Employability Skills Framework for ELT

Introductory Guide
Employability is about more than having appropriate qualifications, technical skills or a specific body of knowledge. To be able to participate effectively in the workplace and fulfil their potential throughout their careers, employees (and potential employees) also need to develop transferable core skills and appropriate attitudes.

Many of these core skills (often referred to as ‘soft skills’) are social skills – the need to work well with other people, with different backgrounds and potentially conflicting interests. There is also an increasing need for higher level thinking skills – to be more critical of information and opinions, to be able to make connections across complex ideas and data sets, and to think creatively to solve problems. In addition, there is the demand for more personal, emotional skills – the ability to maintain motivation despite setbacks, to have a positive attitude when faced with challenges, and to deal constructively with change and uncertainty.

Businesses around the world are finding that their future success depends on having a workforce that has these kinds of social, cognitive and emotional skills. The National Soft Skills Association (nationalsoftskills.org) found that 85% of job success comes from having well-developed soft skills. Despite the apparent need for employees to possess effective core skills, some evidence reveals large mismatches between the actual supply and demand of key work-related skills. According to a report by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, the most common skills deemed to be lacking among staff in UK companies are people and personal skills relating to workload management and teamwork (Vivian et al., 2015). Around the world there is increasing demand from businesses for employees with effective core skills, and education has a critical role to play in helping learners to develop these skills.

Learning an additional language already involves many of these core skills, such as communication, collaboration and critical thinking. This makes the development of these skills especially suited to language learning, and there is lots of scope to develop these skills in an integrated way through the teaching of English.

What do we mean by ‘employability skills’?

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Why teach employability skills?

Businesses around the world are finding that their future success depends on having a workforce that has these kinds of social, cognitive and emotional skills. The National Soft Skills Association (nationalsoftskills.org) found that 85% of job success comes from having well-developed soft skills. Despite the apparent need for employees to possess effective core skills, some evidence reveals large mismatches between the actual supply and demand of key work-related skills. According to a report by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, the most common skills deemed to be lacking among staff in UK companies are people and personal skills relating to workload management and teamwork (Vivian et al., 2015). Around the world there is increasing demand from businesses for employees with effective core skills, and education has a critical role to play in helping learners to develop these skills.

Why integrate employability skills into English language teaching?

Learning an additional language already involves many of these core skills, such as communication, collaboration and critical thinking. This makes the development of these skills especially suited to language learning, and there is lots of scope to develop these skills in an integrated way through the teaching of English.
An overview of the Employability Skills Framework for ELT

The Employability Skills Framework for ELT is a way of making sense of the different skills that employees and potential employees need to develop, in addition to learning English. The framework is based on extensive research into employer needs and is aligned with the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework (cambridge.org/clcf). By providing a map of the most important employability skills, the framework allows teachers to gain a deeper understanding of what each of the skills involves and integrate them more systematically into their teaching.
How does the Employability Skills Framework for ELT help?

The Employability Skills Framework for ELT helps learners to develop employability skills that are important for success in current employment and future careers. These skills are grouped into eight key areas of competency.

1. **Collaboration and Teamwork**
   - Establishing ways of working together
   - Respecting and supporting others in their tasks

2. **Completing Collaborative Tasks and Projects**
   - Agreeing on what needs to be done
   - Managing the distribution of tasks
   - Making use of the skills and knowledge of colleagues
   - Ensuring progress towards a goal

3. **Dealing with Conflict**
   - Identifying challenges, problems, and opportunities
   - Managing team conflict and resolving issues

4. **Communication**
   - Listening actively to others speaking
   - Managing communication barriers or breakdowns
   - Structuring information in spoken and written texts clearly
   - Speaking with confidence and fluency
   - Writing clearly and convincingly

5. **Adapting the Way You Communicate for Different Audiences and Purposes**
   - Identifying the need for different communication styles in different contexts
   - Adjusting language for different contexts, purposes, and people
   - Showing awareness of differences in communication styles across cultures

6. **Innovation and Problem Solving**
   - Engaging actively with ideas and challenges outside one’s immediate responsibilities
   - Considering perspectives of different stakeholders
   - Finding solutions by looking at approaches taken in other teams or organisations
   - Developing and testing out new ideas
   - Developing alternative scenarios and proposals

7. **Leadership and Global Citizenship**
   - Contributing to the success of an organisation, demonstrating leadership, and contributing to an organisation’s positive role in global issues
   - Developing organisational skills to manage time, tasks, and information, and learning to manage one’s ongoing professional development
   - Developing self-awareness, learning to act with resilience, and demonstrating empathy and positive relationship skills
   - Learning to use tools and creating digital content, sharing and interacting appropriately with others online, and ensuring safety and wellbeing online

8. **Professional Development and Management**
   - Developing a creative mindset, generating ideas, and solving problems effectively
   - Generating ideas, generating multiple ideas, elaborating on and combining ideas
   - Developing alternative scenarios and proposals
   - Evaluating ideas and arguments
   - Evaluating arguments and proposals
   - Reaching conclusions from comparing different arguments
   - Identifying and understanding problems
   - Identifying, gathering, and organising relevant information
   - Evaluating options and recommendations to come to a decision
   - Justifying decisions and solutions
   - Evaluating the effectiveness of implemented solutions

So, how can we gain a deeper understanding of what each competency really means? The framework breaks down each competency into more detail, so that you can see much more clearly which skills your learners need to develop to be good at that particular competency.

Each Competency is divided into Core Areas - these are the broad skills and behaviours that make up each competency. The Core Areas are then divided into Component skills - these give more clarity to exactly what is meant by each Core Area.
Collaboration and Teamwork

Research among employers reveals that the ability to successfully collaborate and work well in a team is one of the most sought-after employee attributes. Around the world, there is increasing demand from businesses for employees with effective core skills such as collaboration and teamwork. We have identified three Core Areas within Collaboration and Teamwork:

Collaboration and Teamwork in the classroom
Integrating collaboration and teamwork into our lessons creates a more inclusive classroom and supports successful language acquisition by increasing learner engagement. But as well as being key to inclusivity and engagement, developing these skills also enables our learners to be able to participate effectively in the workplace, and fulfil their potential throughout their careers.

Suggestions for classroom practice
The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- Encourage learners to celebrate the success of group tasks by reflecting on their own contributions and roles, as well as setting goals for improvement.
- Integrate choice into tasks so that learners can choose to work to their strengths, or to try things they are not confident at to develop new skills. Additionally, encourage learners that do have strengths in one particular area to support others in their tasks.
- Support learners in identifying and implementing conflict resolution strategies and resolving issues that arise during group tasks.

- Create opportunities for learners to work together in groups, and ensure that tasks have clear goals and steps.
- Explain and discuss the need for collaboration and teamwork within each task with your learners.
In the workplace, people need to be able to express themselves clearly and appropriately when speaking and writing, to listen actively to others, and to be able to use nonverbal communication appropriately. The National Soft Skills Association found that 85% of job success comes from having well-developed soft skills such as communication, and communication has been identified as one of the top skills that employers look for in their employees. We have identified three Core Areas within Communication:

**Innovation and Problem Solving skills** demonstrate an employee’s ability to be a valuable resource to the company by generating ideas and solving problems creatively. A large-scale study into the future of jobs and jobs training (Rainie & Anderson, 2017) identified problem solving as one of the most important skills needed to succeed in the workplace of the future. We have identified three Core Areas within Innovation and Problem Solving:

**Communication in the classroom**
As well as being key to successful language development, communication is an essential employability skill for employees and potential employees to develop. Although we naturally teach communication skills as English teachers, there is always more that we could do to make the most of these opportunities in order to help our students become excellent communicators.

**Suggestions for classroom practice**
The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- Before starting communication tasks, explore and discuss the concept of active listening with learners. Encourage learners to work together to define criteria for what makes a good listener.
- Useful communication strategies can be highlighted with effective questioning. For example, a teacher helping adults on an English-for-work course may pause a recording of an interview to ask about the impression given by an interviewee who is looking downwards and avoiding eye contact with an interviewer (being prepared to highlight cultural differences).
- When practising new language phrases, encourage learners to consider how language might differ according to different contexts, and create opportunities for learners to carry out research about how communication styles differ between cultures.

**Innovation and Problem Solving in the classroom**
As well as helping learners to develop the skills they need to be able to participate effectively in the workplace, integrating Innovation and Problem Solving skills into our lessons also generates a strong and immediate need for language, and the process is more real-world than many other classroom tasks as learners focus simultaneously on both process and product.

**Suggestions for classroom practice**
The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- Have learners ask and answer questions. By using questions as a vehicle to dive deeper into your learners’ thoughts and ideas, you are promoting innovation and helping learners to develop a creative mindset.
- Encourage learners to generate multiple ideas by integrating brainstorming activities into lessons. In scenarios which involve problems, for example, have learners consider the scale of the problem by brainstorming all the possible consequences, and as many strengths and weaknesses to a proposed solution as possible.
Critical Thinking and Decision Making

Critical Thinking and Decision Making are skills that are in high demand from employers around the world, and employees with these skills are seen as immensely valuable. Companies need their employees to have strong analytical and evaluative skills, and to exercise careful judgement and decision making in the workplace. We have identified three Core Areas within Critical Thinking and Decision Making:

- Understanding and analysing information and arguments
- Evaluating ideas and arguments
- Making decisions

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- At the heart of critical thinking is the notion of asking questions. Learners should be encouraged to continually question the information they receive and the conclusions they come to. The teacher should push learners to deeper critical thinking by asking them questions, such as:
  a. Why is that your answer?
  b. How did you come to that answer?
  c. Do you think there could be another answer?
- Encourage learners to seek out and compare alternative arguments and proposals before making decisions and drawing conclusions.

Leadership and Global Citizenship

One of the top skills employers seek in job applicants is leadership, and in today's rapidly changing world, a key aspect of leadership is the concept of global citizenship. Now more than ever, organisations and businesses are looking beyond their local communities and developing an awareness of the world and a sense of their role and responsibilities within the wider global community. We have identified three Core Areas within Leadership and Global Citizenship:

- Contributing to the success of an organisation
- Demonstrating leadership
- Contributing to an organisation's positive role in global issues

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- Have learners brainstorm the skills and qualities that make an effective leader, and create opportunities for each learner to take on the role of leader in group tasks.
- Allocate time for learners to research how different companies and organisations address global issues such as the environment, inclusivity, equality, and exploitation.
- Begin group tasks and projects by having learners identify and describe their roles and responsibilities within the group.
Professional Development and Management

Strong strategic planning skills and organisational ability are highly sought after by employers, as these skills enable employees to meet deadlines and to maintain realistic goals. We have identified two Core Areas within Professional Development and Management:

- Being organised
- Managing your professional development

Emotional Intelligence in the classroom

In a rapidly changing world, employees are increasingly required to deal constructively with changes and uncertainty, demonstrate a positive disposition to challenges, and maintain motivation despite setbacks. Resilience, patience, adaptability and self-awareness are key qualities that learners need to develop in order to survive and thrive in their current and future careers.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- Encourage learners to demonstrate self-awareness by reflecting on their emotional responses to different work-related issues and tasks.
- When encountering different work-related issues in course materials, ask learners to consider how the issue might impact on people’s emotional states and stress levels. Have learners work together to identify practical behaviours and actions that might help people control negative emotions, manage stress, and develop a positive attitude.
- Support the development of learners’ empathy and positive relationship skills by encouraging them to consider how different characters might feel in reading, listening, and viewing texts. Have learners consider where different characters might need support and identify practical ways of supporting them.
Digital Literacy

With constant changes and advances in digital technologies, employees in all fields of work are increasingly exposed to digital technologies in their working environments. We have identified three Core Areas within Digital Literacy:

Using tools and creating digital content
Sharing and interacting online
Safety and wellbeing online

Digital Literacy in the classroom

Technology has long played an integral role in our lives and it is essential that learners become digitally literate in order to take full advantage of new and flexible ways of working, and make the most of the opportunities that digital technology provides both now and in the future.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- Develop your own digital literacy skills as a teacher and provide learners with authentic contexts for practice by making use of digital tools in your classroom.
- Create opportunities in classroom tasks for learners to select and use appropriate digital tools for learning, collaborating, and creating content.
- Encourage learners to follow safe online practices by holding a discussion about how learners manage their online identity and the potential positive and negative repercussions of this.
- When practising new skills and language, ask learners to consider how language and communication styles might differ in online contexts, and encourage them to discuss how different behaviours may or may not be appropriate online.

Further reading

For more information on this topic, please see:


Acknowledgments

The Employability Skills Framework for ELT has been developed by Cambridge University Press & Assessment in collaboration with Jade Blue (jadeblueeff.wordpress.com).
Explore more useful frameworks from Cambridge:
Cambridge Life Competencies Framework
cambridge.org/clcf

We believe that English can unlock a lifetime of experiences and, together with teachers and our partners, we help people to learn and confidently prove their skills to the world.

Find out more at cambridge.org/english

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