

August 27, 2012

Incredible journey

SRUTHI VIJAYACHANDRAN who won the University of Cambridge ESOL Best Young Speaker Competition, recounts her experience.



A PASSION FOR ENGLISH: Sruthi Vijayachandran

My incredible journey began last year when I enrolled for the Business English Certificate (BEC) from the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations. My faculty at the Department of Public Relations in Stella Maris College, Chennai, recommended it as a valuable qualification that would enhance my professional growth.

Having successfully completed the BEC assessment in April last year, I was invited by Cambridge ESOL to take part in their speaking competition. I progressed through the regional rounds and made it to the National Finals held in Chennai. In fact the competition is quite intense in India because of the popularity of Cambridge assessments and the high number of contestants. Representing India at the international stage was an honour — usually a once in a lifetime opportunity for most people.

The finals were held at Robinson College in Cambridge and the competition was based on three rounds: a prepared speech related to the 2012 Olympics, an impromptu speech pertaining to professional life, followed by a Q & A round. At the end of the event when the Chief Executive of Cambridge ESOL, Dr. Michael Milanovic, announced my name as the winner, I was speechless — yes, ironic given that I had just taken part in a speaking competition!

The other finalists were from Hong Kong, Vietnam, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Japan. The first prize is a MBA scholarship to the London School of Business and Finance and the second prize a Diploma in Business to the University of Tasmania in Australia — both organisations sponsored the event.

What I cherish the most is the experience I gained through the entire process. Of course the constant support and encouragement from family and friends has been invaluable. The competition has not only developed my public speaking skills, but has also provided an opportunity to meet and network with participants from various Indian States and countries across Asia.

What struck me was how friendly all the competitors were and whilst we all spoke a range of languages, we all shared a passion for education and English. And that's what makes English such an important language to learn. We were all from different parts of the world — but we spoke a common language. English is the language of international business and I believe that in today's globalised world, learning it is a must for anyone who wants to succeed in any profession.

There is never a right or wrong time to learn English. Make sure you attempt an internationally recognised English assessment which meets global standards. Bear in mind that successful language learning is not just about knowing grammar and vocabulary, it's about knowing how to communicate effectively in real-life day-to-day situations.

“Communication is an integral part of our lives and proficiency in English can certainly give you an edge — internationally.”