

# The Role of English Speaking- Skills in Career Progression: A Case Study among Sudanese Undergraduate EFL Students

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## Abstract

The present study is to shed light on the nature and extent of the impact of English language proficiency on career advancement across a range of professional contexts by compiling and critically analyzing scientific research on the subject. The research shows on the connections between language proficiency, professional mobility, and socioeconomic circumstances by drawing on the ideas of linguistic capital, socio-linguistic adaptation, and globalized labour markets. Moreover, the English language has a significant influence on our workplaces and businesses. Regardless of differences in geography, society, politics, or religion, English has emerged as the dominant language in the global business community. Fieldwork was carried out at Vignan's Foundation for Science, Technology & Research, Andhra Pradesh. For this, Sudanese graduating EFL students were chosen from various courses of the institute.

The findings show a significant relationship between job success and English language competency, particularly in fields where English is the predominant language of exchange. The extent of this advantage, however, it varies depending on the industry, the cultural setting, and the specific organizational policies. The findings highlight the importance of English education and training in workforce development plans, particularly in locations with a low native English-speaking population. Businesses may benefit from investing in language training as a means of retaining and developing talent. Policymakers may take these findings into account when creating educational curriculum and social interventions to address linguistic gaps on a larger scale. The investigation reveals a favorable correlation between professional advancement and proficiency in the English language.

**Keywords:** career progression, EFL, English proficiency, Sudanese undergraduate students

## 1. Introduction

English is the most widely spoken language in the world of "Science and technology and the language of the internet and communication" (Ashraf, 2018, p. 134). It serves as a common language that allows people from different countries and cultural backgrounds to communicate effectively. Whether it's in business, travel, or diplomacy, English bridges the gap and facilitates global communication. English is frequently used as a medium of instruction in educational and academic institutions globally. Proficiency in English enables individuals to access a vast amount of knowledge, resources, and opportunities for higher education, research, and career advancement. It is asserted to be essential for one's intellectual growth and readiness for employment (Asmari, 2013; Kelly et al., 2022; Waer, 2021).

According to Alonso (2018), focusing on speaking abilities in a second language is tough by nature because it is one of the most challenging abilities to measure in second language data. It may be the most challenging talent to teach, the most challenging skill to assess, and the most challenging skill to research when compared to receptive skills but also when compared to written creation. English is the 'effective system' of intercultural communication, according to Mark Robson, Director of English and Exams at the British Council (Robson, 2013, p. 2). He further stated that more people than ever before, especially those who are thought leaders and decision-makers in business, are studying and speaking English. English is presently the most often used language in the world for worldwide trade, popular media and entertainment, international telecommunications, publishing newspapers and books, and most significantly internationalizing education (Rahman & Singh, 2021; Rao, 2019). Due to its prominence as a lingua franca, effective spoken English communication is therefore most desirable in this globalized society (Jenkins, 2007). Devi and Rao (2018) contend that people's advanced spoken English proficiency empowers them to influence others in order to synthesize cultures, which is necessary for creating a cogent global society. Speaking English well opens up a wealth of opportunities in social, academic, and professional settings (Brown, 2001; Cook, 2003; Crystal, 2003). Al-Sobhi and Preece (2018) assert that spoken English has gained significant recognition for its use in education, the workplace, and the economy.

During the same time period, it was discovered that the structural syllabus, with its emphasis on progressing from the simple to the more complex, was ineffective for fostering communicative language use. According to Widdowson (1978), Wilkins (1976), and Munby (1978),

the foundation of any curriculum seeking to develop communicative competence should be the learners' communication needs. Instead of working from linguistic forms back to the learners' demands, these linguists did it the other way around. Simply understanding grammatical structure was insufficient and would not equip the student to perform in everyday situations. The material for language training was arranged in accordance with function rather than form since both the communicative syllabus and the notional functional syllabus placed an emphasis on what speakers could communicate through the language. As there was no direct communicative goal for the language in everyday society.

English is the language of international business and commerce. Many multinational companies require employees who can communicate fluently in English. Proficiency in English can open doors to a wider range of job opportunities and increase one's chances of success in the global job market. English is the language of literature, art, music, and entertainment. English-speaking countries have greatly influenced these domains, and being proficient in English allows individual to access and appreciate the rich cultural heritage. English also serves as a platform for cultural exchange, fostering understanding and appreciation among people from different backgrounds.

## 2. Understanding the Obstacles to the Growth of Spoken English

The development of students' spoken English proficiency has been hampered by the teachers' acquisition and execution of instructional methods (Ali & Walker, 2014; Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Farooqui, 2007; Ibna Seraj & Habil, 2021; Islam, 2015; Rahman et al., 2015; Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Seraj et al., 2021). According to Anderson (1993), Chowdhury (2001), Li (1998), and Liu (1998), speaking is mostly taught to students using a grammar translation technique. Grammar translation and audiolingual instruction are still popular traditional teaching techniques (Carless, 2009; Farooqui, 2007; Littlewood, 2007; Mangubhai et al., 2007; Paul & Liu, 2018; Richards, 2008). These teaching approaches almost never give students the chance to use English for real-world communication since they solely concentrate on teaching grammar in isolation.

Despite using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to teach spoken English in the classroom, the teachers seldom ever encourage the learners' autonomy. The ability to manage one's own learning is referred to as autonomy (Benson, 2011, p. 58). The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach's primary tenet is to support learner autonomy (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). Due to their limited opportunity to exercise autonomy, learners' growth of spoken English is hampered (Begum & Chowdhury, 2016; Jamila, 2013; Mehrin, 2017). As a result, teachers rarely advocate for learners' agency (Duff, 2012). According to Duff (2012, p. 417), agency describes "people's ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals, potentially leading to personal or social transformation."

## 3. Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to explore the perceptions of Engineering students about communicative language skills.

- To research the effects of professional prospects and career progress on various English proficiency levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced).
- To improve the language skills
- To look at the strategies for improving English language skills

## 4. Research Questions

There are a few research questions which is given below.

- 1) How do they grade their language skills?
- 2) What are the universal perceptions of undergraduate students about English language skills?
- 3) What are strategies do they follow to improve English language skills?

## 5. Significance of the Study

The importance of speaking ability is what gives this study its significance. It is important for Sudanese EFL students because it could aid in resolving their issues with oral communication. This study also has implications for English language instruction in the faculties of basic science and humanities at Vignan University since it throws light on the challenges facing Sudanese EFL learners in oral communication. Additionally, the research looks for specific approaches and recommendations for resolving these issues.

## 6. Literature Review

This study will concentrate on the issues and difficulties that English language learners at Vignan University face when attempting to communicate in English. In order to facilitate it, it will also investigate the issue and try to identify solutions. There are a few research articles have been reviewed by the researcher.

Elbashir (2022) stated that the study set out to look into the difficulties and barriers that English learners typically face in Sudanese universities when attempting to speak the language. It also emphasized the difficulties that students had learning English at Sudanese universities and sought solutions to these issues. Overall, more people are realizing the value of English as a significant foreign language for international communication. Learning English enables one to gain a deeper understanding of the native speaker's culture and life outside of his or her mother tongue. Because English has evolved into a sophisticated and global language, there are many people all over the world who have a strong desire to learn and speak it.

Nyortal, Ahmed, & Adam (2021), they observed that the researcher will ultimately state that the circumstances are highly challenging for Sudanese students who are learning English. The benefits that make it simple for people to study their mother tongue are not available to students learning English as a foreign language. The nature of communication strategy used in Sudanese schools' English instruction focuses on communicative tactics, which are more effective in the classroom. Due to the fact that pupils only hear English, rarely write it in their exercise books, and only learn it in contexts that are fake, there is very little exposure to English. The kids don't have particularly compelling motives for learning the foreign language, and the classroom is not like family life, the street, etc.

## 7. Methodology

The researcher encouraged students to use various methodologies, such as teacher questionnaires, to reach this goal (speaking skill strategy). Data has been collected from Sudanese students at Vignan's Foundation for Science, Technology and Research, Andhra Pradesh. The researchers made personal interaction with the subjects. The questionnaire was analyzed using the descriptive statistical approach.

### 7.1 Participants

The selection of participants was based on their completion of many educational programmes during their academic careers. In the study, the students were divided into four groups of seven each, and three instructors and two students participated in individual interviews.

In terms of sampling, the groups were selected in a certain way to obtain the most information possible from the available resources (Creswell, 2008). As a result, the study could concentrate on various aspects, such as the participants' ages or genders, and build a more comprehensive data base. Following the start of the research, the use of the opportunity sampling technique during individual interviews was also taken into consideration.

### 7.2 Table of Participants

Table 1. List of participants

Regd. No	Name of the student	Name of Course	Present year	Country
201FN01031	M.A.M. Elkhalfifa	B.Pharmacy	4 <sup>th</sup> Year	Sudan
201FN01001	A.K. Omer Arbab	B.Pharmacy	4 <sup>th</sup> Year	Sudan
201FN01054	S.A.Yagoub Mohmed	B.Pharmacy	4 <sup>th</sup> Year	Sudan
201FN01015	F.E.M. Awadalla	B.Pharmacy	4 <sup>th</sup> Year	Sudan
201FN01013	F.E.A. Abdulla	B.Pharmacy	4 <sup>th</sup> Year	Sudan
201FN01066	M.E. Kabashi	B.Pharmacy	4 <sup>th</sup> Year	Sudan
211FN01046	S.E.H. Hussein	B.Pharmacy	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Sudan
211FN01027	M.M.E. Ahmed	B.Pharmacy	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Sudan
211FN01029	M.E.Y.Hamed	B.Pharmacy	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Sudan
211FN01031	N.E.A. Adam	B.Pharmacy	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Sudan
211FN01030	M.S.H. Adam	B.Pharmacy	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Sudan
211FN01006	A.K.A. Hassan	B.Pharmacy	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Sudan
221FN01021	F.A.H.Mohammed	B.Pharmacy	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
221FN01038	M.A.K. Mohamed	B.Pharmacy	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
221FN01011	A.B.S. Elawad	B.Pharmacy	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
231FN01040	M.Y.A. Zakaria	B.Pharmacy	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FN01001	A.J.K. Karkor	B.Pharmacy	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FN01022	E.N.E.Babikar	B.Pharmacy	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FN01037	M..B.O.Mohamed	B.Pharmacy	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FN01004	A.B.A.Elhassan	B.Pharmacy	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FN01002	A.I.S. Khamis	B.Pharmacy	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FN01038	M.K.Y. Elsididng	B.Pharmacy	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FN01072	H.F.M. Bakery	B.Pharmacy	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FN01074	A.A.A. Abdelgadir	B.Pharmacy	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
211FJO1001	A.A.A. Suliman	BCA	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Sudan

211FJO1005	A.M.O. Gumaa	BCA	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Sudan
211FJO1006	A.A.A. Ali	BCA	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Sudan
221FJO1067	S.S.O. Mohammed	BCA	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
221FJO1042	M.M.A.Alhag	BCA	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
221FJO1017	E.M.A. Gibril	BCA	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
221FJO1045	M.F.E. Norein	BCA	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
221FJO1047	M.M.K.Ahmed	BCA	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
221FJO1025	H.J.A.M. Osman	BCA	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
221FJO1044	M.A.H. Adam	BCA	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
231FJO1008	I.B.A. Mohammed	BCA	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FJO1005	Y.O.S. Osman	BCA	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FJO1006	S.M.S. Mohammed	BCA	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FJO1004	E.B.E. Mohammadelid	BCA	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FJO1007	A.D.A.M. Adam	BCA	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FJO1015	O.S.O. Ismail	BCA	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
211FA16013	A.M.M. Babkir	Biomedical	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Sudan
211FA16014	M.A.A. Mohammed	Biomedical	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Sudan
221FA16027	M.D.A. Daoud	Biomedical	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
221FA16028	G.Y.E.Elhaj	Biomedical	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
231FA16010	M.I.A.Idris	Biomedical	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FA16002	A.M.A.Mahmood	Biomedical	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
201FA06005	A.N.A. Mohammed	EEE	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Sudan
201FA06041	B.A.I. Alkhalifa	EEE	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Sudan
221FA06029	M.A.M. Idris	EEE	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
221FA06030	S.A.A. Gabbar	EEE	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
231FA06086	T.M.O. Hmror	EEE	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FA06001	M.M.H. Khalafalla	EEE	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
221FK01033	H.I.M. Magan	BBA	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
231FK01057	M.A.M.I. Abdelmagid	BBA	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FK01015	M.A.E. Eltayeb	BBA	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FK01016	M.H.A. Mohammed	BBA	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
221FA044008	M.E.R.S. Fargalla	CSE	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Sudan
231FA044030	M.AM. Ahmed	CSE	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan
231FA044048	S.M.T.S. Ali	CSE	1 <sup>st</sup> year	Sudan

### 7.3 Instruments

Focus groups were used to gather data for this study, which was followed by one-on-one interviews. In order to analyze a single aspect, triangulation a noteworthy tactic combining multiple research techniques was used during the data collection procedure. Furthermore, by being able to validate data from various angles, such a method yields greater accuracy.

### 7.4 Procedure & Technique

Individual interviews with the instructors were conducted in English because of their fluency in the language. In both group and solitary situations, the students underwent interviews in English, which they speak as their second language. This eliminated any difficulties that could have arisen when speaking a second language and allowed the participants to talk.

While the individual interview normally ran between half an hour (30 minutes), the focus group discussion lasted between one hour (60 minutes). Using semi-structured interviews during the study phase allowed for flexibility. This strategy allowed the researcher to modify the questions and elaborate on any specific issues in light of the interviewees' answers. The discussions started off with a list of precise questions but quickly turned into more of a dialogue.

Table 2. Participants demographic information (Total number of participants:46, Nationality: Sudan)

Gender	Age Group	Qualification & number of participants	Course and branch
Male (95.65%)	20-24	Gradation & 46	B.Pharma, Biomedical, EEE, CSE, BCA and BBA
Female (4.34%)	20-24		

### 8. Data Analysis and Discussion

#### 8.1 Ratio of Male and Female Students Enrolled for Professional Course

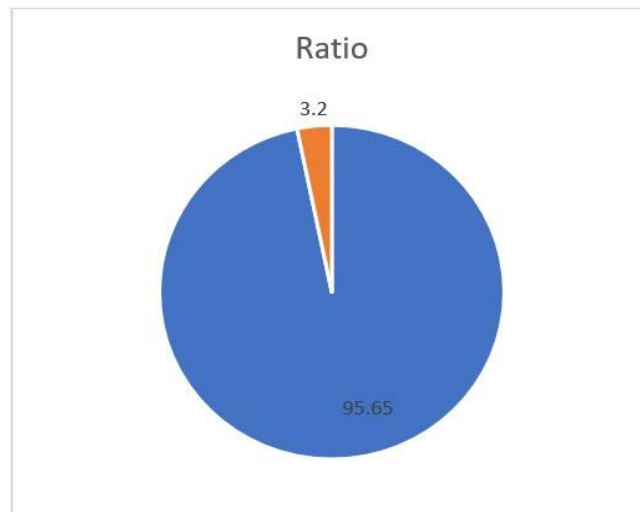


Chart 1. Ratio

#### 8.2 Which Medium You Passed Higher Secondary with

- (a) English
- (b) Arabic
- (c) Other language

The diagram to this question is given below.

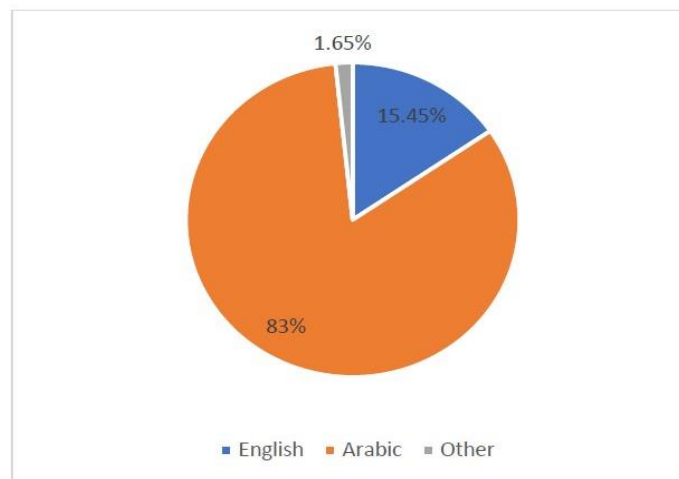


Chart 2. Medium of higher secondary education

90% of students answered that they studied in Arabic medium schools as an instructed of their medium. It indicates that the majority of the students want to learn an English language for their career growth.

### 8.3 How Do You Grade Your Proficiency English?

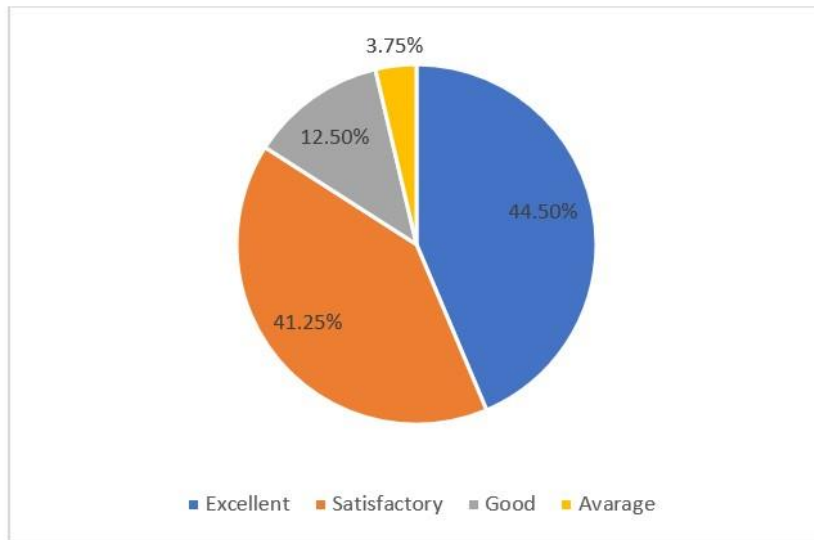


Chart 3. Language proficiency level

Most of the students responded that they are good at speaking. They take an English as a challenging subject in their course. They think that because English is a commercial or global language, they may have more work chances. I'd opine that the learner's professionalism motivates them to desire to master the language.

### 8.4 What Are the Strategies Do They Follow to Improve English Language Skills?

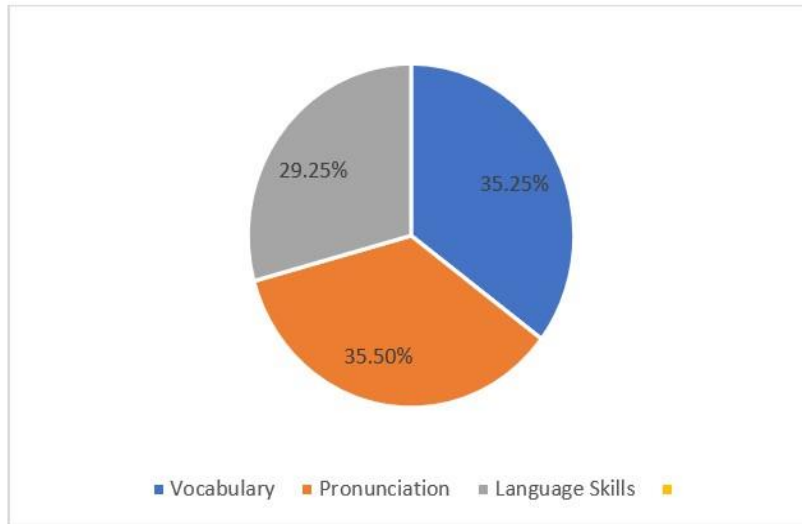


Chart 4. Language skills

The above chart reflects that vocabulary and pronunciation go hand in hand which needs to be emphasized. To practice the above two, one has to have a good listening skill where one can also concentrate on sense and meaning.

## 9. Findings and Conclusion

### 9.1 Findings

1. Due to the increasing need for international communication, it has been discovered that English fluency is crucial for professional progression in non-native English speaking, particularly in Asia and some regions of Europe.
2. The importance of English proficiency was shown to be significantly higher in international commerce, tourist, and academic occupations than in local or less globalized professions.
3. In certain societies where English is viewed as a status symbol, individualities with advanced proficiency were more likely to enthrall directorial or leadership places.

4. Organizations in non-native English-speaking nations are investing more in English training workshops as they recognize the real advantages of international cooperation.
5. Professionals with strong English chops were also suitable to acclimate to transnational bulletins more fluently, adding their prospects of moving up the commercial graduation in a global terrain.
6. The ability to communicate in English increased networking chances at international conferences, seminars, and training sessions, which indirectly aided in job advancement.
7. Higher English proficiency increased a professional's career trajectory by increasing their likelihood to move into positions or industries that required such skills.
8. In order to prepare students for global employment opportunities, higher education institutions, particularly those in non-native English-speaking nations, are placing an increasing focus on English proficiency in their curricula.
9. The ability to communicate in English not only helped one's employment, but also their personal development, sense of self, and ability to represent themselves.
10. People are inadvertently under pressure to increase their English proficiency because of societal beliefs and the prestige associated with it in many countries, which link it to notions of success and professional advancement.

### 9.2 Conclusion

Numerous empirical studies that have been conducted and the in-depth study of the topic's impact on job advancement unambiguously demonstrate how important English language ability is in today's professional environment. There is a better employment chances when communication skill is strong, and especially this trend is noticeable in fields like international business, academia, and tourism. Furthermore, due to the growing need for international communication, the importance of English proficiency is particularly evident in non-English speaking regions, particularly in Asia and some parts of Europe.

Where English is valued as a status symbol culturally, there is an observable trend of people with high competence landing key positions in management and leadership. With advanced levels coinciding with international representations and intermediate competence fitting the needs of more localized jobs in multinational businesses, this proficiency gradient also defines the kinds of roles that professionals are suitable for. However, professionals are usually limited to roles with limited global participation because of their basic level expertise.

It's interesting to note that English proficiency still stands out as a key requirement in fields like IT, engineering, BCA., BBA, Bio-medical and B.Pharma for success. This emphasizes how having strong verbal skills has multidisciplinary implications. The dynamism of the digital age emphasizes this even more, enhancing the necessity of English competence for remote work.

The subtle requirements of various activities and leadership directives still require human English fluency, despite the development of advanced digital tools and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven translators. The shifting priorities of higher education institutions around the world, which have included English in their curricula after realizing the value of the language in today's globalized labour markets, are a clear indication of this tendency.

Overall, even though it is important for career success, English language competency is a complex concept that is influenced by a variety of circumstances, from societal expectations to professional obligations. Understanding these subtleties is crucial for both people and organizations as the globalized professional sector continues to develop.

### 10. Limitation and Further Research

In order to communicative skills on career progression that the students should get opportunity to speak English in the classroom. Teachers should make sure that every student gets the opportunity to speak in the class. This will increase students' communication skills. Furthermore, research suggest that there a scope on writing strategies and reading skills in a particular group of students.

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### Authors contributions

Dr. Soheli and Rahamat contributed equally to the design of the study. Rahamat and Soheli drafted the article and revised the article time to time. We read and approved the final manuscript.

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### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

### Informed consent

Obtained.

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**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

**Open access**

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