

Employability Skills And Communication In Professional Life; The Relation Of Students And Teachers As A Strong Bond Of Professionalism

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Abstract:

This study focuses on the writing of 3rd year Bachelor of Business students from the University of Engineering & Technology in Roorkee, India. The aim of this study was (a) to study the relevance of the syllabus of the subject final level of study in business, (b) to identify gaps in the existing undergraduate curriculum, (c) to assess students' communication skills, (d) collect teachers' opinion about their students' writing performance and (e) suggest some remedial measures to improve students' language skills. Data were collected using a questionnaire and opinionated. The study found that the syllabus did not provide any scope for the development of practical, soft presentation skills. The study confirms that the syllabus provides no space for developing students' writing skills; rather, it requires and evaluates memory skills and reproductive abilities. There also seems to be a huge difference between the expected and achieved level of efficiency. This study points to certain gaps in current education communication that emphasizes the theoretical acquisition of knowledge and fails to provide successful leadership for the development and expansion of human capabilities, as well as personal development.

Keywords: communication skills, language skills, employability skills, communicative abilities, business students, syllabus relevance, language skills

Introduction

"Education can unlock all doors to progress."

—Swami Vivekananda

"Communication is the mother of existence." –
Keerthi Kumar

In today's knowledge society dominated by information and communication technologies (ICT), English is a global medium of communication. Knowledge of the English language has increased significantly significance in all major fields including education, commerce, trade, and employment. Effective communication has become a benchmark for ensuring growth and success in any field. Knowledge of the English language is essential for the creation and maintenance of better relationships at any level. The English language, which is known as a lingua franca, is one of them the most important means of communication in today's world. Moreover, as a result of continued globalization, knowledge of English has become a necessity. In India, English plays a key role in our education system and national life. It's an international language that provides a window to

the world. English is taught as a language of instruction in schools and universities and as such in this era of communication technology without English further higher education or exchange of professional languages is possible. English has the power to change the world. It provides information in everything imaginable field of knowledge. Even the student community has realized that English is essential to expose your identity to the world around you. Due to this, parents and students realized that through the acquisition of knowledge and the use of the English language one can stand increase the level of competition, and can sustain career growth. Here is Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest works.

Language, skill

Language is essentially a skill. Knowing about these things is an intellectual exercise (cognition) and using or performing them is a skill (action). Language skills are basically categorized into four segments – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – which can be further categorized into two sub-

segments – productive/active skills (ie speaking and writing) and receptive/passive skills (ie listening and reading). Alternatively, they can be divided into proper and informal skills, based on their use, as shown in Figure 1.

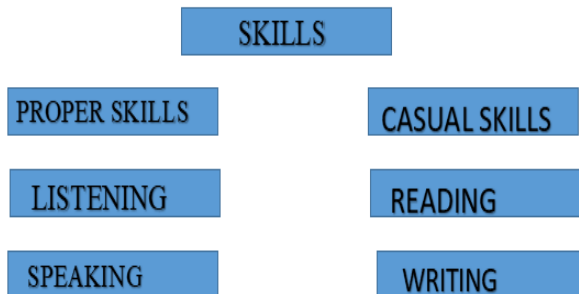


Figure 1. Division of the language subskills based on usage.

Proper skills (i.e., listening and speaking) are frequently used by all, whereas casual skills (i.e., reading and writing) are used casually. One can live without reading and writing, but not without speaking and listening. This indicates the importance of listening and speaking in the process of language learning (Paliwal, 1998). So, in order to enhance one’s communicative abilities, one should have good acquaintance with all four language skills. To attain the optimal level of language proficiency, a language teacher must consider four variables when programming any teaching: the learner, the setting, the material, and the teacher (see Figure 2). If all these are in proper tune, the outcome of the teaching-learning process will be fruitful and encouraging.

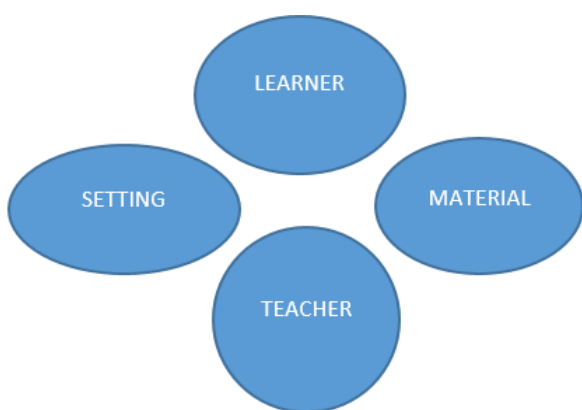


Figure 2. Variables affecting language learning outcomes.

The teacher must know the age, level of education, level of knowledge, goals, and linguistics, and the cultural background and handicaps of his students in language learning. Learning materials must be up-to-date and fully implemented. Teachers must

be proficient in the language, taking into account linguistic and cultural differences.

Current scenario

Today's world requires such a young generation that has certain skills and virtues in addition to their academic excellence. Knowledge has become a way of survival and a growing economy needs highly skilled manpower to create marketability. This is us they need an education system that meets quality expectations and produces trained people power in all faculties and in all subjects. Although the demand for English is growing expertise, we still have Macaulay's curriculum which emphasizes only memorization and reproduction. The entire teaching process lacks a focus on sharpening logical thinking, creativity, and flexibility. The skills of current graduates do not meet the expectations of employers and the current situation of teaching and studying the English language is not at a good level encouraging in Gujarat, India. Even the inability of many children to learn to read and write after 10 to 12 years of schooling is cause for concern. It has been observed that in the current process of English language teaching/learning, even many final-year undergraduates remain very passive and lack basic communication skills. Only a few exceptional students were found to be able to write a speak proper English They are unable to read a book with the correct pronunciation and after him independently. Incorrect spellings and ungrammatical constructions were detected quite common, even among college students. Correct use of English idioms and figures of speech is rare. Given the current scenario of English teaching/ learning, the researcher, an English lecturer at one of the business universities in the state of Uttarakhand saw a need to study language proficiency levels.

Purpose

It was a study of communication skills with a focus on 3rd grade writing Bachelor of Commerce students of University of Engineering & Technology Roorkee, India.

Objectives

The aim of this study was (a) to study the relevance of the syllabus of the concerned subject at the matriculation level in the final year in business, (b) to identify gaps in the field’s existing undergraduate curricula, and (c) assess students' communicative abilities, (d) collect teachers' views on their students' writing performance and (e) suggest some remedial measures to improve students' language

skills. Data were collected through a questionnaire and survey. The researcher obtained responses from teachers and students from all business colleges affiliated with the University of Engineering & Technology Roorkee and collected data related to writing

Sample and population

Skill effectiveness. The collected responses were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. All 18 in the third year of a Bachelor of Business in English or Commercial Communication teachers constituted the sample of teachers. Out of a total of 1,881 students, the researcher took 618 (33%) students for the student sample.

Main findings

The researcher found that 35% of the teacher respondents believed that the curriculum did not emphasize the development of listening skills. Additionally, 34% said that the syllabus does not place any weight on the most desirable speaking skill. More than half of the teachers (76%) said they believed the curriculum emphasized reading skills, and 87% said that the curriculum emphasized writing skills (see Figure 3).

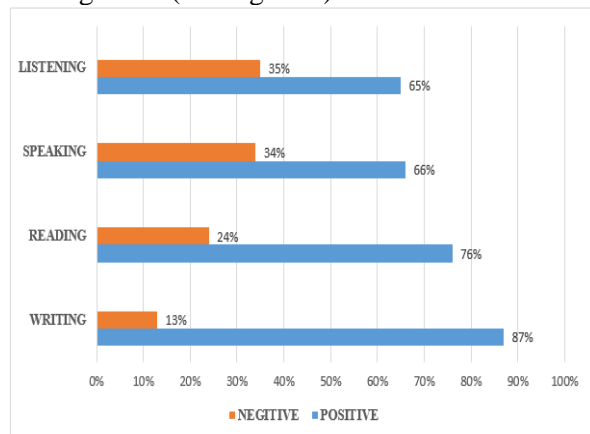


Figure 3. Teachers' views on the curriculum's emphasis on language skills.

Sixty-one percent of teachers believed that the curriculum had no room for the development of practical skills or presentation skills; likewise, 61% of teachers were of the opinion that the curriculum does not provide absolute scope for the development of students' writing skills. Of the sample of teachers, 83% reported that their students did not have the required level of effectiveness in written communication. 87 percent of teachers reported that writing effectiveness would require an optimal level of effectiveness in other language skills. The majority of teachers (35%) considered lack of communication skills as their students' main

problem, and 61% considered their students' lack of vocabulary as another main problem in learning English.

On the student side, 47% said they had problems communicating in English; 49% reported their poor communication skills, poor complex skills and insufficient level of, vocabulary. Half (50%) said they had problems speaking English, and 69% said one of their problems was a lack of grammar. Finally, 86% of students stated that they strongly believe that communication skills are better taught through demonstration than through theory.

Main problems

Of the 618 respondents, 96% reported difficulties with written academic communication (see Figure 4).

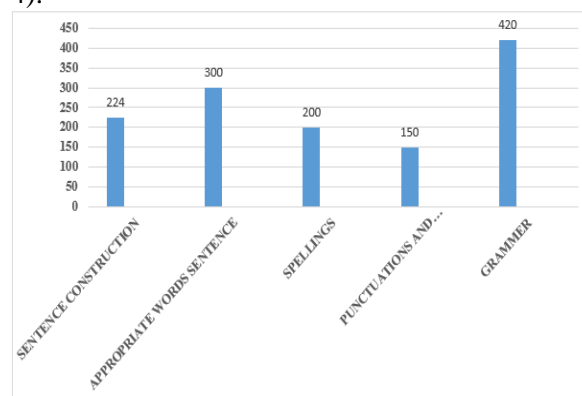


Figure 4. Difficult segments in written communication.

As Figure 4 shows, 69% of the total student responses revealed grammatical errors as a major problem. Another 49% of students confirmed that they have difficulty choosing appropriate words, and another 35% of students reported difficulty in constructing sentences. Furthermore, 30% of the responses indicated difficulties in using the correct spelling. Even adopting correct punctuation and capitalization appears to be problematic for about 23% of respondents.

In conclusion, the curriculum does not provide any scope for the development of practical, soft presentation skills. The study confirms that the syllabus does not provide any scope for the development of students' writing skills; rather, it requires and values memory skills and reproductive skills. There is a huge gap between expected and achieved efficiency levels. Most student respondents pointed to outdated teaching methods and irrelevant curricula. There is consensus among teachers on the need to include practical dimensions of assessment in the form of group discussions, oral examinations, and personal interviews to improve

their verbal communication. All teachers believed that a mere 3-hour written examination is not enough to assess the overall development of the pupil, especially in the area of communication skills.

Teachers' views on improving writing skills

Writing efficiency automatically improves other language skills. Students learning effectiveness varies from student to student, and their achieved level of effectiveness affects their actual learning output. Assessing pupils' performance by assessing their writing skills in a given subject does not ensure their overall development, as it only tests their memory and reproduction skills. All teachers confirmed that mere efficiency in writing does not guarantee complete language proficiency. Proper writing efficiency requires an optimal level of knowledge and familiarity with all other language skills. Segment report writing also requires some analytical skills from the students.

Student exposure

Although most students did not find English a difficult subject, it was observed that many of them could not achieve the minimum required level of written skills in communicative English. This poor performance is justified by either their casual attitude or their poor academic performance. There was agreement among teachers and students that communication skills are better taught through demonstrations. Many students were not so confident about their satisfactory level of proficiency in their English communication skills. Grammar seems to be a difficult task for most students and choosing the right words seems to be the second big problem. All students agreed on four factors that are essential for developing English writing skills. Most of them believed that basic knowledge is necessary to develop writing skills in English. The majority also confirmed that presentation skills, a good command of the language, and knowledge of all language skills would enable them to improve their written communication. Most respondents considered all four options.

Communication skills

Language and communication skills are recognized as important elements in the education of the modern generation. Personality development remains incomplete if communication skills are ignored. Effective communication requires proper knowledge of English grammar, accent, and pronunciation. Words should be handled with care

to interpret the exact intended meaning. To achieve this language proficiency, knowledge of the English language and good communication skills are essential. Communication competence refers to both knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge in real communication interaction. Effective communication is a must in this era of globalization. It is a combination of effective listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Effective communication makes it possible to successfully establish and maintain personal and professional relationships.

This study points to a certain gap in current pedagogical communication, which emphasizes the theoretical acquisition of knowledge and does not provide a successful guide for the development and expansion of human abilities and personal development.

Communication skills, which are one of the evaluation parameters, are not given due attention in the language curriculum.

The study confirms the fact that a person with a solid knowledge of communication skills will be able to demonstrate their academic performance relatively better. These skills develop self-confidence and also increase the employment opportunities of individuals.

Despite studying English together for years, we cannot achieve the expected level of efficiency in the English language. It is unfair to teach these soft skills in a theoretical context and expect students to perform in a practical sense. Soft skills are not given any weightage in university rankings. When they are not prescribed in the curriculum, very few students may consider acquiring knowledge of these soft skills. It is difficult for a person without soft skills to face the challenges of the present scenario. Despite securing a good percentage of academics, they could not compete with those who know these soft skills well. This gap between academic excellence and soft skills and personality development needs to be addressed. It is a known fact that a common job requirement is to have good oral communication skills in addition to technical knowledge. However, the current language curriculum and assessment system do not emphasize aspects of communication skills. The current prevailing rote learning does not help students improve their analytical skills.

R. Rajaram, head of human resources at a major information technology (IT) company, pointed out that most of today's graduates cannot write correct and complete sentences in English. They do not thoroughly understand grammatical aspects or the meaning of punctuation marks.

The role of communication skills in employability: Some research reveals

A national employability report by Aspiring Minds, an employability solutions company, has revealed that insufficient English and computer skills are key factors making graduates unemployable. It reported that out of 60,000 Indian graduates, about 16% and 14% of graduates were employable in sales and customer service operations. These jobs require communication, cognitive skills, and personality traits such as friendliness and helpfulness and, in the latter case, numerical skills. More than a third of graduates (36%) were suitable for employment in clerical/secretarial positions that require relatively low qualifications. Only 2% of graduates are employable in corporate communications or content creation, as the primary requirements are exceptional English proficiency and basic analytical skills. Only 3% are employable as analysts and only 2% as accountants. In teaching, employability was only 15%, as all jobs require high competence in cognitive skills and English. It was found that the higher the qualification requirement for the job, the greater the gap in employability. Cognitive skills remain the same, but the maximum difference between them is English communication skills. So we cannot deny the fact that “poor English and computer skills make graduates unemployable” (Nagarajan, 2013).

Data from the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) featured in The Economic Times article “Only 25% of IT Graduates Easily Employable: NASSCOM” (ET Bureau, 2011) explains why, when major IT companies and organizations like NASSCOM say, that only 25% of engineering graduates are employable, which means most of them have not been able to effectively communicate their skills and thought processes due to the gap between industry and academia (Singh, 2013).

A study conducted by Paulrajan (2011) concluded that a combination of academic qualifications, important professional skills, and personal skills was a selling points for entry-level positions. Employers in the retail industry are looking for people for their management positions with various skills such as academic qualifications, communication skills, leadership skills, teamwork skills, and previous work experience.

Pandey (2012) identified important factors affecting the employability of Master of Business Administration students and the study concluded

that there is a need to develop critical thinking skills in the youth. Shukla (2012) attempted to identify the employability skill level of students. The study revealed that the university curriculum should be revamped with more apprenticeships and live industry projects, which will facilitate pre-employment preparation and increase the employability of graduates.

A study by Chithra (2013) revealed that students with prior work experience have a better awareness of employability skills than students without work experience. The current need is to improve the skills and application of knowledge through specific training to enable workers to perform their jobs in the best possible way.

According to the National Employability Report (2016), over 80% of technical graduates are unemployable (<http://www.aspiringminds.com/research>). Rao (2010) in his book *Soft Skills – Enhancing Employability: Connecting Campus With Corporate* states that “India's education system currently focuses too much on facts and figures, which does not encourage creativity, analytical and reasoning power in children”. Thus, communication skill appears to be the most important component in students' career decisions.

To quote Ahmed, former Minister of State for Human Resource Development and External Affairs, “There has been a lot of concern recently about the employability of graduates coming out of our education system. I am told that only 25% of general graduates in all disciplines have employable skills”.

According to the approach of the Planning Commission of the Government of India for the 12th 5-Year, there is a need to focus on these aspects of skills to create job opportunities for graduates. General education lays the foundation for a knowledge-based concept. It fails to equip graduates with the necessary job skills. They require skills beyond the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic (the “three R's”). Skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (the “four Cs”) are now important in more and more jobs. Youth who complete their education should not look for work; employers should come to the university and hire them (Tank, 2013). Raman and Sharma (2012) stated, “Communication competence is the ability to express opinions in an effective manner, which enables goals to be achieved and relationships to be improved”. According to Knell, Oakley, and

O'Leary (2007), employers are constantly demanding a workforce rich in creativity, communication skills, and cultural understanding.

The study's findings confirm the findings of the Aspiring Minds National Employability Report that poor English and computer skills are key factors in graduate unemployment. All researchers emphasized the need to improve communication skills to improve their employment opportunities. All the reviews proved that poor communication skills are the main cause of educated unemployment which minimizes the job opportunities of current graduates.

Proposals

Poor communication skills of the educated youth are a matter of serious concern as it minimizes employment opportunities. Most employers expect the top five skills: (a) time management, (b) ability to work under pressure, (c) accuracy and attention, (d) oral communication, and (e) multitasking. Furthermore, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization publication added flexibility, innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, versatility, and teamwork to the list of skills. Of the millions of students with higher education in the developing world, very few obtain such education with these required skills and competencies; the rest are taught by poorly motivated, underqualified, and poorly compensated teachers using outdated curricula.

It is high time that universities train their students for the world of work as well. Until or unless students get practical work, no amount of theoretical knowledge will help them connect with the working world. There is a need to focus on the personality of the teacher in creating a better environment in the college. The basic aim of teaching English in business colleges is to provide students with professional knowledge and leadership quality according to the daily routine. But actually there is, a huge gap between the syllabus prescribed for commerce students and the usefulness of that syllabus in their practical life. The following suggestions can help minimize the gap and ensure better language learning outcomes.

Bridging courses are needed at the beginning of the semester to balance the differences between students with high and low levels of knowledge. Furthermore, it is also necessary to help the student realize the need for and importance of acquiring oral communication skills in English. Emphasis should be placed on the practical dimensions of

evaluation. Self-introductions, group discussions, presentations, and quizzes should be part of the exam and assessment. Unlike other content subjects, language as a skill subject should be taught practically. It is more acquired than learned; the classroom should be learner-centered to improve interactive skills.

There is also a need to introduce English for Specific Purposes as a subject at university at the level. English for Specific Purposes can prepare students to qualify for on-campus interviews, improve their job opportunities and make them more employable overall.

An English teacher is expected to prepare students who can use English according to the situational context. Their focus should be on communicative language teaching. In the process of learning English through literature, emphasis should be placed on practicing pronunciation and grammatical elements should be taught functionally. The traditional way of teaching should be updated and learning aids with the latest technology should be used to motivate students. A properly equipped language laboratory should be installed in all colleges and short-term courses should be compulsory for all graduates. All teachers and students should orient themselves towards digitized teaching/learning of languages.

Language planners should focus on redesigning existing English teaching curricula to give students more space to try to learn English as their on. Skill development must be included in the curriculum.

Conclusion

Labor market demands focus on the need to develop skills and competencies, which include improving oral skills, life skills, problem-solving and soft skills. In short, today we need a curriculum that develops the overall development of the student's entire personality.

The whole process of language teaching/learning must be aimed at improving the student's problem-solving abilities. The system should be reformed to devote more of its resources to developing a pool of talented human capital with dynamic leadership skills. Although the first aim of education is to enlighten the human mind through imparting knowledge, its ultimate aim is to ensure successful career placement. Therefore, such an education should be designed that develops all aspects – such as the theoretical acquisition of knowledge and practical use of acquired skills and competencies.

Good command of English will definitely change our work approach and improve our job opportunities. University education should focus on the development of key competencies and skills that guide the young generation to achieve their goals. Thus, in the 21st century, communication skills have become an essential element in ensuring empowerment and employment. Employability skills enable the student to stand up to the increasing level of competition at every stage of life. English, being the source of language knowledge, facilitates and deepens other required skills such as soft skills, presentation skills, and above all communication skills. Finally, this article highlights the need to revise the curriculum, and teaching strategies changing the roles of teachers and students according to the needs of a changing society. As Kalam (2006) said, “the education system must create employment generators, not job seekers”.

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