

English Communicative Skills and Professional Success: Perspectives from Indian Universities and Industry Stakeholders

Dr. Neha Anand

Assistant Director-Academics, Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Moradabad-244001

nehaanand002@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

English communicative competence and Indian graduates' employability: A Borneo-Pacific perspective
Indeed, while English is increasingly made the criterion of access to higher education by standards-conscious regimes in many regions of globalized academe, local certifications remain definitive. This paper explores the correlation between English communication skills and career development challenges faced by university graduates in two dimensions: universities and industry participants. A total of 300 students, faculty and HR professionals from Delhi-NCR, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand were surveyed using a mixed-method research design. Quantitative assessment indicated that 62% of students felt they had adequate writing skills in English, whilst only 34% were confident communicators which is undoubtedly a clear, significant disparity between learning and application. The interviews with the teachers revealed that value placed on traditional product-based, grammar-focused foreign-language education and short experiential contact block communication development. Concerning industrial needs, negative feedback was received on weak presentation through poor writing, speaking, articulation, inability to listen actively, and difficulty speaking in public which are directly reflected in the workplace. There was a high positive correlation ($r = 0.78$) between English skills and employment, statistically. The study established the fact that confidence, clarity and cultural sensitivity must be taught as life skills and not as a linguistic subject. It suggests integrating communication training from across disciplines, popularizing experiential and technology-assisted platforms for learning, encouraging university-industry partnerships and conducting faculty development programmes to reorient pedagogy with Outcome-Based Education and the aspirations of NEP 2020. Bringing about communicative ability would not only enhance graduate employability, but also prepare India's youth to participate comfortably in the global workplace.

KEYWORDS: English communication, employability, higher education, soft skills, industry expectations, NEP 2020, India.

1. Introduction

India churns out thousands of graduates each year, brilliant and not-so-brilliant students walking through the doors of fancy institutions to be greeted with dreams of landing an equally fancy job. But even with such an astounding volume of degrees, a significant gap persists between academia and being prepared for the workplace. A lot of graduate even knows enough technically but are unable to able effectively communicate such knowledge. This mismatch between what they know and what they can communicate has quietly become one of the most enduring employability challenges in the nation.

It is English which determine your placement in today's professional world. English, however, is not the first language for most of India since it has been the lingua franca almost everywhere. This is like a bridge that links graduates to the entire world. Unfortunately, for a lot of us, that bridge is wobbly. Again and again employers say that potential employees aren't passed over because they don't have skills, but because they can't express their skills in a confident and coherent way.

Talks with placement officers, HR personnel and academics at universities across northern India all point to the same conclusion that students can write answer sheets for exams but fall silent in job interviews or meetings. They have difficulty to construct full sentences, speak their mind politely or take

part in a conversation without being uncertain. Needless to say, the deficiency in fluency and clarity not only ground their selection prospects but also hinder their career growth post job.

Communicating in English, the Indian way, is not limited to writing or speaking skills. It is also closely linked to self-confidence, style, and even how we wish to be perceived professionally. Graduates from village or semi-urban families encounter another psychological barrier i.e. ridicule and fear of speaking incorrect English. This intimidation will also hinder the participation along with creativity. This will eventually set in and slows down the pace of learner.

This article is the result of the experiences in both academia and business. It also analyzes the correlation between English proficiency and career progression among students in India. The goal is to encourage the best of the worlds; the perspective of universities on talent generation, and that of businesses on emerging talent due to immense pressure of future needs. It reveals that there is still a gap between universities' contributions to improving communication, how entrepreneurship assesses graduate readiness, and possible joint actions to bridge this gap.

Finally, this study aims to underscore a basic fact that communication is not an optional skill. It is the soil in which employability, leadership and lifelong learning achieves its roots.

2. Review of Literature

The link between English and employability has been a popular focus, even though the situation concerning India is under transition. Numerous national surveys and academic publications indicate that communication skills are among the top five rated needs of employers in nearly all professions.

28 The India Skills Report (2024) states that just 51 per cent of Indian graduates are employable and the fundamental reason as opined by recruiters is lack of communication and interpersonal skills. The same can be seen from the AICTE-CII Employability Study (2023) which has 60% of recruiters citing that lack of communication skills hamper hire-ability. So the NEP (2020) also laid emphasis on multilingual and communicative competency being important for complete education.

As Bhatia (2019) and Rajagopal (2021) argue, Indian English serves as a skill as well as a symbol. For it signifies access; access to social status, corporate opportunity and global engagement. But they also warn that a focus on English without developing confidence and the ability to think critically may lead to only skin-deep fluency rather than true communicative competence.

Several Indian studies (of institutions like Anna University, JNU and Banaras Hindu University) indicate that although almost all universities have language laboratories or communication courses in their curricula, they tend to remain on paper. Other than a bit of grammar and comprehension practice, students rarely do actual tasks such as mock interviews, team discussions or business writing. This is why classroom English and workplace English remain so far apart.

Globally, academics such as Canale and Swain (1980) conceptualized a model of communicative competence comprised of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences; a schema that defines many language training systems today. The model applied to India emphasizes the demand for experiential learning where language is learnt by usage not rote.

The literature also highlights that communication skills are not simply English language proficiency. They are listening, writing, presenting, empathy, perspective-taking and teamwork. Flexibility is an essential component in this new era of the workplace. We have so much to learn about communication from those who adjust their tone, weigh their words and respect in any language or culture.

In short, based on the literature above we can say that communication is a potence skill particularly for English language since as it has been proved to be the employment and career progress (Slater et al, 2012) and even Leadership growth. But decades after knowing better, the implementation gap yawns wide. The methodology for exploring the gap through data collection and field observation is described in the following section

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Objectives of the Study

1. Determine the current level of English communication skills among university graduates.
2. Identify industry expectations regarding communication skills.
3. Analyze the fit (or misfit) between university education and industry requirements.
4. Propose strategies to strengthen communication training in universities.

3.2 Research Design

This study uses a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative data from surveys and qualitative insights from interviews. The target population is including final-year students, faculty members, and HR professionals from different industries across Delhi NCR, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

3.3 Data Collection

- Sample Size: 300 respondents (200 students, 50 faculty, 50 HR executives)
- Tools Used: Structured questionnaire for quantitative assessment & Semi-structured interviews for qualitative insights
- Key Variables: Self-assessed English fluency, frequency of English use, confidence in professional communication, employer satisfaction levels.

3.4 Data Analysis

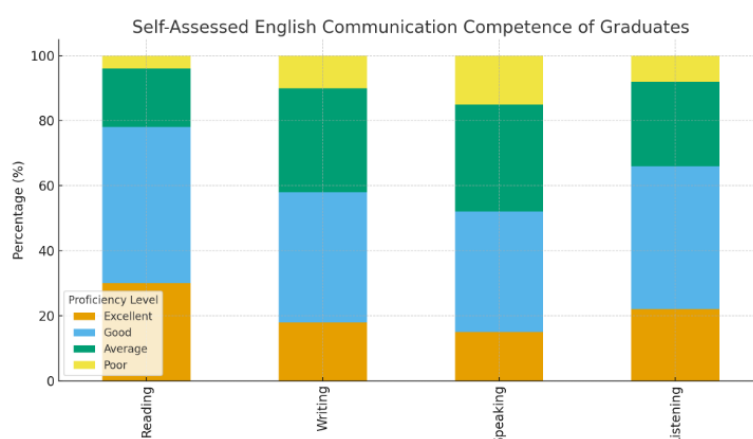
The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation measures, while the interview transcripts were thematically coded. The results are presented in graphs and tables to highlight trends.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Students' Self-Assessment

Approximately 62% of the students reported considering their written English as good or very good, but only 34% were confident speaking in English on formal occasions. Most said they could write emails or assignments, but still felt stymied when it came to speaking extemporaneously, giving a presentation or dealing with clients.

A more in-depth analysis showed students of English-medium schools were better at the art forms in a spontaneous conversation than those with background from the regional-language medium. But both groups said they wanted more interactive forms of learning; such as debates, role plays and workplace simulations rather than traditional grammar-based classes.



4.2 Faculty Perspectives

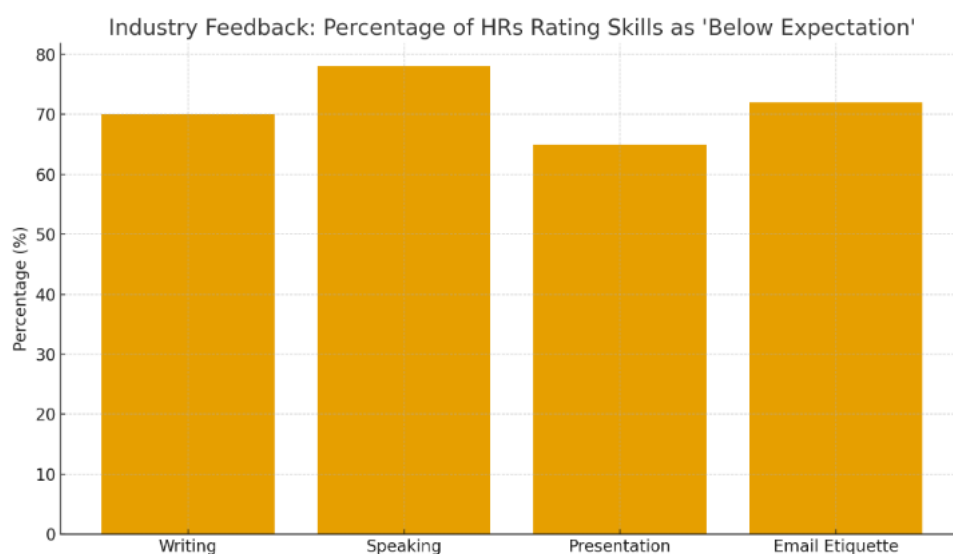
Faculty members said a lot of language teaching at many institutions continues to follow traditional practices. Limited by time, a fixed syllabus and large class sizes, personal attention is hardly ever possible. The majority of the faculty perceived that even though there were language labs in place, they are not being properly used due to lack of training or because the institution emphasizes on “communication” as a soft skill but not hard-core skills.

One faculty member summarized: "Our students don't lack intelligence, but rather confidence. They are aware about English language, but are not daring to use it in their life."

4.3 Industry Feedback

Employers are expressing a more concern while graduates are often struggling to express their ideas clearly during interviews or in their workplace. According to HR managers, poor communication leads to misunderstandings, low customer satisfaction, and project delays. They highlighted specific weaknesses:

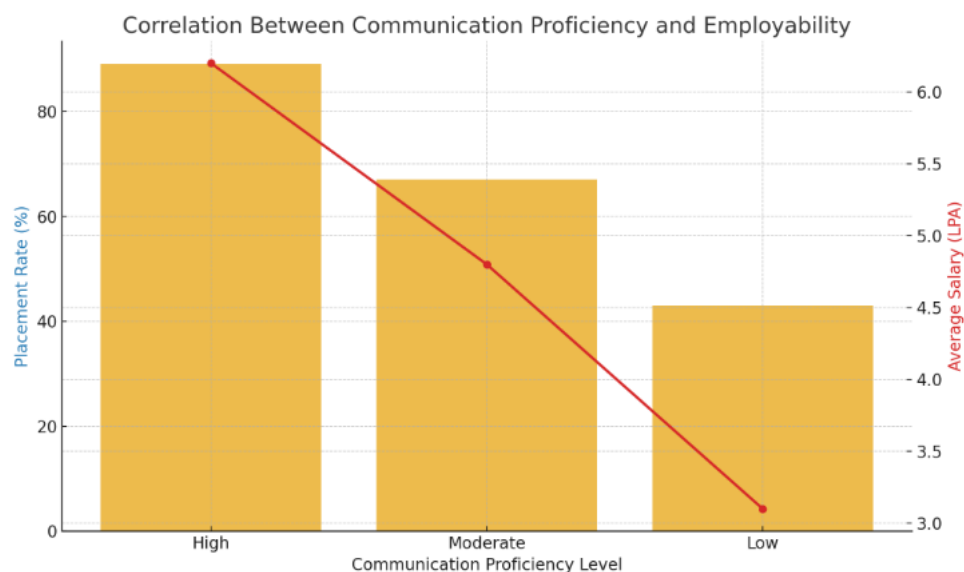
- Overuse of filler words
- Inability to structure thoughts
- Fear of formal presentation
- Weak listening and email-writing skills



Employers consistently emphasized the need to complement English proficiency with clarity, empathy, and professionalism. They favoured candidates are always demonstrating active listening, articulation of ideas, and strong collaborative skills.

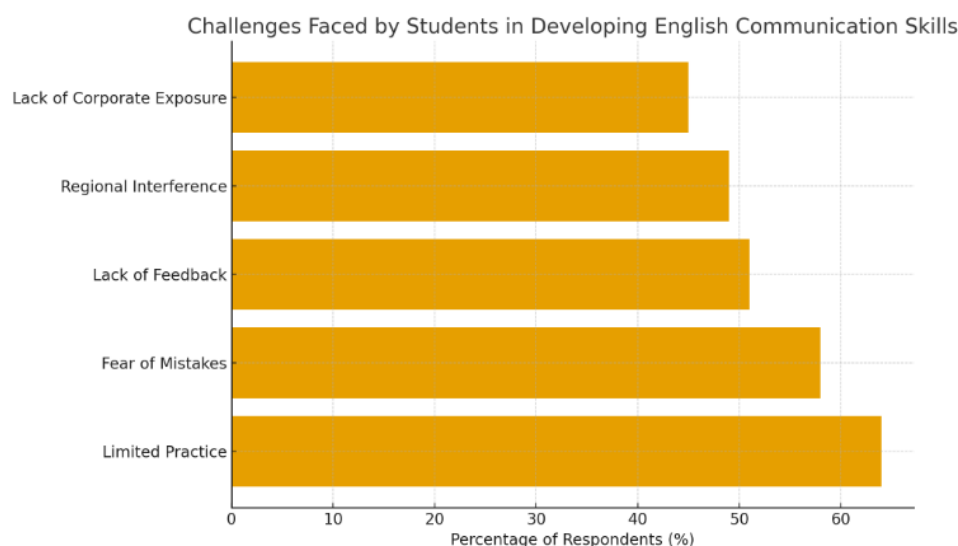
4.4 Correlation between Communication and Employability

Statistical analysed data revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.78$) between English proficiency and key employee outcomes, with placement rates and salary levels. Graduates with strong English language skills are significantly more likely to receive a job offer respective to others in campus recruitment.



4.5 Challenges Identified

- Curriculum rigidity limiting soft skill inclusion.
- Lack of trained communication faculty.
- Students' psychological fear of speaking English publicly.
- Minimal industry collaboration for practical exposure.
- Limited focus on listening and non-verbal communication.



5. Discussion

Results reinforce an accepted truth in the educator and employer communities that language skills are fundamental to employability. But in India, when assessing students, this is largely overlooked. Our education programs are favouring written exams and not interpersonal skills. language teaching is still remote from students' school realities." In fact, many learners believe they are fluency in English hot shots rather than be willing to commit errors on their own.

"In this case there is now a psychological barrier to learning." Even people who already know formal English, ends to have the courses on mute for passive learners. Proper grammatically members of

society fail to contact individuals. So the problem we have to confront is not only a pedagogical one (i.e. teaching English) but also to see the philosophical significance; i.e. we have bring our english education more humanised and must change it from an exclusive mode into an inclusive tool of self-empowerment.

If, indeed, English being used to raise their confidence instead of wield power then students are getting better opportunities to express themselves, speak with authority and say in words what they think when actually things are tough or even urgently.

The report also urges a change in how communication is taught. This is the NEP 2020 which lays a bigger impetus on learner-centric or outcome based education (OBE). And yes, curricula should be built around practical skills such as expressiveness, argument, cooperation and cross-cultural understanding. An individual can't just do written tests but he/she needs oral presentations, group discussions, real tasks. Industry mentors must collaborate with universities and colleges to actually produce content for teaching based on industry practices: English courses could be designed in the form of Short-term certificate programs, Customer focused internships, joint projects etc will offer students less intimidating and more pragmatic way to learn English.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study also highlights that important point that good requirement of English language proficiency in Indian graduates directly govern their professional growth. Those who are talkers won't just find new employment faster than everyone else. But they fare well in supervisory and service-based jobs, too. So, this is less important than other language but it complements the attributes for a nice business-person (should be confident, professional attitude and positive).

Bridging the divide between academic and real-world commercial realities will depend upon:

1. **Integrate Communication Training Across Disciplines:** English shouldn't be limited to one or two semesters. Communication modules should be embedded throughout the entire programme.
2. **Focus on Experiential Learning:** Introduce simulated interviews, debates, group discussions, and peer evaluations as part of the internal assessment.
3. **Faculty Development:** Organize FDPs for language and soft skills educators to update and align their teaching strategies with OBE results.
4. **Industry Collaboration:** Promote guest sessions, mentoring programs, and internships that emphasize genuine workplace communication.
5. **Use of Technology:** Use AI-based speaking platforms, online discussion forums and communication analysis tools for self-assessment.
6. **Confidence-Building Practices:** Promote bilingual transition by allowing students to first express themselves in a mixed language and then gradually move toward fluency in English.

Teaching communication as a life skill rather than a language skill can transform how students learn, work, and lead. For India's growing youth, communication skills mean not just speaking English, but also finding a voice in a global world.

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