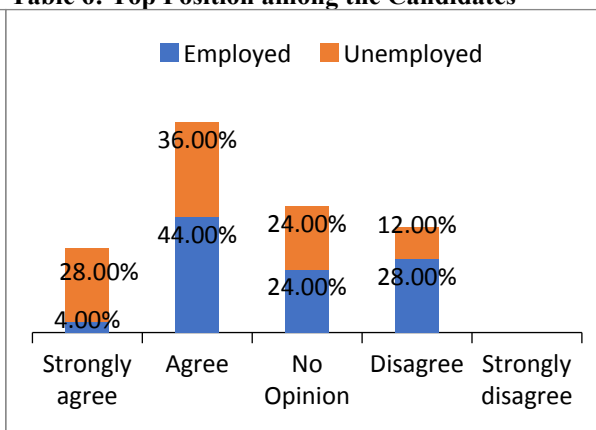


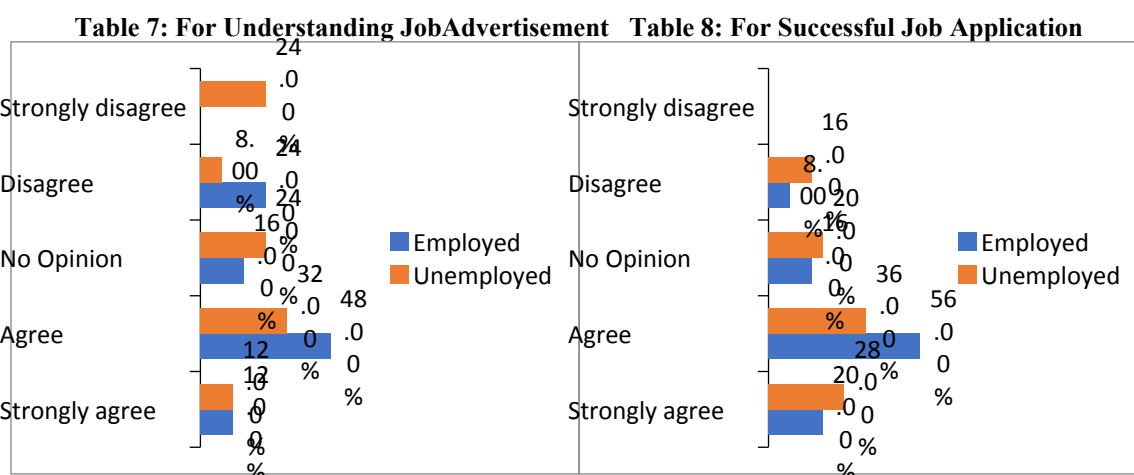
Table 6: Top Position among the Candidates



The importance of English language communication abilities for a successful interview was examined in the following question. According to the analysis, 76% of participants who were unemployed and 48% of respondents who were employed agreed that having strong English communication skills was crucial for success in interviews. In this case, an important percentage of the employed respondents (28%) made no decision at all.

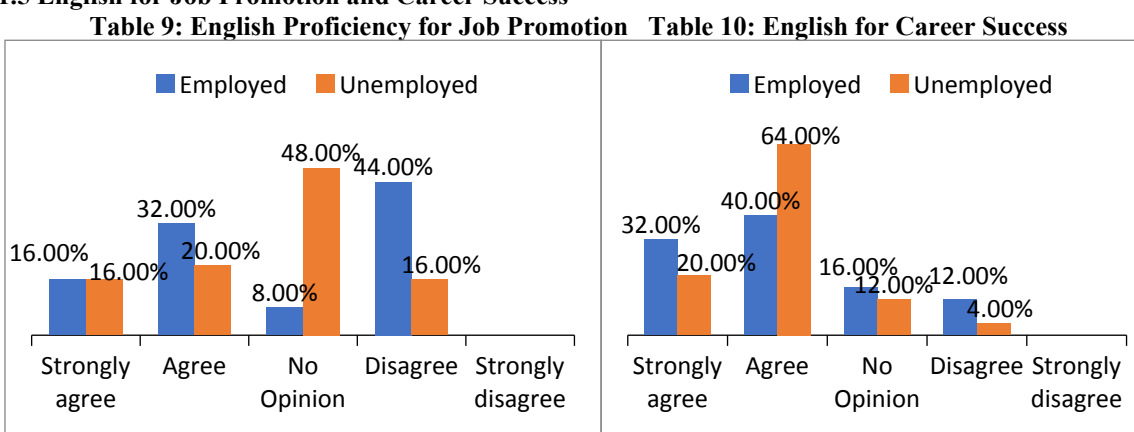
In addition, 24% of them did not agree with the argument. The sixth statement investigated the participants' perceptions on the value of English proficiency in securing their top spot on the applicant list. According to the analysis, 64% of participants who were unemployed and 48% of respondents who were employed said that having fluency in the English language would guarantee them a top spot among job seekers. It is noteworthy that a substantial number of respondents 24% of those in the employed group and 24% of those in the jobless group selected the "no opinion" response option in reply to this statement. Additionally, 28% of the participants who were employed did not agree with the statement.

5.1.4 English for Understanding Job Advertisement and Successful Job Application



The next question explored the proficiency of English language skills to understand the job-related advertisement. The analysis shows that 60% of the employed respondents and 54% of the unemployed participants recognized English language skills as an important tool for understanding job advertisement. Here, a good number of unemployed respondents (24%) remained neutral while choosing an option. Besides, 24% of them (from both groups) disagreed with the statement. The sixth statement explored the participants' belief regarding the importance of English skills to ensure successful job application process of the candidates. The analysis shows that 76% of the employed respondents and 64% of the unemployed participants believed the English language skills might ensure their successful job application. It is notable that a significant number of respondents from the both groups (employed-16% and unemployed-20%) chose "no opinion" option as a response to this statement.

5.1.5 English for Job Promotion and Career Success

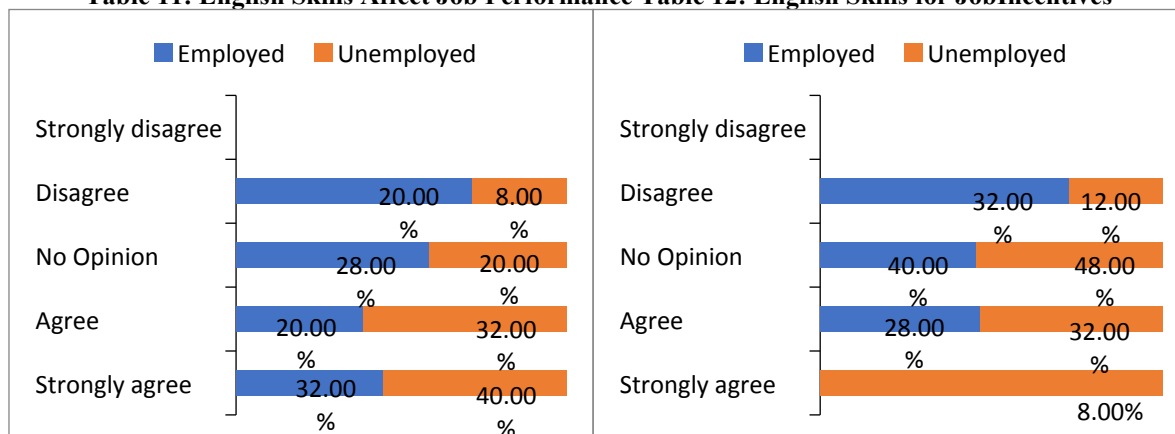


The ninth statement sought whether proficiency in English language was required to get promoted in the job. In response to this question 48% of the employed respondents expressed positive opinion and similarly 36% of the unemployed respondents agreed with the statement. It is notable that a significant number of respondents (48%) from the unemployed group chose "no opinion" option as a response to this statement. It is noteworthy that a significant percentage of employed respondents (44%) disagreed with the claim. The tenth statement was designed to find out the whether Lack of English language proficiency had negative effects on

career success in Bangladesh or not. In response, 72% of the employed respondents and 84% of the unemployed respondents agreed with the statement. A least number of the participants disagreed or chose “no opinion” option while responding this question.

5.1.6 English Skills Affect Job Performance and Ensure Incentives

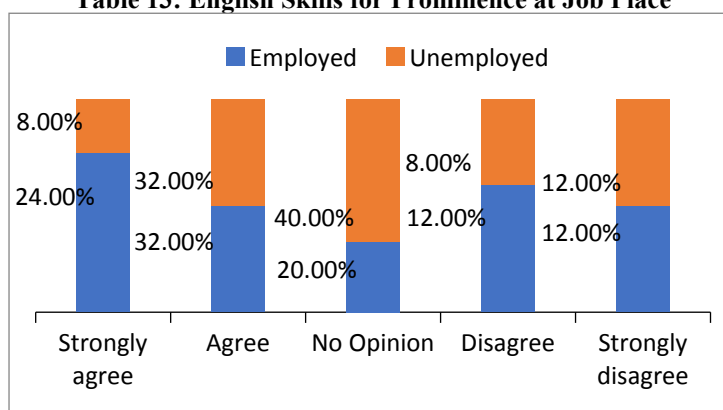
Table 11: English Skills Affect Job Performance **Table 12: English Skills for Job Incentives**



The impact of the lack of English language communication abilities while performing the departmental activities at the job place was examined in the following question. According to the analysis, 52% of participants who were unemployed and 72% of respondents who were employed agreed that the lack of English language skills had a negative impact on job performance. In this case, an important percentage of the employed and unemployed respondents (28% and 20%) made no decision at all. In addition, 20% of the employed respondents did not agree with the argument. The twelfth statement investigated the participants’ perceptions on the value of English proficiency in high incentives in jobs. According to the analysis, 28% of participants who were unemployed and 40% of respondents who were employed said that having fluency in the English language would guarantee their incentives. It is noteworthy that a substantial number of respondents 40% of those in the employed group and 48% of those in the jobless group selected the “no opinion” response option in reply to this statement. Additionally, 32% of the participants who were employed did not agree with the statement.

5.1.7 Strong English Skills Required for Prominence at Job Place

Table 13: English Skills for Prominence at Job Place



The thirteenth statement sought whether proficiency in English language was required to make an employee prominent among other employees. In response to this question 56% of the employed respondents expressed positive opinion and similarly 40% of the unemployed respondents agreed with the statement. It is notable that a significant number of respondents from the employed and unemployed groups (20% and 40%) chose “no opinion” option as a response to this statement. It is noteworthy that a significant percentage of employed respondents (24%) disagreed with the claim.

5.2 Findings from the Interview

The findings of the interview give the researcher an in-depth understanding of the importance of English language skills for employment. Most of the interviewees were of the specific features of the sustainable development goals. However, they believed that English language skills could have been instrumental in removing poverty through removing unemployment. They also believed that English language skills alone could create avenues for more employment leading to any sort of financial development. Some of the employed participants who were working on international platforms argued that their academic qualifications were not considered in the process of recruitment for the current job. The nature of the jobs required sound English language skills with some technical skills related to work and so, their academic certificates were ignored. One of the participants said,

English language skills can be termed as the most significant criteria for my current job. Every applicant must face an interview getting this sort of job. If the candidate is not suitable for this specific type of job in term of English language skills, he/she will not get the job.

Many of the interviewers believed that Bangladeshi youth lag behind from the youth of the neighboring countries in the international job market because of poor language skills. They also said that job applicants from India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan had better command in English language while facing interviews in comparison with Bangladeshi candidates. They think that Bangladeshi graduates are not serious in learning English, and so they face serious problems in getting international jobs for their weak English. One of the participants remarked,

Job competitors who have graduated from India have better proficiency in English Language. Though some of the candidates of Indian nationals have poor language skills, on an average they are better than the Bangladeshi graduates. Due to better English, they are playing crucial role in the international job market.

Many of the participants believe that even after getting a job, English language skills are tested at different levels at the workplace. They believe that English language skills need to be improved with the continuation of jobs for sustaining successfully at the workplace. English language skills are also necessary for getting job promotion or incentives. Better English skills certainly give the employees a unique position at the workplace. One of the participants said,

My English is not up to the mark. If my English language skills were better, I could get promotion and job incentives sooner.

Therefore, it is undoubtedly true that most of the jobs require excellent communication skills. As English is the most widely spoken international language, its necessity cannot be ignored in term of employment.

VI. Discussion

The findings demonstrate how significant it is to develop English language skills for employability. If employment can be ensured, poverty alleviation will be an easy task as unemployment affects poverty. We know that poverty alleviation is a major part of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2021). Hence, quality English education can certainly contribute to achieving SDGs by creating better employment opportunities. Now the question might arise why English is so important for employability. The findings of this research show that English language skills are crucial to understanding international job advertisements and successful job application. It has been suggested that English is widely used in many types of international job advertisement and job application forms (Renkema, Vallen, & Hoeken, 2001; Schreinen, 1989), but the lexical and syntactical style of the language used in the advertisements do not follow formal or conventional language formula (Thomas et al., 2016).

Sometimes, academic qualification becomes useless for some jobs, as those jobs only require good language skills and/or technical knowledge (Bury & Oka, 2017). Certain scholars have noted that the requirements for employment differed from position to position, and that the primary criterion for selection may not have been educational achievement (Ho & Alcorso, 2004). According to certain research (Brooks, 1996; Syed & Murray, 2009), immigrants' educational credentials from their home country particularly from underdeveloped nations were not regarded as being on par with those from migrating countries. Additionally, the study shows that being able to communicate in English helps someone to succeed in both written tests and interviews for jobs. According to Ting et al. (2017), proficiency in spoken and written English is a highly sought-after skill that is necessary for success in a variety of professions. Proficiency in English is frequently a need for jobs requiring interaction with coworkers, clients, or consumers from other nations or areas (Chodhary, 2022). Cheong et al. (2016) also mentioned that communication skills and English language competency are highly valued by companies when it comes to hiring new potential employees. This demonstrates that candidates with strong language and communication abilities will perform better on written exams and in interviews for employment.

The study also revealed that proficiency in English is necessary to keep a job after someone gets one, in addition to being essential for finding a good one. In the corporate sector, communication skills in English are essential. These include public speaking, presentations, negotiation, settlement of disputes, and knowledge

sharing (Fareen, 2018). The ability to write in English is essential for many day-to-day tasks at work, including creating proposals, reports, instruction manuals, memoranda, notices, and formal communication. Thus, it can be concluded that proficiency in the English language aids in both getting excellent employment opportunities and keeping them. Thus, mastering English promotes sustainable development and lowers poverty. Hence, stakeholders must ensure quality English education, so that our graduates become well equipped with standard English language skills.

VII. Recommendations

English education for employability should focus on equipping learners with language skills that are essential for professional success. Here are some key areas we need to concentrate on for ensuring quality English education.

1. English teachers should teach how to write professional emails, reports, resumes, and cover letters. They should focus on clarity, tone, and structure.
2. Teachers should make the learners practice effective communication in meetings, presentations, and interviews. In this regard, they should emphasize pronunciation, fluency, and professional vocabulary.
3. English lessons should introduce vocabulary relevant to specific fields (e.g., finance, IT, healthcare). They should cover common business jargon and expressions.
4. English teachers should teach appropriate behavior and communication styles in various professional settings. They need to discuss how business practices and expectations can vary across cultures.
5. English teachers should provide guidance on how to highlight skills and experiences effectively in English. Teachers should conduct mock interviews and provide feedback on responses and body language.
6. English language lessons should facilitate teamwork, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. Learners should be engaged in exercises that promote analytical and creative problem-solving ability.
7. Language lessons should be designed to simulate real-world scenarios like customer service interactions, sales pitches, and team meetings. Teachers should analyze and discuss real business cases to apply language skills in context.
8. English teachers should familiarize learners with tools like video conferencing software and collaborative platforms in the English classes. They should teach how to navigate job search websites and professional networking platforms.

By integrating these elements into English language curriculum, we can help learners develop the language proficiency they need to succeed in the job market.

VIII. Conclusion

As academic qualification is useless without better proficiency in English for an under-privileged country like ours, the quality of English education for Bangladesh should be enhanced in the field of communication in academic and professional life. As Bangladeshi youth are lagging in international job market because of their poor language skills, they should develop communication competency. By teaching them how to write email, letter, resume, cover letter with proper professional approach and tone, we can improve their communication skills. Also, they should be trained on conducting meetings, presentations and facing interviews for jobs in a teamwork with their teachers. By this way, the teaching of English language as an academic subject should be aligned with the goals of sustainable development and the 21st century skills strategy.

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