

# Master English or lose out in job hunt

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**S**TUDENTS at the tertiary level who neglect English are doing so at their peril.

Instead, they should not make every effort to master the language.

Though no one can force our undergraduates to study English, they must understand that mastering it would be an asset to them.

They should not blame employers for not accepting them as most companies require graduates who are competent in English, especially at the supervisory and executive levels.

In my research on the kind of skills 73 companies in the country look for, the 12 top needs related to English are to be able to:

- > Communicate justly when there's a difference of opinion;
- > Communicate efficiently to convince clients;
- > Communicate effectively to win business opportunities;
- > Communicate convincingly over the phone;
- > Communicate with proper etiquette or manners;
- > Adapt to formal and informal situations when communicating;
- > Draft and write proper letters to clients;
- > Write short reports on business dealings and events;
- > Understand and report what others have discussed;

> Understand and clarify information, letters and reports received;

> Present facts plainly to an audience; and

> Conduct meetings in a brief and effectual manner.

Are our graduates prepared for this?

Students must remember that English is not only for them to seek better jobs after graduating. It has become an indispensable tool for them in their everyday life.

From the tiny electronic gadgets to the Internet and books, English is the main language used. Most newspapers and journals are written in English.

Most popular international news channels on television are in English. In fact, the more languages one acquires the better standing he has in the business and across the globe.

Students who ignore English are by design "localising" the value of their degrees. Many IT graduates from India, for instance, can find jobs in the developed world aided by their good grasp of English.

If our graduates think that they can secure a job as a civil servant where the language may not be a prerequisite, the bloated civil service would not be able to accommodate that many employees.

Even then there are sectors within

the civil service that require graduates to be competent in English.

In the case of China, English is taught to all schoolchildren and some universities are now giving emphasis to English. There are now Chinese universities offering graduate courses in English with well-defined programmes. In the main, some universities are offering the sciences in English.

China is now able to draw many international students to study at these universities and the quality of education has improved tremendously as there is a high level of competition among university students.

The focus now is for local and foreign students in China to be able to speak Mandarin and English.

Graduates from these institutions are able to find jobs with local and foreign companies thus making their degrees naturally "internationalised".

Malaysia cannot talk about globalisation and at the same time ignore the English language.

We cannot dictate to the world to accept what we want. It's the world out there that will dictate what we should do with our graduates to make them more competitive.

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